

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

(Aligned with the Victorian Child Safe Standards – 11 Standards)

1. Purpose

This policy outlines Word Builders Speech Pathology's commitment to ensuring the safety, wellbeing, and empowerment of all children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in the best interests of every child in our care.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, contractors, students, volunteers, and any other individuals engaged by the organisation.

3. Statement of Commitment

We are committed to:

- Promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of all children
- Empowering children to participate and have a voice
- Creating a culturally safe, inclusive, and respectful environment
- Taking all concerns and allegations seriously and responding appropriately

4. Definitions

Child abuse includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional/psychological abuse, neglect, and exposure to family violence.

Child safety refers to protecting children from harm, abuse, and neglect.

5. Implementation of the 11 Child Safe Standards

Standard 1: Culturally Safe Environments

We support and respect the identities of Aboriginal children and young people by:

- Acknowledging and respecting Aboriginal culture
- Promoting cultural safety in practice
- Ensuring staff undertake cultural safety training

Standard 2: Leadership, Governance and Culture

We ensure child safety is embedded in our leadership by:

- Promoting a culture of safety and accountability
- Ensuring leaders model child safe behaviours

- Regularly reviewing child safety practices

Standard 3: Child and Student Empowerment

We empower children by:

- Encouraging them to express their views
- Listening to and valuing their concerns
- Providing age-appropriate information about their rights

Standard 4: Family and Community Involvement

We involve families and communities by:

- Communicating openly about child safety practices
- Providing access to policies and procedures
- Encouraging feedback and participation

Standard 5: Diversity and Equity

We respect diversity and ensure equity by:

- Supporting children with disability
- Respecting cultural, linguistic, and gender diversity
- Making reasonable adjustments to support participation

Standard 6: Suitable Staff and Volunteers

We ensure all personnel are suitable to work with children by:

- Requiring a valid Working With Children Check (WWCC)
- Conducting reference and background checks
- Providing supervision and ongoing training

Standard 7: Child-Focused Complaints Processes

We provide accessible complaint processes by:

- Offering multiple ways to report concerns
- Making information child-friendly
- Ensuring complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly

Standard 8: Child Safety Knowledge, Skills and Awareness

We ensure staff are equipped by:

- Providing regular child safety training
- Educating staff on recognising and responding to abuse
- Reinforcing professional boundaries and expectations

Standard 9: Physical and Online Environments

We promote safety in all environments by:

- Ensuring visibility in therapy or service spaces
- Managing risks in one-to-one settings
- Using secure platforms for online/telehealth services

Standard 10: Review and Continuous Improvement

We continuously improve by:

- Reviewing policies and procedures regularly
- Learning from incidents and feedback
- Updating practices to reflect current standards

Standard 11: Policies and Procedures Documentation

We ensure all child safety practices are documented by:

- Maintaining up-to-date policies
- Ensuring staff understand and follow procedures
- Making documents accessible to families and stakeholders

6. Code of Conduct

All staff must:

- Treat children with respect and dignity
- Maintain professional boundaries
- Act in the best interests of the child
- Report any concerns immediately

Staff must not:

- Engage in inappropriate physical or emotional behaviour
- Develop relationships outside professional boundaries
- Ignore or minimise concerns about child safety

7. Reporting Concerns

All staff must report concerns where there is a reasonable belief that a child is at risk.

Steps:

1. Ensure the child is safe
2. Document concerns
3. Report to appropriate authorities (e.g., Child Protection, Police)
4. Notify management

8. Breaches of Policy

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment or engagement.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following any significant incident or legislative change.