



Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy

Mildura District Aboriginal Services (MDAS)

1. Purpose

Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS) is a not-for-profit organisation community controlled organisation providing services to children and young people between the ages of 0 and 18 years.

Our organisation provides service delivery to Aboriginal Community including early years, health, family and community services within the Mallee region.

We take seriously our responsibility to deliver a supportive environment that is caring, nurturing and safe.

We promote equity and respect diversity by:

- actively anticipating children's diverse circumstances and responding effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities
- by giving all children access to information, support and complaints processes, and
- paying particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with a disability and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Our Board of Directors approves and endorses MDAS commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect.

It is the responsibility of all at MDAS, from Executive to staff and volunteers, to:

- protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying and exploitation by our people;
- be alert to incidents of child abuse and neglect occurring outside the scope of our operations and services that may have an impact on the children and young people to whom we provide a service; and
- create and maintain a child safe culture that is understood, endorsed and put into action by all the individuals who work for, volunteer or access our programs and services.

We expect all within our organisation, regardless of their role or level of responsibility, to act to safeguard children from such harm by:

- adopting the practices and behaviour we have set as our standard when carrying out their roles, and
- reporting any abuse or neglect of which they become aware to our management and/or to external authorities responsible for child protection or to police, regardless of whether that abuse is being perpetrated by personnel within our organisation, or by those outside our organisation including those from the child's family, extended family, their family's extended network or strangers.

2. Scope

The Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy applies to all personnel involved with MDAS.

3. Related documents

The following MDAS policies must be considered in relation to this document:

- Practice and Behaviour Guidelines / Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- Responding to Child Abuse and Allegations Reporting Policy
- Licensing and Screening Policy
- Recruitment Policy

4. Related legislation

In upholding this Policy, the following legislation must be considered by all MDAS personnel:

- *Child, Youth and Families Act 2005*
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Commonwealth Authorities) Act 1987
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Mental Health Act 1986
- Information Privacy Act 2000
- Victorian Health Records Act 2001
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986

5. Definitions

Definitions are included in Appendix 1.

6. Responsibilities

The Board is responsible for the development and endorsement of MDAS Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy. It delegates the implementation of the Policy to the CEO and Executive Management. The role of each entity in relation to the development and compliance of the MDAS Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is detailed in the table below.

Entity	Role/Responsibility
Board / CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the commitment to this Policy and its expectations. • Support policy review on an annual cycle as a minimum or at a time governed by legislation, regulations, or organisational learnings that promote a change to the Policy and all relevant policy or procedural guidelines. • Ensure compliance to the Policy via an inbuilt review mechanism. • Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow for the development and effective implementation of this policy. • Develop opportunities for regular discussion at all levels to support a culture of openness and continued improvement and accountability to child protection and member welfare.

Entity	Role/Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young people in support of this Policy and its expectations.
<p style="text-align: center;">CEO/Executive Management Team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all involved Personnel understand their obligations in accordance with the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and any relevant policy and procedural documentation. This includes induction, a minimum of one compulsory training session, and regular discussion and guidance at supervision and team meetings. Ensure the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is implemented and adhered to amongst relevant member stakeholders. Ensure the development and implementation of required internal policy/work procedures and guidelines are in place to support child protection practice in accordance with the expectations of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy. Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow effective implementation of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy. Ensure to support Personnel in a joint way with a decision to initiate any form of action to protect a child from abuse, neglect, grooming or exploitation. Ensure appropriate supports, such as counselling and formal debriefing, are provided for any Personnel involved in a matter relating to responding to a concern for the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person. Advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young people in support of this Policy. Proactively share resources and experience in the development of child safe initiatives as they are identified. Develop opportunities for regular discussion at all levels to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability of child protection and member welfare. Ensure that our Personnel are aware of the appropriate recruitment, screening and employment practice in relation to individuals with specific roles in working, coaching or volunteering with children and families.
<p style="text-align: center;">Personnel, Staff, Coordinators and supervisors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a full understanding of the commitments and expectations of this Policy, as well as all other policy relevant to safeguarding children and young people. To undertake any induction and training anticipated in this Policy, in relation to policy and procedures relevant to safeguarding children and young people.

Entity	Role/Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To seek guidance from a supervisor or manager if there is ever any lack of understanding in relation to the commitments and expectations as set out in this Policy. • To take action to protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying and exploitation. • To assist in creating and maintaining a child safe culture and a culture of inclusion and safety

7. Our Commitment

MDAS is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who access our activities, programs, services or facilities. Our policies and procedures seek to address risks to child safety and to establish a Safeguarding culture and practices. Our Safeguarding Children and Young People policies and procedures are: accessible in forms that are easy to understand; have been informed by stakeholder consultation; and are communicated to children, young people and their families, our personnel and the general public. We regularly review our policies, gain endorsement of changes and advise our personnel of changes.

We are committed to safeguarding children & young people

Through our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy we document our clear commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. We communicate our commitment to all of our personnel and give them access to a copy of our policy.

Our personnel know the behaviour we expect

We ensure that each person involved in our delivery of services to children and young people understands their role and the behaviour we expect in relation to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. We utilise clear position descriptions which clearly state relevant safeguarding requirements. We have a code of conduct, which is approved and endorsed from the highest levels of our organisation that outlines our expectations for behaviour towards children and young people. Our personnel are given a copy of and have access to the code of conduct. Our personnel indicate, in writing, that they have read and are committed to the code of conduct.

We minimise the likelihood of recruiting a person who is unsuitable

We have appropriate measures in place to minimise the likelihood that we will recruit a person who is unsuitable to work / volunteer with children or young people. We have recruitment procedures that ensure:

- our safeguarding commitment is communicated to potential applicants for positions
- face-to-face interviews are held which includes safeguarding-related questions
- two professional reference checks are undertaken
- screening checks are undertaken, including identity, criminal record, working with children checks and qualification checks.

Induction and training is part of our commitment

We provide all new personnel with information during their induction about our commitment to Safeguarding including our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, code of conduct and child abuse reporting policy. We have a process for ensuring all of our personnel complete Safeguarding Children training. We support ongoing education and training for our personnel to ensure safeguarding information is provided in an ongoing way.

We encourage the involvement of children, young people and their parents

We involve and communicate with children and young people, and their families in developing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment. We provide information to children and their carers (such as brochures, posters, handbooks, guidelines) about:

- our commitment to safeguarding children and their rights
- the behaviour we expect of our personnel and of themselves
- our policy about responding to child abuse

We have processes for encouraging two-way communication with children and families. We seek their feedback and have a process for responding. We respect diversity and seek to facilitate effective communication and involvement.

Our personnel understand their responsibility for reporting child abuse

Our policy for responding to child abuse is approved and endorsed from the highest levels of our organisation, and applies to all our personnel. The policy states that:

- personnel must immediately report abuse or neglect and any concerns with policies, practices or the behaviour of personnel.
- personnel must meet any legislated mandatory reporting requirements
- personnel must follow a specified process when reporting abuse or neglect including who will receive reports
- failure to report is serious misconduct.

Our personnel are given a copy of and have access to the policy and understand the implications of the policy for their role. We document any allegation, disclosure or concern regarding child abuse and monitor responses to all allegations, disclosures or concerns.

We maintain and improve our policies and practices

We are committed to maintaining and improving our policies, procedures and practices to safeguard children and young people from neglect and abuse. We have assigned responsibility for maintaining and improving our policies and procedures to a 'Safeguarding Children Program Coordinator'.

We monitor our personnel and external providers to ensure appropriate practice and behaviour, and policies are followed. We communicate with our personnel to ensure that they understand our policies and that the policies are effective in the work place. We require our personnel to disclose convictions or charges affecting their suitability to work with children and young people and we review police record and WWCC checks periodically.

We have formally reviewed our service delivery to identify and document potential risks to children or young people. We undertake formal reviews, at least annually, to identify and document potential risks to children or young people associated our service delivery. We have a procedure to undertake annual reviews, as part of our ongoing compliance with safeguarding requirements.

8. Records and documentation

We retain records of changes to this document (see 10. Monitoring and Review).

9. Communication

MDAS commits to ensuring our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is communicated to:

Service users

- on our website
- in age-accessible formats for children and young people
- as part of enrolment forms and program information provided to parents and families

All 'Involved' Personnel

- during recruitment and induction processes
- in minimum compulsory training on safeguarding children and young people policies and procedures
- on agendas for team meetings
- when there are any updates or changes to this document.

10. Monitoring and review

This document will be reviewed at least every 3 years, after consultation. Some circumstances may trigger an early review, this includes but is not limited to legislative changes, organisational changes, incident outcomes and other matters deemed appropriate by the Board and/or Chief Executive Officer. We retain records to document each review undertaken. Records may include minutes of meetings and documentation of changes to policies and procedures that result from a review.

External audit and verification based on a sample, conducted by the Australian Childhood Foundation shall occur at 3 yearly intervals.

11. Supporting resources

The Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy for Children and Young People

The Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy for Parents and Families

Safeguarding Children and Young People Statement

Practice and Behaviour Guidelines (Code of Conduct)

Recruitment practices and supporting documentation review processes

Safeguarding Children Information for Parents

Safeguarding Children statement: for children and young people

Appendix 1

Term	Definition
Bullying	Bullying involves the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another less powerful person or group and is generally an act that is repeated over time.

Term	Definition
	<p>Bullying has been described by researchers as taking many forms which are often interrelated and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Verbal</i> (name calling, put downs, threats); • <i>Physical</i> (hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting); • <i>Social</i> (ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating); and/or • <i>Psychological</i> (spreading rumours, stalking, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions).
Child or young person	A person under the age of eighteen years.
Safeguarding Code of Conduct or Practice and Behaviour Guidelines	The Safeguarding Code of Conduct aims to identify and prevent behaviour that may be harmful to Members, children and young people within MDAS and Mallee District communities. The Safeguarding Code of Conduct outlines what is, and what is not acceptable behaviour or practice when working with or engaging with children and young people.
Direct role in providing activities, programs and services to children and young people	A direct role is considered one that has contact with children and young people that is not incidental, but normally part of providing a service, program or activity for children and young people. This direct delivery may require regular physical contact and forms of ongoing communication. For example, coaching.
Emotional or psychological abuse	Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when a child does not receive the love, affection or attention they need for healthy emotional, psychological and social development. Such abuse may involve repeated rejection or threats to a child. Constant criticism, teasing, ignoring, threatening, yelling, scapegoating, ridicule and rejection or continual coldness are all examples of emotional abuse. These behaviors continue to an extent that results in significant damage to the child's physical, intellectual or emotional wellbeing and development.
Family Violence	Family violence occurs when children are forced to live with violence between adults in their home. It is harmful to children. It can include witnessing violence or the consequences of violence. Family violence is defined as violence between members of a family or extended family or those fulfilling the role of family in a child or young person's life. Exposure to family violence places children and young people at increased risk of physical injury and harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.
Grooming	Grooming is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a child with a view to abusing them at some stage. There is no set pattern in relation to the grooming of children. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period of time before the abuse begins. The child may be given special attention and, what starts as an apparently normal display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation and then into more serious sexual behaviour. Other perpetrators may draw a child in and abuse them relatively

Term	Definition
	quickly. Some abusers do not groom children but abuse them without forming a relationship at all. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sports and religious activities, or in internet chatrooms, in social media or by other technological channels.
Harm	<p>Harm to a child, is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; • sexual abuse or exploitation; • a single act, omission or circumstance; and • a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.
Neglect	Neglect is the persistent failure or deliberate denial to provide the child with the necessities of life. Such neglect includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, adequate supervision, clean water, medical attention or supervision to the extent that the child's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed. Categories of neglect include physical neglect, medical neglect, abandonment or desertion, emotional neglect and educational neglect. The issue of neglect must be considered within the context of resources reasonably available.
Personnel	All staff and volunteers who work for the organisation whether in a paid or unpaid capacity.
Physical abuse	Physical abuse occurs when a person subjects a child to non-accidental physically aggressive acts. The abuser may inflict an injury intentionally or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a child. Physically abusive behavior includes (but is not limited to) shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, excessive and physically harmful over training, and kicking. It also includes giving children harmful substances such as drugs, alcohol or poison. Certain types of punishment, whilst not causing injury can also be considered physical abuse if they place a child at risk of being hurt.
Sexual abuse	Sexual abuse occurs when an adult or a person of authority (e.g. older) involves a child in any sexual activity. Perpetrators of sexual abuse take advantage of their power, authority or position over the child or young person for their own benefit. It can include making sexual comments to a child, engaging children to participate in sexual conversations over the internet or on social media, kissing, touching a child's genitals or breasts, oral sex or intercourse with a child. Encouraging a child to view pornographic magazines, websites and videos is also sexual abuse. Engaging children to participate in sexual conversations over the internet is also considered sexual abuse.
Sexual exploitation	Sexual exploitation occurs when children are forced into sexual activities that are then recorded in some way and/or used to produce pornography. Such pornography can be in the form of actual photos or videos or published on the internet. Exploitation can also involve children who are forced into prostitution.