



# Child Safe Standards

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# Child Safe Standards

## Practice Summary

Allay Occupational Therapy provides evidence-based and client-driven services for children, adolescents and adults across multiple areas of need. Our clients may experience developmental delays, disabilities, mental or physical health conditions or injuries and neurological or behavioural disorders. Services are targeted towards the individual needs of each client supported by our team with the aim of maximising their quality of life and wellbeing. Our clients are always at the forefront of our mind in the delivery of services, practice management and policy design. At Allay we are committed to providing a respectful, responsive, culturally safe, inclusive and welcoming service and workplace for everyone.

Allay Policies and Procedures are a resource for our team, bringing together current research, knowledge and practice strategies. It is reflective of legislative requirements and practice principles outlined in relevant guidelines.

Legislation and practice principles considered were:

- Disability Act 2006
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Quality and Safeguarding Framework (2017)
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Rules 2018

Review of Allay's Policies and Procedures occurs every two years to ensure relevancy. This is undertaken by the Principal Occupational Therapist, Associate Principal Occupational Therapists, Policy and Procedure Working Party, leadership team and the individual team members.

## Introduction

Allay acts to protect children and young people from abuse, and build an environment where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. Abuse may be child sexual abuse, physical abuse, serious emotional and psychological abuse and serious neglect.

### Child Safe Standard 1: Cultural Safety

Allay acts to build a culturally safe environment, promoting diversity and inclusion at Allay, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual and other sexually or gender (LGBTQIA+) diverse backgrounds.
- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Allay acts to build a culturally safe and inclusive environment for children where they feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. This is ensured in the first instance by offering a culturally safe environment in which diverse and unique identities and experiences of children and young people are respected and valued. All of our team members aim to encourage and actively support a child's ability to express their culture and identity and enjoy their rights.

Allay fosters a culture of openness, inclusiveness and awareness. All of our staff, volunteers and students recognise the importance of cultural safety and inclusive practice for children. Strategies are embedded within Allay which equip staff to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of diverse cultures and identities, and understand the importance to the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people.

All allegations of racism are treated very seriously by Allay and guided by Policy and Procedure across Child Safety, Incident Management, Supervision and OH&S. Allay's complaints, feedback, incident management and supervision processes are designed to ensure racism within the organisation is identified, confronted and not tolerated.

Allay actively supports and facilitates participation and inclusion within it by children, young people and their families from diverse backgrounds. Allay's policies, procedures, systems, training and processes together create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of children, young people and their families.

#### Child Safe Standard 2: Child safety and wellbeing

Allay Occupational Therapy acts to protect children from abuse, and build an environment where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. This is ensured in the first instance by a culture of child safety embedded throughout our organisation so that child safety is part of everyone's everyday thinking and practice. All of our occupational therapists aim to demonstrate child safe values, attitudes and behaviours.

Our leadership team take a lead in protecting children from abuse and are involved in providing direction of all child abuse allegations and risks and takes responsibility for ensuring an appropriate response. Allay staff members are actively aware of and consistently champion and model a child safe culture through their engagement with children and young people and their families and supports.

All allegations of child abuse and child safety concerns are treated very seriously by Allay. A strategy to prevent, detect and mitigate child abuse risks is implemented. This includes

complying with all legal requirements, including reporting suspicions of child abuse to police and/or child protection and recording any child safety management issues.

Allay has a Child Safe Policy and Working with Children Policy which outline our commitment to promoting children's wellbeing and protecting children from abuse.

#### Child Safe Standard 3: Empowering Children

Allay promotes the participation and empowerment of children by offering opportunities for children and young people to actively participate in their therapy program and is responsive to their contributions. All staff endeavour to create environments where children feel safe and comfortable in reporting concerns or allegations of abuse. All children and young people are informed about their rights, including to safety, information and participation. Our staff are trained in child focussed therapy and encouraging children's participation. They recognise the importance of friendships and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and less isolated.

Our staff are trained in hearing and responding appropriately to concerns raised by children and young people. In addition, staff are attuned to the signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children and young people to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns. Where appropriate, all staff seek to include young people in their views about safe and unsafe environments. Where relevant children and young people are offered access to sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant related information in an age-appropriate way.

#### Child Safe Standard 4: Families and communities

Allay promotes the participation of families in the decisions affecting their children through a Family Centred Practice approach as detailed in the Allay Working with Children Policy. It engages and openly communicates with families and the community about its child safe approach and relevant information is accessible on the Allay website including this standard.

Families and communities feedback is incorporated in the development and review of Allay's policies and procedures. Families, carers and the community are informed about Allay's operations and governance through the initial intake process, ongoing updates from the allocated therapist and the Allay website.

#### Child Safe Standard 5: Equity

Allay understands children and young people's diverse circumstances and provides support and responds to those who are vulnerable. This is supported by staff training on Cultural Safety. All children and young people have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.

Allay has a culture of openness, inclusiveness and awareness. All of our staff, volunteers and students recognise the importance of cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety

of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, the cultural safety of children from LGBTQIA+ backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

Allay is inclusive to all children and families. In particular:

- The cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- The cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- The cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual and other sexually or gender (LGBTQIA+) diverse backgrounds.
- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

#### Child Safe Standard 6: Human Resources

Allay utilises robust human resources practices to reduce the risks of harm to children. We achieve this by:

- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure that we engage the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children where we emphasise child safety and wellbeing throughout the recruitment process. This is demonstrated through the position advertisements, police record and identity checks, NDIS Worker Screening, Working with Children Checks, interviews and detailed reference checks from previous employers, including from the applicant's most recent line manager.
- All Allay staff and volunteers receive an induction which includes making them aware of their responsibilities to children and young people, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligation. Child safety and practice is routinely discussed in forums such as in induction to Allay, team meetings, supervisions, clinical review and in-service professional development.

#### Child Safe Standard 7: Complaints and concerns

Allay has an accessible complaint handling policy which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of leadership, staff and volunteers, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies and obligations to act and report.

Effective complaint handling processes are understood by children and young people, families, staff and volunteers, and are culturally safe.

Allay has in place child safety incident management policies and procedures that address reporting complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and co-operates with law enforcement. Reporting and privacy law obligations are considered and met.

Allay staff must follow the steps below for responding to and reporting suspected child safety issues including abuse.

If a child discloses a child safety incident, Allay staff will:

- Listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, or the police.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Complete a “Child Safety Management” incident reporting form as per the Allay Incident Management Policy detailing the situation.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child’s words and report the disclosure to a member of the leadership team, and police or child protection.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

If an Allay team member has identified any concerns of abuse or concern for the safety of their client, which has not been directly disclosed, they will:

- Ensure the immediate safety of the client as necessary.
- Speak to a member of the leadership team regarding their concerns.
- Complete a “Child Safety Management” incident reporting form detailing the situation.
- If appropriate, follow up any reporting that needs to occur e.g. to Child Protection, Orange Door

If a parent/carer says their child has been abused at Allay or raises a concern:

- Explain that Allay has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the Allay leadership team, the police or child protection.
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Complete an “Child Safety Management” incident reporting report detailing the situation.

- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Speak to a member of the leadership team regarding their concerns.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

#### Child Safe Standard 8: Ongoing education and training

Allay implements this standard through the following processes:

- Providing Allay team members with induction and ongoing training in child safety and effectively implementing Allays child safety and wellbeing policies. Team members are required to review and sign the Child Safe Code of Conduct.
- Providing opportunities for employees and volunteers to develop and maintain skills to ensure child safety including recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and young people. Supporting staff and volunteers to understand the importance of child safety and wellbeing, and enable them to consistently follow child safety policies and procedures.
- Allay reinforces a commitment to child safety by recognising the good work and practices of employees and volunteers in keeping children safe and protected.
- Allay ensures that volunteers and employees who work with children have ongoing high quality supervision, support and training so that they can respond effectively to issues of child safety, support colleagues who disclose harm and build culturally safe environments for children and young people.

#### Child Safe Standard 9: Physical and online environments

Allay has strategies to identify and reduce or remove the risk of child abuse in both physical and online environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities. Allay adopts a risk management approach by considering the child safety risk(s) based on the nature of their activities with children, the physical environment, and the characteristics of children to whom we provide services. Allay will take measures that ensure once risks are identified, we will reduce or remove them to help ensure the safety of children.

Allay implements this standard by:

- Ensuring the online environment is used in accordance with Allay's Code of Conduct and child safety and wellbeing policy and procedures.
- Ensuring a clear and accessible process for evaluating risks posed by situations and activities and the children we work with.
- Developing, recording and communicating clear processes for removing risks to children.
- Providing staff and volunteers with training in identifying children at risk of abuse and organisational child abuse risks.
- Committing to continual improvement in how risks are managed by learning from past lessons, including policy review and staff training.



- Driving a risk management approach through endorsement and ownership by leadership, including responsibility for risk identification and management in position descriptions.
- Instituting risk management policies and processes.
- Including discussion about apparent risks or 'near misses' in leadership and team meetings.
- Encouraging early identification and raising awareness of possible risks.
- Ensuring staff have suitable experience and qualifications to manage high risk environments.

#### Child Safe Standard 10: Review and improvement

Allay regularly reviews, evaluates and improves child safe practices. Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed at the time of the incident, at quarterly leadership meetings and through an annual review process to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement. Allay reports on the findings of relevant reviews to staff and volunteers, community and families and children and young people.

#### Child Safe Standard 11: Policies and procedures

Allay ensures its policies and procedures address all Child Safe Standards, are documented and easy to understand. Leader's champion and model compliance with policies and procedures. Staff and volunteers understand and implement policies and procedures.

#### Relevant Allay Resources

- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Working With Children Policy
- Incident Management Policy
- Child Safety Management Form

#### Quality and Practice Improvement

Allay leadership will ensure that all team members are aware of this policy and procedure.

Review of Allay's Policies and Procedures occurs every two years to ensure relevancy. This is undertaken by the Principal Occupational Therapist, Associate Principal Occupational Therapists, Policy and Procedure Working Party, leadership team and the individual team members.