



Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

VERSION 4.0

13TH AUGUST 2024

Table of Contents

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy	2
Mission	2
Vision.....	2
Values.....	2
Practice Summary.....	2
Policy and Procedures in the Practice.....	3
Quality and Practice Improvement.....	3
Definitions	3
Introduction.....	4
Purpose	4
Scope	5
Role of the Leadership Team	5
Statement of Commitment to Child Safety.....	5
Culturally Safe Environments for Aboriginal Children and Their Families	6
Valuing Diversity.....	6
Code of Conduct	7
Children’s Empowerment, Participation, and Inclusion	7
Families and Communities.....	8
Commitment to a Safe and Supportive Environment	8
Training and supervision.....	8
Recruitment	9
Fair procedures for personnel.....	9
Privacy	9
Legislative responsibilities	10
Risk management.....	10
Allegations, concerns and complaints.....	10
Relevant Allay Resources.....	10

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Mission

Empowering people to lead independent and meaningful lives, with sustainable, satisfying daily activities and relationships.

Vision

To provide quality therapy services, as a leader in innovation and sustained by strong relationships with our clients, communities, and within our team.

Values

Collaborative – Innovation – Sustainable – Empowered

Practice Summary

Allay Occupational Therapy's policies underscore our commitment to quality occupational therapy services. Our values of Collaboration, Innovation, Sustainability, and Empowerment guide us in empowering individuals to lead independent, fulfilling lives. We strive to be a catalyst for positive change, fostering autonomy, well-being, and community involvement.

We prioritise client service by providing evidence-based interventions tailored to the needs and objectives of individuals across all life stages. Our occupational therapists and allied health assistants work closely with clients and their support networks, using innovative strategies to maximise outcomes and foster sustainable well-being. We value strong relationships with our clients, communities, and team, aiming to be a leader in innovative therapy services.

Our clients remain central to our service delivery, practice management, and policy development. We are dedicated to creating a respectful, responsive, safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for all. The Allay community is inclusive of all cultures and identities. We maintain a safe and inclusive environment, welcoming individuals from all backgrounds, and appreciate their contributions to our practice.

We are committed to continuous quality and practice improvement, reflecting lived experiences, current research, knowledge, and strategies. Our Allay Policy and Procedure Guidelines, aligning with relevant legislation, support our team in implementing these practices.

We value our team's well-being and professional growth, and provide a supportive environment for personal and career development. Our policies and procedures, coupled with a professional development program, guide best practices, uphold standards, and ensure a safe and ethical environment, propelling us to the forefront of the occupational therapy field.

Legislation and practice principles considered were:

- Disability Act 2006
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguarding Framework 2017

Prepared by: Lauren Pattinson, Principal Occupational Therapist
Commencement date: 13th August 2024
Review date: 13th August 2026

Allay Occupational Therapy
Child Safety and Wellbeing
Page | 2

- National Disability Insurance Scheme Rules 2018
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Worker Screening Rules, WWC, police checks, criminal offences
- Child Safe Standard
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) (including Child Safe Standards)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) (including reporting to Child Protection)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) (including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences)
- Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic) (including Part XIII – Organisational liability for child abuse)

Policy and Procedures in the Practice

We value the well-being and resilience of our team members. We prioritise their professional growth and ensure a supportive environment that promotes personal and career development. By investing in their well-being and ongoing education, we empower our team to provide the highest quality of care.

Our policies and procedures are designed to guide best practice and provide clear direction to our team. They serve as a roadmap for delivering exceptional care, upholding professional standards, and ensuring a safe and ethical practice environment. They are supported by a professional development program through policy training, case studies and reflective activities.

Quality and Practice Improvement

To maintain the relevancy and effectiveness of our policies and procedures, a thorough review is conducted every two years. This review involves the active participation of the Principal Occupational Therapist, Associate Principal Occupational Therapists, Policy and Procedure Working Party, leadership team, and individual team members. By engaging in this collaborative effort, we can make necessary adjustments, incorporate new insights, and remain aligned with best practices and regulatory standards. Via policy training, case studies and reflective activities, Allay leadership and the team are aware of the application of this policy and procedure in practice.

Definitions

Child abuse means:

- a sexual offence committed against a child
- an offence committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), such as grooming
- physical violence against a child
- causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

Harm is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, including as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.

Child/Children means a person who is under the age of 18 years.

Concerns and complaints

A concern refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction to Allay Occupational Therapy related to one or more of the following:

- Our services or dealings with individuals
- Allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, a volunteer or another individual associated with Allay Occupational Therapy
- Disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person
- The conduct of a child or young person at Allay Occupational Therapy
- The inadequate handling of a prior concern
- General concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

Introduction

Allay acts to protect children 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.

Protection of children has its foundation in a culture of child safety, that is 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.

Allay fosters a culture of openness, inclusiveness and awareness. All of our staff, volunteers and students consider the safety of all children, recognise the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

Purpose

The purpose of this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to ensure that all children who engage with Allay are provided with a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment. This policy outlines our unwavering commitment to prioritising the safety and wellbeing of children, detailing the specific measures we take to protect them from harm, including all forms of child abuse. It serves as a comprehensive guide for our staff, volunteers, and the broader Allay community to maintain a child-safe environment at all times.

At Allay, we promote a person-centred approach to supporting individuals who experience difficulties with their occupations and behaviours, with the aim of improving their quality of life and increasing their satisfaction and participation in daily activities. We are committed to upholding the human rights of our participants, ensuring their full participation and maximum choice in their lives and communities.

The Allay Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Standards serve as a vital resource for our team in:

- Creating and maintaining a service culture that prioritises child safety.
- Fostering an environment of openness, inclusiveness, and awareness.
- Providing clear resources and protocols for reporting, ensuring the safety of all children under our care.

Scope

This Policy and Procedure applies to all Allay team members, receptionists, volunteers, students and clients. It is framed around the National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguarding Framework and Child Safe Standards.

All Allay Occupational Therapy staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

Role of the Leadership Team

The Leadership Team has the role of making sure Allay Occupational Therapy prioritises children's safety and that action is taken when anyone raises concerns about children's safety.

The Leadership Team will champion and model a child safe culture at Allay. We encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern. The Leadership Team will work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable to raise concerns.

Everyone at Allay has a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. The Leadership Team will make sure that staff and volunteers are conducting risk assessments and taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy. They will also ensure that appropriate child safety training for staff and volunteers is identified and completed.

The Leadership Team will conduct a bi-annual review of how effectively Allay is delivering child safety and wellbeing. The input of people involved with Allay will be sought as part of this review as part of our Feedback Process.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

At Allay, we are fully committed to the safety, wellbeing, and empowerment of all children. We believe that every child has the fundamental right to feel safe, be protected from harm, and be supported in an environment that fosters their overall wellbeing. Our practice is dedicated to creating and maintaining a child-safe environment where safety concerns and allegations are treated with the utmost seriousness and are handled consistently in line with our robust policies and procedures.

To achieve our unwavering commitment to child safety, we pledge to:

- **Uphold Child Safety Standards:** We implement rigorous recruitment, screening, and induction processes to ensure that all staff, volunteers, and contractors understand and are equipped to maintain our high child safety standards.
- **Regular Review and Update:** We regularly review and update our policies and procedures to ensure they align with current best practices and legislative requirements, reinforcing our commitment to child safety.
- **Ongoing Education and Training:** We provide continuous education and training for our staff and volunteers, ensuring they are well-informed about child safety, wellbeing, and the risks associated with child abuse.
- **Inclusive Environment:** We are committed to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where children feel safe, respected, valued, and empowered to express their concerns or seek help when needed.

- **Empowerment and Respect:** We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers, ensuring that everyone in our community feels valued and safe.
- **Zero Tolerance for Abuse:** We have zero tolerance for child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns are treated with the highest priority and are addressed rigorously and consistently in accordance with our policies and legal obligations.
- **Early Risk Identification and Prevention:** We are committed to preventing child abuse by identifying risks early and taking proactive steps to remove or reduce these risks.
- **Legal and Moral Obligations:** We rigorously apply our legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we have concerns about a child's safety.
- **Cultural Safety:** We are dedicated to the cultural safety of all children, including Aboriginal children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children from lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and/or intersex backgrounds, and children with disabilities. Our commitment extends to ensuring that our environment is safe and supportive for all.

Through these actions, Allay seeks to ensure that all children in our care are safe, happy, and empowered to participate fully in their communities and lives.

Culturally Safe Environments for Aboriginal Children and Their Families

Allay is committed to creating an environment where Aboriginal culture is celebrated, and Aboriginal children, families, and community members feel welcomed and included. Our strategies to embed cultural safety for Aboriginal children include:

- **Acknowledgement of Country:** We incorporate an Acknowledgement of Country in all significant meetings and events.
- **Community Consultation:** We actively seek to attend training and consultation to promote Aboriginal culture and practices within Allay's services and programs.
- **Cultural Expression:** We provide opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture within Allay's activities, supporting them to explore and celebrate their heritage.
- **Staff Training:** All staff and volunteers receive training on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children.
- **Cultural Celebrations:** We celebrate NAIDOC Week, National Sorry Day, National Reconciliation Week, and other significant cultural events.
- **Feedback from Aboriginal Families:** We seek feedback from Aboriginal children, families, and communities on their experiences at Allay.

Valuing Diversity

At Allay, we value diversity and equity for all children. To ensure that every child feels safe, welcome, and included, we:

- **Diversity Training:** Provide training for all team members on understanding diversity and supporting inclusion and cultural safety.
- **Inclusive Participation:** Welcome and support the participation of all children, including those with disabilities, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children unable to live at home, LGBTQIA+ children, and Aboriginal children and their families.

- **Inclusive Enrolment:** Offer students and families the opportunity to provide information about themselves in our Intake Form and initial interviews, including any specific needs they may have, to ensure full participation in our programs.
- **Zero Tolerance for Discrimination:** Maintain a zero-tolerance policy for racism and other forms of discrimination, taking immediate action when such behaviour is identified.
- **Diverse Programming:** Deliver programming that reflects the diversity of our students, their interests, and cultures.
- **Representative Staffing:** Strive to reflect the diversity of our community within our staff and Management Committee, including a commitment to having representatives of South Sudanese background on our Management Committee.
- **Cultural Acknowledgements:** Acknowledge and celebrate important cultural dates within our classes and activities.
- **Inclusive Environments:** Ensure that our physical and online environments actively celebrate diversity and promote inclusion for children of all abilities.

Code of Conduct

Allay has a Child Safe Code of Conduct that all staff, volunteers, and Leadership Team members must comply with at all times. Breaches of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action, including the termination of a person's involvement with the organisation.

Children's Empowerment, Participation, and Inclusion

At Allay, we are a child-centred organisation that prioritises the empowerment, participation, and inclusion of all children in our care. We actively seek to involve children in our organisational planning, the delivery of services, and the management of facilities. This includes their participation in rehearsals, performances, and decision-making processes that directly affect them. We value the voices of children, listen to their views, and respect what they have to say, ensuring that their perspectives are integral to our operations.

Empowering Children and Respecting Their Rights

We respect the rights of all children, including their right to be safe within our organisation. We provide them with clear and accessible information about their rights and encourage them to express their views and concerns. We regularly communicate with children about safety, ensuring they know what to do if they feel unsafe, and we take immediate action to address any concerns raised by them or their families.

Participation and Inclusivity

We are committed to promoting diversity and inclusion within Allay. Children from all cultural backgrounds and walks of life are welcomed and encouraged to participate fully in our activities. We specifically:

- **Cultural Safety:** Promote the cultural safety, participation, and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as well as children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- **LGBTQIA+ Inclusion:** Promote the cultural safety, participation, and empowerment of children from lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual, and other sexually or gender-diverse backgrounds.

- **Disability Inclusion:** Ensure that children with disabilities are safe, supported, and able to participate equally in all activities.

Child Participation Initiatives

We encourage children’s participation through:

- **Regular Discussions:** We hold regular discussions with children, including child-led conversations about their services, preferences, and strengths. These discussions help us tailor our environment to better meet their needs.
- **Suggestion and Feedback:** We seek feedback from families and children via our Feedback Surveys. Suggestions are assessed and acted upon where possible.
- **Accessible Information:** We ensure that information about our operations, staffing, and programs is accessible online, in easy to read format, in printable formats and around our clinic.

Families and Communities

Allay recognises the critical role that families and communities play in promoting the safety and wellbeing of children. We actively involve parents and carers in significant decisions concerning their child and welcome feedback from families and community members at any time. Concerns or feedback can be communicated through our contact email address, and we encourage open communication to ensure the best outcomes for the children in our care.

Communication of Child Safe Policies and Practices

Allay provides families and the community with comprehensive information about our child safety policies and practices through the following methods:

- **Website Publication:** Our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct are published on our website for easy access by families and community members.
- **Information Fact Sheets:** We include easy to read information about our child safety approach and Kid’s Rights in our Fact Sheets provided to all clients.

Commitment to a Safe and Supportive Environment

At Allay, we foster an environment where children can develop friendships, support each other, and feel safe. We do not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour between children, and we take prompt action if such behaviour occurs. By promoting a culture of safety, respect, and inclusion, we empower children to be active and vital participants in our community.

Training and supervision

Training and education are important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone’s responsibility.

Allay organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision and clinical reviews to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, promote the 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.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse. This is in addition to ensuring their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate according to Allay's Model of Practice. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety. Allay understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, people from LGBTQIA+ backgrounds and people with a disability.

We carry out reference checks, police record checks and working with children checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. We also abide by NDIS Worker Screening Rules.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our "Child Safety Management" incident reporting form as per the Allay Incident Management Policy. This includes investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Privacy

As per Allay's Privacy Policy, all personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Allay may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children when it is appropriate and in their best interests. Information about complaints is kept confidential, except where sharing it is necessary to respond properly to a complaint or to prioritise child safety. We may also need to share information with external authorities to comply with the law or prioritise safety.

Legislative responsibilities

Allay Occupational Therapy takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** A person of authority in an organisation can commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk that a child under the care, supervision or authority of the organisation will become a victim of sexual offence committed by an adult associated with the organisation, has the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, and negligently fail to do so. A person of authority is for example a leadership team member or manager.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties. Mandatory reporting refers to the legal requirement of certain groups of people to report a reasonable belief of child physical or sexual abuse to child protection authorities.

Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors related to sessions that can lock), social and emotional environments (for example, any risks imposed by who the child comes into contact with in the home environment) and online environments (for example, risks posed by online platforms).

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Allay treats all reports of child abuse and child safety concerns with the utmost seriousness, whether they are made by an adult or a child. Our complaint handling policy outlines how complaints or child safety concerns will be promptly and thoroughly responded to. We provide an easy-to-understand complaints information sheet and kid's rights sheet for children, families, and the community, explaining the complaint process and available support. If a complaint involves an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, it must be reported in accordance with our policy. Staff and volunteers are required to prioritise children's safety in their response and report any potentially criminal conduct to Victoria Police.

Relevant Allay Resources

- [Child Safe Standard](#)

- Family Inclusive Policy
- Incident Management Policy
- Child Safety Incident Form
- Kid's Rights Fact Sheet
- NDIS Code of Conduct
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Complaint Management Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Staff Privacy Policy
- Worker Engagement Policy