

# CHILD SAFETY & WELLBEING POLICY

DATE OF ISSUE: JANUARY 2025

CONTACT DEPARTMENT: PEOPLE & CULTURE, RISK DEPARTMENT

## PURPOSE

The Outdoor Education Group (OEG) is committed to providing environments that are safe, inclusive, and supportive for all children and young people participating in our programs nationwide. Safety includes physical, social, psychological and cultural dimensions. This policy represents a proactive, unified approach to safeguarding children, grounded in the [10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#).

## POLICY

Note: In this document, the terms 'safe' or 'safety' refer to holistic safety, across physical, psychological, social, and cultural domains. The terms 'young people' and 'children' refer to people under the age of 18.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all OEG team members, including employees, volunteers, contractors, and Board members, in all locations and activities involving children across Australia. Every team member is responsible for upholding a safe environment and protecting children and young people in their care.

## KEY ACTIONS

The following key actions are relevant to all OEG team members and help us to comply with the 10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

<p><b>1. We work to meet National Child Safe Standards</b></p>	<p>Child safety is important across our whole organisation. We have a complaints and feedback system that is accessible for young people, caregivers and team members. Our Child Safety and Wellbeing policies and processes are reviewed regularly. We have guidelines that reduce vulnerability of young people to abuse (Appendix A). Our recruitment processes clearly emphasise child safety and wellbeing, and all team members have current working with children checks.</p>
<p><b>2. We report child safety concerns</b></p>	<p>Team members are legally and ethically required to report any suspicion, disclosure, or reasonable belief of child abuse, neglect, or harm. We have clear steps and support processes (see Procedure). Records kept are appropriate and confidential. Team members can access confidential counselling support and debriefing sessions through OEG’s Employee Assistance Program.</p>
<p><b>3. Our team has the tools to protect young people</b></p>	<p>Ongoing training and resources support team members to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) understand their legal and ethical responsibilities relating to child safety,</li> <li>(2) understand that young people have a fundamental right to physical, psychological, social, and cultural safety, and that what feels safe varies for each individual,</li> <li>(3) create and maintain environments that feel respectful, and safe enough for all young people to learn (Appendix B), and</li> <li>(4) recognise, respond to, and report abuse confidently and effectively. Resources and direct support are always available to team members with questions or concerns.</li> </ul> <p>Training is mandatory and includes induction and refresher training.</p>
<p><b>4. Everyone can feel safe and included</b></p>	<p>We take steps to make sure all young people can participate and feel safe enough physically, socially, psychologically and culturally to learn. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.</p>
<p><b>5. Participants and caregivers know what to expect</b></p>	<p>Young people and their caregivers can access information to prepare for camp. This information can be accessed in different ways, e.g., in person/on the phone, via our website or via email. Concerns can be addressed, and adjustments can be made ahead of time to make sure young people with different needs can have safe, meaningful opportunities to be involved. Options are offered around participation.</p>
<p><b>6. Young people have a voice</b></p>	<p>Young people are encouraged to express themselves, voice their concerns, and be involved with decisions affecting them. Participants have choice and control over how they participate. Information about child safety and wellbeing is accessible for young people. There is a way for young people to submit complaints and feedback.</p>

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## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

	General	Response to concerns
Managers/Supervisors	Model, support and reinforce engagement with child safety training, resources and policies.	Serve as the primary point of contact for child safety concerns, including complaints and feedback directly from participants. Ensure immediate, appropriate action is taken in line with organisational protocols.
Risk Management team/Field Duty Managers	Documents and communicates program related risks and controls including those related to child safety.	Handles all initial child safety concern calls and follows up on incident reports to ensure appropriate actions are taken and documented.
Chief of People	Oversees reporting and compliance and leads the implementation of child safety policies. Manages complaints and feedback.	Coordinates incident management, supports mandatory reporting across jurisdictions, provides support to managers, Risk Management, and Field Duty Managers (FDM) on child safety questions and concerns.  <i>Child Safety Officer</i>
Wellbeing, Diversity & Inclusion Officer	Manages reporting and compliance, supporting the organisation's inclusive and culturally sensitive approach.  Ensures accessible resources are available to young people, caregivers and community members. Manages complaints and feedback. Manages records related to child safe reports and complaints.	Acts as a secondary contact for child safety concerns if the Chief of People is unavailable.  <i>Child Safety Officer</i>
All Team Members	Foster an inclusive and respectful culture that prioritises the physical, social, psychological and cultural safety and wellbeing of all children. Engage with training and resources around child safety and wellbeing. Take responsibility for their role and ongoing learning in setting programs up as safe spaces.	Share a collective responsibility to recognise, respond to, and report any child safety concerns.

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## CHILD SAFE CODE OF CONDUCT

All team members, including volunteers and contractors, are expected to follow OEG's **Child Safe Code of Conduct**, which outlines clear behavioural expectations when interacting with children and young people.

- ▲ Show respect for all children's rights and opinions, creating spaces where they feel heard, supported, and safe to report concerns. This includes young people with diverse needs and backgrounds.
- ▲ Listen and respond to the concerns of young people, particularly if they communicate (verbally or non-verbally) that they do not feel safe or well.
- ▲ Report any concerns about harm to a young person via OEG's Mandatory Reporting Process.
- ▲ Act professionally and always maintain clear boundaries.
- ▲ Do not do anything that is likely to physically, sexually or emotionally harm a young person.
- ▲ Avoid one-on-one situations with young people where you cannot be seen, such as behind closed doors or isolated areas.
- ▲ Ask permission before touching a young person (e.g., if they need help adjusting a harness). Don't initiate unnecessary physical contact.
- ▲ Do not have private personal contact, including online contact, with past or current participants.
- ▲ Do not disclose personal or sensitive information about a young person unless it is directly required for their care or reporting purposes.
- ▲ Only take or share images of a young person with written consent, and then only via OEG's internal communication channels (unless it is a part of your role).
- ▲ Any identifiable photos of participants taken on a personal device should be deleted immediately after a program.
- ▲ Avoid showing content from a personal device to a young person.

**Failure to adhere to this Code of Conduct** may result in disciplinary actions, including termination of employment or volunteer roles.

# PROCEDURES

## IDENTIFYING CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND HARM

Harm to children and young people usually falls into the following categories:

- **Sexual** (e.g., inappropriate touching, grooming)
- **Physical** (e.g., hitting, pushing, or physical intimidation)
- **Emotional or psychological** (e.g., persistent hostility, humiliation, or intimidation)
- **Neglect** (e.g., failure to provide adequate supervision, food, or shelter)

The following also need to be reported:

- Self-injury and suicidal thoughts or behaviour
- Caregiver substance abuse, mental illness or domestic violence that place a child at risk of harm as described above.

### Reasonable belief

This is formed when a reasonable person in the same situation would suspect a child is at risk of harm based on observation, a disclosure, or behaviour. **Examples of a Reasonable Belief** include:

- A child directly discloses abuse or neglect.
- A third party, such as another child or adult, indicates that a child has been abused.
- A team member observes signs of harm, such as physical injuries, fearfulness, or changes in behaviour.

### Indicators of abuse or harm

- **Physical Indicators:** Unexplained bruises, burns, or injuries on a child; frequent or inconsistent explanations of injuries.
- **Behavioural Indicators:** Extreme withdrawal, fearfulness, or aggressiveness; knowledge of sexual behaviour, sudden changes in their attitude/behaviour.
- **Disclosure:** A child verbally reports abuse or describes harmful interactions. Please see Appendix C for guidance on responding to a disclosure.

### Reportable conduct

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If allegations or convictions of child abuse or misconduct toward children (reportable conduct) are made **against an employee or volunteer of OEG**, we are legally required to report it in line with relevant **Reportable Conduct Schemes** in each jurisdiction. This ensures all allegations of child abuse or misconduct are managed effectively and investigated thoroughly and fairly for everyone, including the person who is being accused.

## RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED HARM OR ALLEGATIONS OF HARM ON PROGRAM

If harm is suspected or an allegation received during a program (including about yourself):

- The situation considered harmful should be stopped immediately
- Students should be separated from the person against whom they are making the allegation and be placed under the supervision of another adult
- An adult not involved in the allegation should take control of the group
- Further action will be guided by your CC/Manager and FDM in line with the National Reporting Protocol.

## REPORTING CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND HARM

### OEG's Mandatory Reporting Process

OEG's national approach ensures that all team members understand and adhere to their child protection responsibilities across Australian states and territories, including compliance with variations in local legislation.

The steps below cover a work-related report, but all OEG Team members are mandatory reporters. **This means we are legally required to report directly to the appropriate state or territory Child Protection authority or to police if we believe a child is being abused or neglected, even if this occurs outside of a work context.**



# CHILD SAFE

## MANDATORY REPORTING PROCESS

The Outdoor Education group is committed to protecting children and responding to child abuse. This means all OEG Team members need to keep the safety of children in mind regardless of whether they are in client facing roles.

**If a child is in immediate danger, Call 000**

**Ensure the child is removed from potential harm as soon as possible.**

### WHEN TO REPORT



Any reasonable belief, suspicion, allegation or direct disclosure of abuse, neglect or harm  
Breach of code of conduct  
Environmental safety issue

### WHO TO REPORT TO



In the field: Course Coordinator or FDM  
Not in the field: Direct team leader  
All reports will immediately be escalated to OEG's Child Safety Officer.

### HOW TO REPORT



Report immediately via phone call or in person.  
Record using an UPLOADS Incident Report Form.

### CONFIDENTIALITY



All reports are strictly confidential. Discuss only with those managing the incident. It's ok to seek professional support.

### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The team managing the incident will:

- Support the child, the client, the person reporting, and the accused staff member or volunteer.
- Ensure the child's safety, clarify the concern, and initiate response if needed.
- Decide if the matter must be reported to police or child protection based on legal and duty of care requirements, and report promptly if required.

**IF IN DOUBT, MAKE A REPORT!**

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1800 888 900

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Dealing with actual or suspected harm to a young person can feel confronting, especially if you or someone close to you has experienced abuse. It can be especially difficult because in most cases we have no follow up contact with the child and won't know the outcome of a report. Talking to someone involved with managing the incident can help process these feelings, or you may want to speak confidentially with a professional.

To access free, confidential professional support, you can sign up for OEG's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Uprise on **1300 209 371** or online (<https://app.uprise.co/sign-up>) using the code **outdooredugroup.eap**. Uprise counsellors are professionally required to maintain confidentiality, so it is ok to discuss deidentified child safety incidents with them. Our Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy may provide further guidance.

## COMPLAINTS

In many cases, actions that create a safe space (Appendix B) can reduce the chance of complaints. Field team members should be prompted to report any concerns or potential concerns related to child safety or accidental impacts on wellbeing at the end of program (Appendix D). This reminds team members to reflect on anything they might have missed and helps our team to be proactive about potential complaints by being ahead of the conversation.

In line with National Child Safe Principles, children and young people, families, staff and community members must be able to make complaints or raise concerns related to child safety and wellbeing in a way that is accessible. Young people are informed of their right to safety and to make complaints via:

- ▲ posters at all hardtop venues
- ▲ program information websites
- ▲ public OEG website
- ▲ text in OEG's student feedback surveys.

### Verbal complaints

Young people on program can make complaints by speaking directly to an outdoor educator, program coordinator or other trusted OEG team member. Complaints by OEG team members can be made directly to the Chief of People and Culture or Wellbeing, Diversity & Inclusion Officer. If you receive a complaint verbally:

- ▲ Acknowledge concerns and take the complaint seriously.

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- ▲ **Follow OEG’s Mandatory Reporting Process** and steps for responding to a disclosure, even if you don't think the complaint is reportable conduct.

An OEG Child Safety Officer will decide if a mandatory report is necessary, and what action will be taken to respond to and resolve the complaint Appendix E).

### **Online complaints**

Are received via our online complaints form. This is accessible for any young person, caregiver, client or OEG team member or community member at any time. Complaints received via the online form will be automatically forwarded to the Wellbeing, Diversity & Inclusion Officer and Chief of People and Culture.

## **POLICY REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed as required to ensure it remains current and compliant with applicable laws and regulations. OEG may amend this policy from time to time to improve the effectiveness of its operation or may choose to terminate the policy.

## **SUPPORT & RESOURCES**

For guidance or support, team members can contact:

- Chief of People & Culture
- Wellbeing, Diversity & Inclusion Officer
- **Confidential support:** OEG’s EAP Uprise is available for team members needing counselling or debriefing services after managing sensitive child safety incidents. Call 1300 209 371 or online (<https://app.uprise.co/sign-up>) using the code [outdooredugroup.eap](https://app.uprise.co/sign-up).

Child Safety and Wellbeing resources:

- [Australian Human Rights Commission: National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#)
- [Australian Child Safe Standards – A State by State Guide](#)
- [NSW Child Safety Mandatory Reporting Decision Tree](#)
- [NSW Office of the Children’s Guardian - Child’s Guide to Reportable Conduct \(video\)](#)

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: REDUCING VULNERABILITY ON PROGRAM

The guidelines below reduce the risk of a young participant being vulnerable to abuse on an OEG program, including by other young people.

- ▲ Rules that apply at school around respect, relationships, sex, alcohol, drugs, etc. also apply at camp. Where participants do not come with a school or established group, setting clear expectations around behaviour is particularly important.
- ▲ Participants typically share a tent with at least one other participant.
- ▲ Participants typically only go into their own tent.
- ▲ When activities may require physical contact (e.g. some initiatives), safe touch (only areas not covered by a swimsuit) and asking permission should be discussed. Opting out should always be a clear option.
- ▲ Bush toilet and changing areas should be clearly identified and communicated. Participants should be taught a clear signal to show if the toilet area is occupied (e.g., if shovel is missing, toilet is occupied).
- ▲ OEG team members should not enter a participants' room when there are participants inside.

## APPENDIX B: CREATING SAFE, RESPECTFUL, INCLUSIVE PROGRAM SPACES

### **Stress that feels unpredictable, severe or out of control to the person experiencing it can have a negative impact.**

The following actions can help create a space where all young people can feel respected and safe enough to learn across physical, social, psychological and cultural domains. All roles share responsibility for creating safe spaces. Much of the work in creating safety comes in setting outdoor educators up for success with strong organisational culture, solid skills, a logical outline and trusted support. Young people can be set up for success with pre-program information, communication and options that are a good fit for their needs.

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#### **Expectations**

These should be explicitly set and reinforced with participants and include all domains of safety, including respectful language and actions, zero tolerance for belittling, bullying, discrimination or physically risky behaviour. E.g. using a group contract, or brief chat for a short program. Rules that apply at school around respect, relationships, sex, alcohol, drugs, etc. should also apply at camp.

*Program design teams and the program coordinator can make sure outdoor instructors have the time and resources to do this early and effectively.*

#### **Predictability**

When possible, information should be shared about what to expect ahead of time, e.g. access to map, timetable, activities, menu.

Predictability creates psychological safety. *Client relationship managers and program coordinators play a key role in making sure participants know what to expect, and any additional needs have been identified and met.*

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#### **Choice**

Options should be offered for participation wherever possible. This includes activities that may not produce stress in an obvious way.

*Program design, planning and delivery teams can help by making sure outlines are appropriate for all participants and adjustments are available wherever additional needs have been identified.*

#### **Support**

Be approachable and take concerns seriously. Distress in individuals should be noticed and addressed effectively. Remember individuals experience and show stress, fear and safety differently. Work with the participant and client team member to support individual needs. This creates psychological safety.

*Program coordinators can help by trusting and supporting outdoor instructors to anticipate and respond to individual needs. Rostering should prioritise continuity of team members with a group where possible.*

## APPENDIX C: RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE

Responding appropriately to a disclosure can make a huge difference to a young person's wellbeing and likelihood to report in the future. It is also important to respond in a way that is honest and doesn't compromise future investigations.

### 1. Listen Calmly and Supportively

- **Stay calm:** Avoid displaying shock or disbelief.
- **Provide reassurance:** Let the child know they've done the right thing by telling you.

Example phrases:

- "Thank you for telling me."
- "I'm here to help you."
- "It's not your fault."
- **Do not interrogate:** Allow the child to share at their own pace without pressing for details or interrupting their narrative. **Don't ask detailed or leading questions** when a child discloses harm. Your role is to listen, provide reassurance, and report the disclosure to the appropriate authorities. However, **open and non-leading questions** can be used to clarify essential details such as who is involved, what happened and when and where it happened.

Example open questions:

- "Can you tell me more about what happened?"
- "When did this happen?"
- "Who was there?"

### 2. Avoid Making Promises

- **Do not promise to keep it a secret:** Explain that you may need to tell someone else to ensure their safety.
- Be honest about what will happen next, while reassuring the child that they'll be supported.

Example:

"I may need to share this with someone who can help keep you safe."

"I haven't been told yet what the next step will be, but I know the people making that decision really care about keeping you safe."

### 3. Record the Disclosure Accurately

- Write down exactly what the child said as soon as possible, using their words.
- Include the date, time, and any relevant observations (e.g., emotional state, injuries).

### 4. Report the Disclosure

- **See Reporting and Incident in OEG's Child safe and wellbeing policy.** As outdoor educators we **must** report any suspicions of harm to child protection authorities even outside of a work context.

### 5. Seek Support for Yourself

- Disclosures can be emotionally challenging. To access free, confidential professional support, you can sign up for OEG's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Uprise on 1300 209 371 or online (<https://app.uprise.co/sign-up>) using the code `outdooredugroup.eap`.

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## APPENDIX D: END OF PROGRAM: BEING AHEAD OF THE CONVERSATION

*“Is there anything the Client Relationship Manager needs to know?” (did you see/hear/touch/smell something that seemed like it could be misinterpreted or have felt unsafe?)* This is a standard question that should be asked by the coordinator at every program debrief. It gives OEG and our team members a chance to be ahead of any conversations that might come up after the program. Examples might include:

- Reflecting on a concerning pattern of behaviour that may be reportable, or two people noticing behaviour at different times that together appear concerning.
- A participant got a minor scratch to their face from a tree, but it might at first appear alarming to caregivers - the school might want to let them know before they see them.
- Accidentally seeing a young person using a bush toilet, or them seeing you.
- A student was found in a tent that wasn't theirs, but it didn't appear suspicious.
- A young person needed their harness adjusted and you accidentally bumped them in the chest, immediately apologising.
- The teacher and a student were momentarily out of sight while administering refrigerated medication each day.
- Several year 3 students started initiating hugs to you more frequently than appropriate, until you told them you would rather high 5.
- You overheard someone saying to another student that they didn't have enough food on camp, even though you had heard of no issues and there was plenty of food available.
- Some students reported being cold at night even though you had given them all the extra resources you could get.
- You and the teacher thought you smelled cigarette smoke but there was no other evidence.

## APPENDIX E: COMPLAINTS AND INVESTIGATIONS

Reportable conduct will be passed on to appropriate authorities. Their advice will determine whether an internal investigation will proceed. Internal investigations must not interfere with external processes.

If the complaint is **not** reportable conduct:

### 1. Document and Acknowledge

- Complaints will be documented via the online form either directly or by an OEG Child Safety Officer.
- Receipt of complaints that come via the online form or email will be acknowledged within 2 business days.

### 2. Assess and Investigate

- OEG's Chief of People & Culture will assess the nature and seriousness of the complaint.
- Where appropriate, relevant parties will be involved while maintaining confidentiality and child safety.
- Where appropriate, a thorough and impartial investigation will be undertaken. OEG may engage an external investigator.

### 3. Resolve and Respond

- A plan is made to address the complaint and prevent recurrence.
- Where possible, the outcome is communicated to the complainant.

### 4. Follow up

- Situation is monitored to ensure the issue is resolved.
- Complaints will be reviewed regularly for any systematic learnings.