

Applies to	All Intereach workers. For the purpose of this policy, the term worker includes employees, volunteers, students, Family Day Care (FDC) educators and Board members.				
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1. Policy Statement

Intereach is committed to child safety.

- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our workers.
- We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- Intereach is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks.
- Intereach has robust human resources and recruitment practices to reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing workers.
- Intereach is committed to regularly training and educating our workers on child abuse risks
- We have specific policies and procedures in place that support our workers to achieve these commitments.

2. Objective

The objective of this policy is to:

- outline Intereach worker's roles, responsibilities and activities that contribute to creating, maintaining and continuously improving a child safe culture that keeps children and young people safe;
- focus on how we can build and maintain a child safe environment which is inclusive, transparent and promotes children's participation; and,
- empower children, who are vital and active participants at Intereach. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

3. Definitions

- **Child safety concerns** is defined as the safety, welfare and well-being of children and, in particular, protecting them from child abuse. Concerns may be based on disclosures from children or young people, other sources, or from observations, and may relate to a single incident or a series of incidents.
- **Child/children or young person** is defined as person or persons under the age of 18 years.
- **Child abuse and neglect** refers to any behaviour or treatment by parents, caregivers, other adults or older adolescents that results in the actual and/or likelihood of causing physical or emotional harm to a child or young person. Such behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and can include acts of omission (i.e. neglect) and commission (i.e. abuse),

as defined by <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/effects-child-abuse-and-neglect-children-and-adolescents>.

- **Cultural safety** is defined as an environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening.
- **Mandatory reporter** is defined by the legislative requirement for certain professional groups to report reasonable belief of child physical or sexual abuse to child protection authorities:
 - In NSW, mandatory reporting is regulated by the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (the Care Act), for further information go to <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/Protecting-kids/mandatory-reporters/about>; and,
 - In Victoria, mandatory reporting is regulated under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005, for further information go to <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mandatory-reporting>.
- **Child related role** is defined by the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW) as a worker who is engaged in child-related work:
 - the worker is engaged in work that involves direct contact with a child or children and that contact is a usual part of and more than incidental to the work; or,
 - the worker is engaged in work in a child-related role.

4. Responsibilities

Every person involved in Intereach has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

It is the responsibility of managers and nominated supervisors to:

- ensure workers are engaged, trained and supported to act in accordance with this policy;
- ensure that mandatory child protection reports are consistent with legislative definitions and thresholds;
- actively promote cultural safety and inclusion amongst workers; and,
- consult with workers regarding identified child safety concerns that will not receive a statutory response and ensure that relevant referrals are made.

It is the responsibility of workers to:

- take all reasonable steps to protect children and young people from abuse;
- maintain safe and appropriate behaviour when working with children and young people;
- listen to children and young people and respond quickly to child safety concerns identified through disclosure or observation;
- support the active participation of children in the program, activities and services we offer;
- actively participate in training to support their understanding and knowledge in relation to child safety;
- actively participate in the review of all Child Safe documents;
- promptly advise their manager or nominated supervisor of child safety concerns;

- report any allegations and incident to the relevant statutory authority where it is reasonable to believe that physical and/or sexual abuse of a child or young person has occurred or is occurring, in line with legislative reporting definitions and requirements;
- make relevant referrals to support services;
- maintain records of child safety discussions, reports and actions; and,
- seek advice from manager or Nominated Supervisor if support is required to meet any of these responsibilities, particularly in relation to meeting reporting requirement

5. Policy

5.1. Child Safe Standards

The Victorian Child Safe Standards and the NSW Child Safe Standards are compulsory frameworks that support organisations to promote the safety of children by requiring them to implement policies to prevent, respond to and report allegations of child abuse. The Standards inform and guide practice in areas such as:

- Governance and Leadership;
- Empowering Children;
- Involving and informing families and communities;
- Equity and diversity in providing culturally safe and child friendly services;
- Human Resource Practices;
- Responding and Reporting;
- Knowledge, Skills and Awareness;
- Physical and Online Environment;
- Continuous Review and Improvement; and,
- Accurate Documentation and Communication.

Please refer to [Child Safe Standards Victoria](https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards) <<https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards>> or [Child Safe Standards NSW](https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/training-and-resources/child-safe-standards) <<https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/training-and-resources/child-safe-standards>> for detailed information regarding these Standards.

5.2. Child Safe Code of Conduct

A Child Safe Code of Conduct is in place, which establishes guidance on professional boundaries, ethical behaviour, acceptable and unacceptable relationships and lists behaviours that are acceptable and those that are not.

All Intereach workers must agree to abide by our Child Safe Code of Conduct. All workers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Child Safe Code of Conduct.

Workers receive training on the *Intereach Child Safe Code of Conduct* to ensure understanding and their obligations. Training is regularly provided or refreshed annually eg Code of Conduct is collaboratively reviewed annually and staff receive updated training and re-sign to ensure they understand their obligations.

5.3. Recruitment

All people, including volunteers, undergo work checks as part of our recruitment and selection process. Those who are engaged in child-related work and who are not exempt are required to

hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this check, which Intereach will verify.

Pre-employment reference checks are carried out which are reflective of child safety needs and are conducted prior to an offer of employment or engagement in any child related role.

All workers and adults residing in a FDC residence are required to provide a National Criminal History Record Check that is less than six months old prior to appointment or registration. Criminal History Checks are renewed every three years. Criminal History Checks are managed in accordance with the *Intereach Work Check Procedure*.

5.4. Training, support and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone at Intereach understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all workers, families and children to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our workers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our workers through continuing professional development to develop their skills to protect children from abuse and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New workers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand Intereach's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse. This will include checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to *Intereach's Child Safe Code of Conduct* for information about appropriate behaviour). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing or Department of Communities, and Justice, Office of the Children's Guardian (Reportable Conduct Scheme) and the NSW Police or Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

5.5. Allegations, concerns and complaints

Intereach takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our workers are trained to deal with allegations appropriately.

We work to ensure all children, families and workers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place. If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Not reporting suspicions of abuse of a child is an offence.

Factors contributing to reasonable belief may include:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves);
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed;
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it; and,
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Intereach welcome complaints and feedback. take complaints seriously, refer to *Intereach Complaints Policy* for more information.

5.6. Communication

- We will hold regular information sessions for workers.
- Our policy will be discussed during induction sessions for all new workers.
- Children and parents joining our program/s will receive information on Child Protection. which may include a copy of the Policy, *Child Safe Code of Conduct* and *Complaint Policy*.
- Relevant information will be communicated in an accessible format for the target audience.
- We adopt a variety of communication strategies within our services to ensure child safe expectations are practiced and understood by our workers.

5.7. Documentation

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be workers, families or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety.

Records will be stored in accordance with confidentiality and privacy principles in appropriately restricted areas. Records relating to pre-employment checks, investigations and any other sensitive child protection matters shall be stored under secure electronic format.

Under Freedom of Information legislation, a person has the legal right to obtain access to information held as records by Intereach including information on relevant employment proceedings. Where personal records are inaccurate, amendments may be requested. If access is denied or an amendment is refused there is an appeal process.

5.8. Review

This Policy will be reviewed every two years and involve feedback from all stakeholders.

5.9. Breach of Policy

Failing to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action and/or termination of employment or engagement with Intereach and will be managed in accordance with the relevant organisational and/or program specific policies and procedures.

6. Context	
6.1. Standards or other external requirements	<p>Australian Human Rights Commission, National Principles for Child Safety</p> <p>Department of Communities and Justice (NSW)</p> <p>NSW Office of Children's Guardian</p> <p>Child Safe Standards (NSW)</p> <p>Department of Families Fairness and Housing (Vic)</p> <p>Child Safe Standards 2015 (Vic)</p>
6.2. Legislation or other requirements	<p>Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (Cth) - clauses 84</p> <p>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)</p> <p>Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)</p> <p>Crimes Act 1900 (NSW)</p> <p>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)</p> <p>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)</p> <p>Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)</p> <p>Failure to Disclose 2014 (Vic)</p> <p>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)</p> <p>Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)</p> <p>Freedom of information Act 1982 (Cth)</p>
6.3. Reference Internal documents	<p>Child Protection Procedure</p> <p>Work Check Procedure</p> <p>Domestic and Family Violence Policy</p> <p>Privacy Policy</p> <p>Recruitment and Selection Policy</p> <p>Code of Conduct Policy</p> <p>Child Safe Code of Conduct</p> <p>Complaint Policy</p> <p>Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy</p> <p>Children's Services Children's Health and Safety</p> <p>Children's Services FDC Educator Registration, Monitoring and Support Procedure</p> <p>Children's Services Fit and Proper Assessment of FDC Educators Procedure</p>

7. Document control			
Version	Date approved	Approved by	Next review date
1.0	December 2014	Combined Leadership Group	December 2017

2.0	December 2016	Combined Leadership Group	December 2019
3.0	December 2017	Leadership Governance Group	December 2019
4.0	09/10/2019	Leadership Governance Group	09/10/2022
5.0	03/11/2020	C. Holness, Senior Manager, WHS and Quality	03/11/2023
6.0	14/04/2021	Senior Leadership Governance Group and Board	14/04/2023
7.0	8/09/2021	Senior Leadership Governance Group and Board	8/09/2023