

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES		
(CSE1/12)	<b>CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENTS POLICY</b>	
GIRL GUIDES SOUTH AUSTRALIA		

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### iii. Contents

1. Definitions and Abbreviations	1
2. Policy Statement	2
3. Purpose	2
4. Scope	2
5. Objectives	3
6. Policy Details	3
7. Roles and Responsibilities	8
8. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review	9
9. Appeals and Complaints	9
10. Associated Documents	9

## 1. Definitions and Abbreviations

- 1.1. Refer to the Girl Guides South Australia Definitions of Terms for standard Girl Guides South Australia terminology.

## 2. Policy Statement

- 2.1. Girls Guides South Australia recognises that children should be protected from situations which would jeopardise their welfare and safety.
- 2.2. Girl Guides South Australia is bound by State government legislation regarding the provision of services for children. Members of Girl Guides South Australia who operate in New South Wales (Broken Hill) will be bound by that States legislation as indicated in this document.
- 2.3. Girl Guides South Australia is committed to creating child safe environments that promote learning and enjoyment.

## 3. Purpose

- 3.1. The purpose of this policy is to describe the broad roles and responsibilities of staff<sup>1</sup>, members and volunteers towards youth members, and to ensure our core values, good reputation, positive behaviours and attitudes are protected and maintained. Specifically, the responsibilities Girl Guides South Australia staff, members and volunteers have:
  - 3.1.1. towards the safety and wellbeing of children and young people,
  - 3.1.2. towards any records which may be kept in relation to children and young people, and
  - 3.1.3. in enabling and supporting those responsibilities and ensuring they are met.

## 4. Scope

- 4.1. This policy applies to staff and volunteers working for Girl Guides South Australia aged 18 years or older, whether or not they are members of the organisation who have 'regular contact' or are 'in close proximity on a regular basis' with youth members:
  - 4.1.1. 'Regular contact' or 'in close proximity on a regular basis' means contact that has a constant or definitive pattern or which recurs at short uniform intervals or on several occasions during short periods of time such as a week (for example: regular unit meetings).
  - 4.1.2. This may mean a person volunteering or working for a short-term event or activity of less than 10 days duration or for more than 1 day in any month.
  - 4.1.3. In addition to clauses 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 of this policy, if there is any overnight contact (i.e. camps, sleepovers etc.), all adults must have a criminal history assessment prior to such contact.
- 4.2. This policy applies to staff, members and volunteers who have access to records kept by Girl Guides South Australia on its youth members.
- 4.3. This policy will continue to apply to individuals following termination of their association with Girl Guides South Australia should disciplinary action relating to an allegation of child/vulnerable adult abuse against that/those individual/s be commenced.
- 4.4. If any staff, members or volunteers are unsure whether this policy applies to them, they must seek clarification in writing from the State Commissioner.

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<sup>1</sup> A person is employed by the organisation if they are employed, contracted, subcontracted, acting as an agent of, or volunteering for, a relevant organisation.

## 5. Objectives

- 5.1. This policy is designed to ensure that Girl Guides South Australia staff, members and volunteers contribute to youth members safety and wellbeing in the following ways:
- 5.1.1. Volunteers provide safe, respectful and engaging environments where girls and young women observe and are taught positive life skills and values through the Australian Guide Program. This helps girls and young women to:
    - i. develop and expect positive relationships with others,
    - ii. be resilient and resourceful in dealing with stress and adversity, and
    - iii. achieve their potential.
  - 5.1.2. Volunteers recognise when girls and young women's wellbeing or safety is being compromised and they follow up on these concerns. This helps ensure that:
    - i. timely and relevant information is gathered and shared with other professionals,
    - ii. unsuitable individuals are not retained on Girl Guides South Australia sites or services,
    - iii. girls and young women and their families are directed to support when they first show signs of needing it, and
    - iv. fewer girls and young women are harmed by violence, abuse and neglect occurring within or outside their family environment.
  - 5.1.3. Volunteers understand that the needs of girls and young women who have been harmed through violence, abuse or neglect may require them to adapt their programs and support accordingly. This means that:
    - i. girls and young women affected by violence, abuse and neglect are more likely to stay connected to Girl Guides South Australia, and
    - ii. the experience contributes to their recovery and their development of positive coping skills and learning success.
- 5.2. Through this policy, Girl Guides South Australia is demonstrating its commitment to maintaining the safety and wellbeing of all members.

## 6. Policy Details

### 6.1. Child protection

#### 6.1.1. Abuse of a child

Child abuse is illegal in all Australian States and Territories. Girl Guides South Australia requires that anyone who reasonably suspects that a child has been or is being abused, to immediately report it to the Child Abuse Report Hotline on 13 14 78. Within Girl Guides South Australia, the State Manager or State Commissioner should also be advised.

- 6.1.2. Girl Guides South Australia supports the rights of the child and will act without hesitation to ensure a safe environment is maintained at all times.

**All allegations of child abuse will be dealt with promptly, seriously, sensitively and confidentially.**

A person will not be victimised for reporting an allegation of child abuse; the privacy of all persons concerned will be respected. Procedures for handling allegations of abuse are available in the GGSA Procedural Manual.

- 6.1.3. Girl Guides South Australia supports the rights of our volunteers and encourages their active participation in building and maintaining a secure environment for all participants.
- 6.2. **Identify and analyse risk of harm**
  - 6.2.1. Girl Guides South Australia will develop, maintain and implement risk management strategies to ensure compliance with the Child Protection Act 1993 as amended.
  - 6.2.2. This policy, its associated documents and other Girl Guides South Australia policies will form part of the organisations risk management strategy.
- 6.3. **Maintain codes of conduct for adults and children**
  - 6.3.1. Youth members and adult members must abide by the values and behaviours laid out in the Girl Guides Australia Promise and Law.
  - 6.3.2. Staff, members and volunteers must ensure their behaviour is consistent with:
    - i. the Code of Conduct, as laid out in Guide Lines, and
    - ii. section 8.16 of Guide Lines “Valuing Diversity”.
  - 6.3.3. Staff, members and volunteers should be aware that the success of the Australian Guide Program is due to the modelling of expected behaviours by adults and therefore must lead by example.
- 6.4. **Choose suitable volunteers and employees**
  - 6.4.1. Girl Guides South Australia will take all reasonable steps, including but not limited to those identified in this policy and the associated documents, to ensure that it engages suitable and appropriate people to work with youth members.
  - 6.4.2. Suitability will be assessed through a range of screening processes, including but not limited to a criminal history assessment.
  - 6.4.3. Girl Guides South Australia will ensure that any person whose criminal history assessment is considered unacceptable is notified as soon as possible and is provided with details of how to lodge an appeal. Until the appeal decision is made, the individual’s involvement in any guiding activities is suspended although their membership of the organisation will be allowed to continue.
- 6.5. **Support, Train, Supervise and Enhance Performance**
  - 6.5.1. Girl Guides South Australia will ensure that staff, members and volunteers, who work with children or their records, have ongoing supervision, support and training such that their performance is developed and enhanced to promote the establishment and maintenance of a child safe environment.
- 6.6. **Criminal History Assessments**
  - 6.6.1. All staff, members and volunteers identified by this policy, with the exception of individuals operating in NSW under the auspices of Girl Guides South Australia, are required to undergo a criminal history assessment at a

maximum period of three years, or at other times as requested by the State Manager or State Commissioner. For NSW staff, members or volunteers, a Working With Children Check must be undertaken instead.

- 6.6.2. Both criminal history assessments and Working With Children checks must be completed before individuals commence work with children. If necessary, start dates should be postponed until the assessment is completed.
- 6.6.3. Where appropriate, the State Manager or State Commissioner may choose to request a criminal history assessment is undertaken by a CrimTrac accredited agency. In these cases, informed consent<sup>2</sup> will be required by the individual prior to lodging a request for an assessment. Costs incurred during this process will be met by the individual.
- 6.6.4. Girl Guides South Australia is committed to procedural fairness.
- i. The individual must be given the opportunity to confirm their identity and the accuracy of any associated criminal history report (or alternatively the right to dispute the contents of a criminal history report) and any other information or references, and for this information to be considered.
  - ii. The individual should be given the opportunity to provide further information, such as the details of the conviction or offence, the circumstances surrounding the offence and other information and references, before the assessment takes place.
  - iii. Additional ways an individual may be afforded procedural fairness are by being:
    - informed of any proposed decision to be made about them;
    - provided with the rationale for the proposed decision; and
    - given the right to have a full criminal history assessment decision reviewed by an independent body.
  - iv. Current employees who are deemed ineligible to work with children, based on their criminal history, have a right of reply unless statutory exemptions specify otherwise.
  - v. In all cases, the State Manager or State Commissioner must act fairly and impartially.
- 6.6.5. Where appropriate, the State Manager or State Commissioner may choose to seek advice or guidance from the Board of Girl Guides South Australia prior to making a decision on an individual's criminal history assessment. Any referral to the Board will be dealt with under confidential conditions.
- 6.6.6. Individuals must notify the State Manager and/or the State Commissioner of any change in their criminal history in writing and as it occurs.
- 6.7. **Mandatory Notification (Responding to and Reporting Abuse/Neglect)**
- 6.7.1. All staff, members and volunteers who work with children are mandated notifiers, under the Children's Protection Act 1993 as amended, and have a legal obligation to report any suspected child abuse and/or neglect.

The law protects any person making a Child Abuse report based on reasonable grounds from receiving threats, intimidation or unreasonable treatment.

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<sup>2</sup> Informed consent is provided using the form on the DFC website ([www.dfc.sa.gov.au/pub/screening](http://www.dfc.sa.gov.au/pub/screening))

- 6.7.2. Where a member of staff, adult member of the association or volunteer is required to make a Child Abuse report, appropriate debriefing will be made available to them. Should an individual (including youth and adult members) express that the impact of witnessing or listening to reports of child abuse is having a negative impact on their physical or mental health, a list of suitable counselling services and relevant agencies will be made available to them.
- 6.7.3. In order to ensure that staff, members and volunteers are able to identify child abuse and/or neglect as well as know how to make a report, Child Safe Environments training, which are accredited by Families SA, will be run by Girl Guides South Australia on a regular basis.
- i. All those affected by this policy should attend a Girl Guides South Australia training (2 hour information session), or equivalent course provided by an accredited training provider, within 6-12 months of commencing their work with Girl Guides South Australia.
  - ii. Proof of attendance at a session should be provided to the Training Manager for recording on the member database.
  - iii. A written request for an individual to attend a session may be made by the State Manager or State Commissioner at any time.
- 6.8. **Monitor and report (Lodge compliance statement)**
- 6.8.1. Staff, members and volunteers will provide all information required to report on the organisations compliance with the Child Protection Act 1993 as amended within the timeframes provided by the State Manager.
- 6.8.2. The State Manager will collate data and reports on the compliance of staff, members and volunteers with this policy and the Child Protection Act 1993 as amended.
- 6.9. **Supervision**
- 6.9.1. Staff, members and volunteers will:
- i. maintain appropriate ratios of adults to youth members during unit activities as laid out in section 2.8.2 of Guide Lines.
  - ii. maintain appropriate ratios of adults to youth members during camps as laid out in section 5.1.1 of Guide Lines.
  - iii. adhere to the requirement that there must be at least two adults present at any Unit activity including at least one qualified Leader or, if that is not possible, a provisional Leader who has completed the minimum requirements of Girl Guides Australia.
- 6.10. **Access to records**
- 6.10.1. Access to records relating to youth members will be tightly controlled.
- 6.10.2. Girl Guides South Australia will retain appropriate records to demonstrate their compliance with the Child Protection Act 1993 as amended. Appropriate records include:
- i. confirmation that a criminal history report was obtained, and
  - ii. evidence of the decision-making process.

- 6.10.3. Girl Guides South Australia will not retain an individual's criminal history information once an assessment has been made regarding their suitability to work with children.
- 6.10.4. Information will be stored securely and confidentially.

## 6.11. Privacy

### 6.11.1. Taking of images of children

Images of children can be used inappropriately or illegally. At the time of becoming a member, Girl Guides South Australia requires all members to indicate their willingness for images of them to be taken and possibly made available to members of the organisation or the general public through publicity activities. Permission can also be granted or rescinded later by writing to the State Manager, or by completing a media consent form.

If Girl Guides South Australia uses an image of a child it will avoid naming or identifying the child, or it will, wherever possible, avoid using both the first name and surname unless prior permission is granted.

Girl Guides South Australia and its members will only use appropriate images of a child which are relevant to Guiding and will ensure that the child is suitably clothed and where possible in uniform.

This policy also applies to the use of images of youth members in social media. More information is available in the Girl Guides Australia Social Media Policy. (or GGSA guideline, depending on when approval of the policy is given)

### 6.11.2. Personal information

Personal information such as residential addresses, email addresses or telephone numbers will not be displayed without gaining consent from the parent/guardian.

Details of hobbies, likes/dislikes, school, etc. will not be displayed as this information can be used as grooming tools by paedophiles or other persons.

### 6.11.3. Physical privacy

Girl Guides South Australia requires the privacy of all members to be respected and does not allow the use of camera phones, videos, cameras and other photo taking devices inside changing areas, showers and toilets.

## 6.12. Transportation

- 6.12.1. Staff, members and volunteers will adhere to section 8.15 of Guide Lines in relation to the transport of youth members for the purposes of Guide activities.
- 6.12.2. Only staff, members and volunteers who have undertaken a criminal history assessment will provide transport for youth members organised by Unit Leaders for the purposes of participating in Guiding activities.
- 6.12.3. Any arrangements undertaken by individual families/carers to provide transport are not governed by this policy.

## 7. Roles and Responsibilities

Parties	Responsibilities
7.1. State Commissioner and State Manager	<p>Oversee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The implementation of this policy and to monitor and manage all associated risks.</li> </ul> <p>Ensure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Approved staff child protection training programs are provided across the paid and volunteer workforce on a regular basis.</li> <li>– Allegations against staff, members and volunteers are investigated in a timely and procedurally fair manner and by appropriately trained and supported personnel.</li> <li>– Investigations are conducted with the interests of girls as the paramount consideration.</li> <li>– Criminal history screening processes are maintained to meet policy or legislated requirements.</li> <li>– Risks to the organisation regarding its compliance with this policy are identified and addressed.</li> <li>– Issues identified as impediments to the protection of girls safety and wellbeing are responded to and raised to the Board as appropriate.</li> </ul> <p>Monitor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The management and movement of staff, members and volunteers whose conduct has compromised girls or young women’s wellbeing or the reputation of the organisation.</li> </ul> <p>Manage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Whole of system reviews of serious critical incidents and actioning of subsequent recommendations.</li> <li>– Criminal history assessments of staff, members and volunteers as required.</li> </ul>
7.2. Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Act in accordance with the requirements outlined in this policy.</li> <li>– Raise concerns when impediments to the protection of children and young people’s safety and wellbeing are identified.</li> <li>– Ensure they have an approved current criminal history assessment.</li> </ul>

<b>Parties</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
7.3. Region Leaders	<p>Enable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Region members and volunteers to fulfil their roles in providing services to children and young people identified as needing additional support</li> </ul> <p>Provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Support to members and volunteers experiencing difficulties in maintaining safe and respectful environments.</li> </ul> <p>Address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Performance issues - as they relate to meeting the requirements of this policy - with members and volunteers in the region.</li> </ul> <p>Raise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Concerns to the State Commissioner when impediments to protecting children’s safety and wellbeing are identified</li> </ul>
7.4. Members and Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Act in accordance with the instruction and advice of the approved child protection training for volunteers</li> <li>– Undertake a criminal history assessment as required by Girl Guides South Australia</li> </ul>

## **8. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

- 8.1. Unit and District Leaders will provide ongoing monitoring of their Units compliance with this policy and may be required to provide reports to the State Manager or State Commissioner.
- 8.2. Region Leaders will monitor the reports provided by Unit Leaders (as outlined in 7.1), support sites and services to address gaps in compliance and advise the State Commissioner and the State Manager as required.
- 8.3. The State Commissioner and the State Manager will ensure the designated parties outlined in clause 7 of this policy maintain oversight of the policy’s relevance, its alignment with legislation and national standards and will amend the policy as appropriate.
- 8.4. The State Manager will provide information on the organisations Child Safe Environments Policy and associated training as well as data as requested by the Department of Education and Child Development to the relevant authority.

## **9. Appeals and Complaints**

Grievances arising from the operation of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with the Girl Guides South Australia Appeals Policy.

## **10. Associated Documents**

- 10.1. **Girl Guides Australia Policies and Guide Lines**

- 10.1.1. Guide Lines (including the Girl Guides Australia Promise and Law and the Code of Conduct)
- 10.1.2. Social Media Policy (currently in draft form)
- 10.2. **Girl Guides South Australia Documentation<sup>3</sup>**
  - 10.2.1. Child Safe Environments Procedures
  - 10.2.2. Child Safe Environment Risk Management Strategy (when available)
  - 10.2.3. Definition of terms
  - 10.2.4. Appeals Policy

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that documents listed in the 'Associated Documents' section were in draft form at the time of approval of this policy. These documents will come into effect in the months following approval of this policy, which does not need to be updated until a scheduled or ad hoc review is carried out.