



Mailing: P.O.Box 19
Balaclava 3183

p: 1300 785 593

www.friendshipcircle.org.au
info@friendshipcircle.org.au

POLICY AIMS, SCOPE AND OBJECTIVE

Friendship Circle is committed to providing a safe environment for all participants, staff and volunteers of our various programmes. Anyone involved with Friendship Circle has a right to

- A safe and secure environment and quality care which is appropriate to his or her needs;
- Be treated with dignity and respect without abuse or neglect, exploitation, discrimination or victimization;
- Personal privacy;
- Be treated and accepted as an individual, and to have his or her individual preferences taken into account and treated with respect;
- Maintain his or her personal independence;
- Be involved in the activities, associations and friendships of his or her choice,
- Have access to services and activities which are offered by the organisation to children;
- Complain and to take action to resolve disputes;
- Have access to advocates and to other avenues of redress; and
- Be free from reprisals, or a well-founded fear of reprisal, in any form for taking action to enforce his or her rights.

This policy is applicable throughout our programmes which include but are not exclusive to Sunday Circle Programme

- Home Visitation and Buddy Programme
- Camps
- Sibling Programmes

The policy aims to reduce the risk of Abuse occurring, and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken should Abuse occur.

Child abuse takes a variety of forms, which can become apparent to us whilst working with participants and their families. This policy is designed to give all staff, volunteers and families the guidelines for dealing with all forms of abuse.



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DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

Child Abuse, a single or repeated act, occurring in any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to a child.

Physical Abuse, any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as:

- Hitting, punching, kicking (marks from belt buckles, fingers), shaking, burning (irons, cigarettes), biting, pulling out hair, alcohol and/or other drug administration.

Sexual Abuse, any assault or abuse of a sexual nature, sexual molestation, indecent exposure, sexual harassment or intimidation.

Emotional Abuse, the chronic attitude or behaviour of one person which is directed at another person, or, the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a person's self-esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include:

- Insulting, bullying, devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or other extreme acts in the aged or vulnerable person's presence.

Neglect, characterised by the failure to provide for basic needs. Any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a person's health or development. There are some behaviours which whilst not defined as abuse are discussed in the code of conduct and are unacceptable at Friendshipcircle programmes. These include but are not restricted to

- Inappropriate conversation of a sexual nature.
- Suggestive gestures or remarks.
- Inappropriate touching.
- Inappropriate literature.
- Recording or filming with or without prior consent.
- Acts of violence committed by an Employee, Member, Volunteer, Contractor or Visitor in the course of an activity.

These behaviours are taken seriously by Australian Friendship Circle and any incidents reported will warrant internal investigation.



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DEFINING AUSTRALIAN FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

Organisation – Australian Friendship Circle c/o 2 Vadhure Avenue, St Kilda East 3183

Staff – Anyone employed by Australian Friendship Circle in any capacity including directors; coordinators and administrative staff.

Volunteers – Non paid personnel who staff events and work directly with children and their families.

Participant – Anyone who attends our programmes.

Casual Employee – Anyone hired to provide an entertainment activity or programme to the participants.

Child – Anyone under the age of 18

SELECTION & SCREENING

Staff Members

Prior to beginning work with friendship circle the organisation will ensure the following has taken place:

- All staff will have been interviewed by at least one director.
- All staff will be required to provide the names of 2 references and a reference check will be made
- The staff member will receive training relevant to their job. references.
- All staff will be provided with a copy of this policy prior to starting work
- All staff will have a valid WWCC.

Casual Employees

Before a casual employee comes to work at Friendship Circle the organisation will ensure that the following is in place:



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- The person / company has been fully briefed as to the requirements of the job being done and to the specific needs of the participants
- All people coming to work with the organisation in any capacity where they work directly with participants and children will have a valid WWCC..

Volunteers

All volunteers who express an interest in working with Friendship Circle will need to do the following before they are able to work with any participant or attend any programme

- They will fill out an application form and sign a code of conduct
- They will be given copies of the guidelines relating to physical contact; personal care; photos and online safety
- They will be interviewed by a member of staff
- They will need to provide names of 2 references and a reference check will be made
- They will attend training relevant to the programme/s they are helping with
- They will be shown a copy of this policy and understand all implications of it
- All volunteers over 18 will need to apply for a WWCC.

In all the above categories, if the Organisation has identified that an applicant has previously committed a violent or sexually related offence or where there is reasonable evidence surrounding an applicant, they cannot, under any circumstances, be considered for employment or engagement with Friendship Circle.

A Safe Environment

The participants attending Australian Friendship circle are all children or vulnerable people. To ensure there is a safe environment at all times we have the following policies to complement this one. The relevant parts of these are included in the volunteers code of conduct.



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- PHYSICAL CONTACT POLICY
- PERSONAL CARE / TOILETING POLICY
- ONLINE/ SOCIAL MEDIA SAFETY POLICY
- BULLYING POLICY.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

Concerns about a participant / child

Friendship Circle Melbourne actively encourages all staff and volunteers to report any concerns they may have about a child or participant to the director of services. This report can be made directly or via their immediate line manager. All reports will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately. The details of those reporting abuse will at all times be kept private and confidential.

Concerns about inappropriate behaviour from a staff member; casual employee or volunteer

Participant's families, volunteers, staff members and other participants are urged to feel comfortable to speak to one of the directors about any concerns they may have in this regard. These concerns will be taken seriously and investigated accordingly. Actions taken by the organisation may include the following depending on the severity of the allegation

- The automatic suspension from all work or other duties within Friendship circle for the duration of any internal or external investigations.
- Appropriate reports made to the police
- The automatic termination of their employment, or involvement with Friendship Circle if found guilty of committing abuse, either by internal investigation or by a court.

All disclosures or concerns of abuse will be documented accordingly and the person within the organisation responsible is the Director of Services. This person will ensure that all



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persons involved with the organisation are aware of this policy and their role with regards safeguarding.

Alcohol & Drugs

The consumption of alcohol, cigarettes or illegal drugs by staff or volunteers whilst attending any friendship circle programme is strictly prohibited. Anyone found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs will be sent home from that particular programme and the incident will be reported to the director of services.

Any participant required to take prescription medication administered by staff or volunteers will need to ensure it has been discussed with the director of services in advance and that the prescription is current.