



## Child Safe policy

### POLICY

Our policy guides workers (paid and volunteer) on how to behave when interacting and engaging with children supported by Ungooroo Aboriginal Community (hereafter referred to as UAC). This policy focuses on how we can build and maintain a child safe environment which is inclusive, transparent and promotes children's participation. All Directors and staff and foster carers must sign this Child Safe policy to indicate that they understand and have received a copy of the Child Safe Policy and other policies related to child safety including the Child Protection: Identifying and Responding to Harm and Risk of Harm and Managing Allegations against Employees.

All Directors, staff and carers will sign a Code of conduct when engaged by UAC as part of the onboarding process.

The policy and guidelines will be reviewed every two years and incorporate comments and suggestions from our range of stakeholders (including workers, children and families).

The *Children's Guardian Act 2019* commenced on 1 March 2020 to give the Children's Guardian greater powers to help organisations create safer environments for children in NSW.

The new Act consolidates the Children's Guardian's functions for registration or accreditation and monitoring of voluntary and statutory out-of-home care agencies as well as regulating children's employment in the entertainment industry.

The new Act also extends the Children's Guardian's functions to include the Community Visitor Scheme (relating to children and young people) and an expanded Reportable Conduct Scheme, which transfer to the Office of the Children's Guardian from the NSW Ombudsman.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **1. Children's Participation**

Our organisation supports the active participation of children in the programs, activities and services we offer. We provide a range of ways to allow children to provide feedback or raise concerns. We listen to their views, respect what they say and involve them when we make decisions, especially about matters that will directly affect them.

### **2. Recruitment**

UAC maintains a rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening and selection process for support workers and staff.

UAC achieves this by:

- Ensuring all staff have appropriate qualification, personal qualities, skills and experience to perform their role
- Implementing strategies to recruit staff culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Ensuring all recruitment practices comply with legislation and industry requirement
- Conducting Interviews will be conducted for all potential employees
- As part of the interview process conducting 2 referee checks
- Verifying each staff member's Working with Children's Check details and maintaining records of those checks
- Managing instances where staff or carers receive a Working with Children's Check bar or interim bar
- Conducting National Criminal Record checks for all Board Members, CEO, carers and staff
- Ensuring the Carer/Worker Register is current
- Ensuring employment records are maintained which includes personal details, employment history, supervision and any allegations of complaints or grievance. These files are to be stored securely and treated confidentially.
- Ensuring carer files are maintained

- Ensuring new staff member attends induction and orientation upon employment
- Ensuring all staff and carers area aware of their right to access their file upon request

### **3. Complaints management and reporting**

- UAC values and appreciates all complaints and feedback from children and young people and their families as these assist us to develop better services. All complaints will be recorded and will be used to improve existing services and in planning new services. All complaints will be treated in a manner which upholds the principles of fairness and confidentiality.
- UAC supports the rights of all children and young people with an interest to make complaints. People with an interest could include a child or young person, family member, friend, staff member or another service provider.
- UAC supports the rights of all people with an interest to pursue any complaint in relation to services received, and to do so without any fear of retaliation, disadvantage, or of services being discontinued.
- UAC will ensure that all children and young people are enabled to nominate a contact person within the organization with whom they can communicate and correspond in relation to complaints and their resolution. UAC will also support the right of children and young people to lodge complaints with an external agency such as the Office of the Children Guardian or Department of Communities and Justice.
- UAC will ensure that the Feedback and Complaints policy and procedure is visible and accessible to all children and young people and will also provide them with information including contact details about other external support agencies that may assist with complaint resolution if required.
- UAC will develop resources or have complaints information available for children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- UAC is committed to resolving all complaints efficiently and fairly. Children and young people have a right to request an internal review of decisions. Reasons for such decisions will be provided in writing on request.

- If any person with an interest is not satisfied with the manner in which UAC has managed a complaint, they should contact a senior member of the organization such as the Operations Manager. They can also contact an external agency who can assist with complaint resolution.
- All complaints received by UAC will be fully documented and every effort will be made to resolve the matter within four (4) weeks of the commencement of the investigation component of the complaint. The complaint management process will be conducted in an environment of openness, accountability and service improvement. Sufficient resources will be allocated to ensure that all complaints are adequately managed and investigated. If UAC is unable to resolve a complaint to the satisfaction of the parties involved, the matter will be referred to an agreed external agency for resolution or mediation.
- UAC will ensure that staff members are trained in complaint management and specifically in the application of this policy and procedure. UAC will ensure that only suitably qualified/trained staff members will manage the investigation of complaints.
- Children and young people will receive training and support if required to understand their right to make a complaint and to understand the complaint management process.
- UAC will meet all obligations where it is required to formally report complaints annually to agencies such as State or Federal statutory bodies including the Office of the Children's Guardian.
- The CEO of UAC is the appointed Child Safety Contact Person to manage all complaints. When they receive a complaint, he/she will be responsible for coordinating the complaint management process through to resolution. When a complaint is received, the CEO will respond to the complainant within five (5) working days to discuss the complaint further. The response can be made in person, by a phone-call, email or letter. The response should include advice around the following:
  - Who will be investigating the complaint.
  - Possible timeframe for resolution; and
  - When the next contact with the complainant will be made.

- A person who has raised a concern about suspected wrongdoing or made a formal complaint, has the right to continue to work in a discreet, safe and collegiate environment without the threat of intimidation, judgement or victimisation. Some investigations are subject to particular legislative requirements (e.g. reportable allegations or WHS incidents) and these must be adhered to during any investigation process.
- Determine the nature of the investigation -this includes determining whether it is about:
  - policies, procedures and practices, or
  - conduct of individuals.
  - the nature of the investigation has a bearing on the expertise required, and the nature of the possible outcome. At this stage, a decision should be made as to whether the complaint needs to be investigated internally or should be referred to an external investigator

#### **4. Training support and supervision of workers**

UAC promotes respect, fairness and consideration for all workers. As part of this process all workers have a more senior worker assigned to support and supervise their work.

At commencement of employment all new workers receive a copy of all child safe policies and procedures and the Manger will ensure that they have the opportunity to ask questions and clarify their understanding of these.

Child safe practices is a standing agenda item at meetings and workers are encouraged to ask questions and contribute to the continuous improvement of child safe policies, procedures, and practices in the workplace.

#### **5. Communication**

UAC will hold regular carer meetings which provide information and resources for them to support them in their role.

All children and young people accessing UAC services will receive a copy of the Complaints Policy.

All staff, volunteers, carers and Board members will sign this policy to demonstrate that they are aware of, and understand the requirements, related to child protection and child safety.

## DOCUMENTATION

Documents related to this policy	
Legislation and Cross-Reference	NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2012 NSW Children's Guardian Act 2019 NSW Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 NSW Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013 NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care (2015)
Forms, record keeping or other organisational documents	Recruitment Policy Disciplinary Policy Codes of Conduct Vision, Values and Aims Statement Complaints and allegations policy Training Support and Supervision policy

**Date of Policy:** March 2021

**For review:** March 2023

**Version:** 1

I understand that I have received, am aware of and understand the Child Safe Policy and other policies related to child safety including the Child Protection: Identifying and Responding to Harm and Risk of Harm and Managing Allegations against Employees.

Name	Position	Signature	Date