
Child Safe Policy

Higher Swing is a child safe organisation.

Our Child Safe Policy demonstrates the strong commitment Higher Swing has to creating and maintaining child-safe and child-friendly environments and is designed to ensure all employees and Community Partners are aware of their responsibilities and commitment to child safety.

Our mission is to create communities where families are psychologically safe, healthy, and thriving. Therefore, it is important to Higher Swing that children and young people are in a safe environment when involved in Higher Swing programs and activities and this informs our Child Safe Policy and Procedures.

A *child* is defined as a person up to the age of 16 and a *young person* from 17 to 18 years. This policy is relevant to all children and young people under 18 years of age who access Higher Swing programs.

Our Statement of Commitment

All children and young people have a right to feel safe, and to be safe at all times. Higher Swing will not tolerate any abuse or neglect of children or young people involved with our programs. We are committed to creating environments that are child safe and child friendly. We respect and value the rights of all children and young people and support them to reach their full potential.

We recognise that particular consideration needs to be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. We also acknowledge the particular needs of children and young people arising from their cultural and linguistic background, sexuality, gender diversity, disability, or as a result of domestic and family violence or other trauma.

Safeguarding children and young people is the responsibility of all Higher Swing employees, Community Partners, and volunteers. Higher Swing demonstrates a commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by:

- Taking all allegations or disclosures of abuse or neglect seriously, responding appropriately, and reporting concerns to the relevant authorities.
- Empowering children, young people, families and communities to participate in decisions that affect their lives.
- Valuing diversity and promoting inclusive practices.

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- Employing and engaging only people who are suitable to work with children and young people and providing high-quality supervision and support.
- Ensuring young people who feel unsafe or wish to raise a concern know who to talk with and feel comfortable doing so.
- Educating employees, Community Partners, volunteers and families with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe, including how children and young people maintain their own personal safety, as appropriate or as required.
- Embedding Child Safe principles within our quality assurance practices.
- Continuously reviewing and improving our systems and practices to protect children and young people from abuse.

Our Code of Conduct

Communicates the values and attitudes of Higher Swing on the issue of child safety and child-safe environments.

- Identifies appropriate and inappropriate behaviours.
- Guides Higher Swing's expectations regarding attitudes, responsibilities, behaviours, and partnerships.
- Is provided to employees and Community Partners during onboarding.

Participation and empowerment of children and young people

- Higher Swing will seek to ensure that all children and young people are actively involved in the activities and services we offer.
- Higher Swing provides a range of ways to allow children and young people and their parents/carers to provide feedback or raise concerns.
- Higher Swing listens to what children and young people and their parents/carers say and involves them in decisions that affect them.
- Higher Swing will make its relevant policies and procedures clear to Community Partners and families, so they know how to report concerns.

Partnerships and employee engagement

Higher Swing will maintain thorough and consistent recruitment, screening and engagement processes. This process requires that:

- A formal interview is undertaken for all candidates directly employed by Higher Swing involving contact with children;

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- All employees, Community Partners and volunteers working with children have a current Working with Children Check (WWCC) relevant to the state or territory the child resides.
- All Community Partners have their own Child Safe Policy or completed the Child Safe Organisation e-learning model by the Office of the Children's Guardian.
- All employees, Community Partners and volunteers are informed of the priority.
- Higher Swing has in relation to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and mandatory reporting responsibilities.
- Job descriptions or duty statements provide a clear understanding of the expectations and accountability of employees and volunteers in regard to child safety.

Support, supervision, performance review, and professional development

- Higher Swing is committed to ensuring that employees have development and ongoing training in child safety issues at least annually.
- All new employees, Community Partners, and volunteers will be given an overview of our Child Safe Policy and ongoing information and updates regarding changes announced by the Office of the Children's Guardian.

Incident management and reporting concerns

As an organisation who facilitates Community Partners working with children and young people, we are committed to helping keep children safe.

- Incident reporting procedures are made clear to all employees in Higher Swing and shared with Community Partners working with children and young people.
- In an emergency, or if there are grounds for having immediate, serious concerns about the safety of a child or young person, Community Partners are advised to contact the police.
- Mandatory reporters are required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities. All Community Partners who deliver services to children and young people, and those in management positions in their organisation, are Mandatory Reporters.
- All mandatory reporters must make a report to Communities and Justice (DCJ) when they have current concerns about the safety, welfare and wellbeing of a child for any of the following reasons:
 - the basic physical or psychological needs of the child or young person are not being met (neglect)
 - the parents or caregivers have not arranged necessary medical care for the child or young person (unwilling or unable to do so)
 - the parents or caregivers have not arranged for the child or young person to receive an education in accordance with the Education Act 1990 (unwilling or unable to do so)

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- risk of physical or sexual abuse or ill-treatment
- parent or caregiver's behaviour towards the child causes or risks serious psychological harm (emotional abuse)
- incidents of domestic violence and as a consequence, a child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm (domestic or family violence)
- the child was the subject of a prenatal report and the birth mother did not engage successfully with support services.

Protective behaviours and practices

- All employees, Community Partners and volunteers understand that children and young people learn through example, and role modelling is an important strategy we use to educate about appropriate and protective behaviours.
- Higher Swing's programs and activities involve supporting young people to develop communication strategies that empower them to speak up when they are feeling uncomfortable or vulnerable.
- All employees, Community Partners and volunteers listen to young peoples' views and respect what they have to say.

Communicating with different stakeholders

Community Partners, employees and volunteers:

- Child safe information will be prominent in onboarding information given to new Community Partners, employees and volunteers.
- All prospective Community Partners, employees, and volunteers will be advised that a current 'working with children' check is a prerequisite, relevant to the state or territory the child resides.

Families:

- Higher Swing provides family members with child safe information through the website.
- Community Partners must provide family members with information of their own Child Safe Policy and procedures.
- All family members are informed about making a complaint and the process this involves.

Young people:

- We communicate clearly about our Child Safe Policy and procedures through the website, including their right to a safe environment and how to report a concern.
- Higher Swing seeks to gain feedback from children and young people through program reviews and surveys.

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Policy Breaches

Any employee, Community Partner, or volunteer of Higher Swing identified as breaching the policy will be subject to appropriate action.

- For employees and volunteers, this will result in instant dismissal
- For Community Partners, this will result in termination of partnership.

Responsibility

The Director is responsible for setting the policy and ensuring it is reviewed, implementing the policy and ensuring all comply with the requirements in the policy.

Policy Review

- Higher Swing will review the Child Safe Policy and procedures, and related documents, including behaviours and practices every two years.
- Community Partners, employees, and volunteers are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be encouraged to be actively involved.