



Spectrum Writing

Child Safe Environments Organisational Policy

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Child Safe Policy

1. Purpose

This policy was written to demonstrate the strong commitment of the management and all staff of Spectrum Writing to child safety and establishing and maintaining a child safe and child friendly environment across all sites and in all activities.

2. Context

This policy reflects our commitment to provide a safe environment where every person has the right to be treated with respect and is safe and protected from harm or risk of harm.

It complies with our obligations under the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* (Safety Act) and the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016*, including:

- *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016* - Section 3E – Child Safe Environments; and
- *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016* - Section 15-19 regarding Working with Children checks for people working with children; and
- *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* (Safety Act) Section 30-31 – Reporting of suspicion that child or young person may be at risk

It also complies with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations ..

While Spectrum Writing recognises that many of our participants are children and young people, it is also part of Spectrum Writing's endeavour to become a Family Friendly Workplace. Our child safe and child friendly environment also covers the children of Spectrum Writing staff members when they are either in one of our premises or programs as necessitated by our family flexible workplace arrangements.

3. Scope

This policy, from the date of endorsement, applies to all employees and directors and other individuals involved in the organisation, including:

- The Management Team (includes CEO and Business Manager)
- Subcontractors
- Volunteers
- Work experience students

Where mentioned in this document, the word "staff" or the words "staff members" relate to all the positions listed above.

4. Commitment to Child Safety

All children who attend Spectrum Writing have a right to feel and be safe.

We are committed to the safety and well-being of all children and young people accessing our services and the welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where all children are valued and feel safe.

Everyone within our organisation has a role to play in ensuring a safe environment for children and young people, including all those mentioned in section 3. Scope.

5. Children's Participation

Spectrum Writing encourages and respects the views of children and young people who access our services. We listen to and act upon any concerns that children, young people or their families raise with us.

We provide clear age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate explanations to children and young people and allow for questions during sessions. We involve children and young people in decision-making as appropriate. Our group work involves the entire group working towards a common goal, and while we request respect and active listening, we do not insist upon active participation due to the disabled nature of our clientele.

As our clients all have Autism Spectrum Disorder and may not be aware of appropriate boundaries in group discussion, they are permitted to raise any concerns or feedback at any time, though we will typically encourage or revisit this after the session officially finishes. We frequently request participant feedback via our online avenues (such as Skype & Discord) and treat all feedback with seriousness and compassion, in line with our Privacy Principle. We do not issue a standardised survey or questionnaire due to our client's additional needs, and feel this would hamper their attempts to raise issues of concern or feedback with us.

The rights of children and young people accessing our services and programs are outlined in our Service Agreements.

We value diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices.

6. Recruitment Practices

Spectrum Writing takes all reasonable steps to ensure that we engage the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. We employ a range of screening measures and apply best practice standards in the screening and recruitment of staff.

All recruitment decisions are made jointly by the Management Team, and involve due diligence measures such as interviews and referee checks. A position description is given to the applicant during the recruitment process and also forms part of the final contract signed by our staff member.

We require current not prohibited Working with Children Checks prior to staff working with children, as set out in the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016. These are initiated by Spectrum Writing through the DCSI online portal.

Any person who falls within the scope of this document who does not fulfil these requirements will be precluded from contact with children and their records in the fulfilment of their work obligations to Spectrum Writing.

- All new employees undergo induction and receive a copy of our Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct.
- All employees receive regular supervision sessions that include a focus on ongoing learning about child protection and other matters that affect children and young people.
- From time to time, employees working regularly with children and young people are provided opportunities to attend training sessions about their mandatory notification obligations.

Spectrum Writing undertakes to inform the Department of Human Services Screening Unit where we become aware of certain information regarding any person involved with our organisation, including any serious criminal offence, child protection information, or disciplinary or misconduct information.

7. Code of Conduct

All staff members and participants are made aware of, and must abide by, our Code of Conduct. Spectrum Writing's Code of Conduct is outlined in Appendix B.

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If either a participant or a staff member breaches our Code of Conduct Spectrum Writing reserves the right to remove them from our organisation. In serious instances the relevant authorities may also be contacted, such as the police, the Child Abuse Reporting Line (CARL), and the Department of Human Services Screening Unit.

8. Support for Contractors and Volunteers

Spectrum Writing seeks to attract and retain the best contractors and volunteers. We provide support and supervision, so that people feel valued, respected and fairly treated.

We ensure that volunteers and contractors who work with children have ongoing supervision, support and training so that their performance is developed and enhanced to promote the establishment and maintenance of a child safe environment. This support and training is initially provided on a job-shadowing basis, and a "session folder" is provided for the staff running each session that breaks down exactly what needs to be done and when. Emergency contact information for each participant is front and centre, a roll is taken, and the needs of specific children (such as those requiring additional supports re dysgraphia etc) are addressed and reinforced each session by the Management Team.

9. Reporting and Responding to Harm or Risk of Harm

Information about making appropriate reports of harm or risk of harm is available from the South Australian Department of Child Protection website.:

<https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse>

Spectrum Writing will not tolerate incidents of harm or risk of harm.

Under Section 30 (3) (h) of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*, all Spectrum Writing staff members are mandated notifiers. All staff understand their obligation to notify the Child Abuse Report Line on 13 14 78 as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, or is at risk of harm, or SA Police on 000 if a child or young person is in immediate danger. Alternatively, utilise the online reporting system available on the South Australian Department of Child Protection website:

<https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse/report-child-abuse-or-neglect>

We ensure that staff are aware of how to make appropriate reports of harm or risk of harm. We provide opportunities for staff to attend an information session on mandatory reporting. We also ensure that staff have access to relevant information resources available from the Department of Child Protection, including:

- Guidelines for Mandated Notifiers (available to view or download from <https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse/mandated-notifiers-and-their-role>)
- Department for Families and Communities' reporting child abuse website: <https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse/report-child-abuse-or-neglect>.

We ensure that support is also available for the employee making the report, particularly where an ongoing service is provided to the child, young person and their family. This support may be accessed from the Chief Executive Officer.

Employees must immediately report to the Chief Executive Officer, any reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm by another employee. Spectrum Writing will take protective action to keep the child and others safe. (**Note:** It is paramount that where a complaint is made or suspicion is raised, that all involved ensure that the principles of confidentiality and natural justice applies).

The Management Team will keep any information received in a confidential electronic file with details of when, where and from whom they received this information, what they did with it, that can only be accessed by them, and all principals of safety, confidentiality and natural justice must be attributed to all people involved.

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As per our obligations, a mandatory report must be made to CARL and/or SA Police. As such an activity is a potential code of conduct breach, the Management Team must immediately take action and ensure other children and young people are safe from harm.

The process for reporting harm or risk of harm to the Management Team involves an immediate phone call, followed by a written report. An email, text message, or similar from the reporting staff member is acceptable, and a formal report will be drafted by the Management Team as soon as possible.

10. Supporting Children, Young People and Their Families

Child Protection is everyone's responsibility. Spectrum Writing recognises that even where a report is made, we may still have a role in supporting the child or young person. This support may include:

- Referring the child, young person or their family to other appropriate services;
- Ensuring that the child or young person's services (as per their Service Agreement) continue to be provided or met following the making of a report.

11. Reporting and Responding to Complaints or Feedback

Spectrum Writing commits to responding to all complaints and feedback promptly, sensitively and fairly.

If a complaint or feedback is received that relates to harm to a child it should be handled as per section above 'Reporting and responding to the reasonable belief that a child or young person may be at risk of harm'

The Spectrum Writing Complaints and Feedback Procedure is as follows:

The Management Team (comprising the Chief Executive Officer and the Business Manager) will meet and begin to address the problem within 24 hours of receiving it if it does not fall under information more relevant to Category 9 "Reporting and Responding to the Reasonable Belief that a Child or Young Person may be at Risk of Harm", in which case such complaints will be escalated and dealt with under that process.

All concerned parties will be afforded the concepts of natural justice and all information relating to the complaint or feedback will be kept securely in line with Spectrum Writing's Privacy Policy.

Outcomes of the Management Team meeting can include any of the following outcomes:

Counselling of the staff or participant concerned

Revision of this and other relevant documents, and updated agreements signed by all affected parties

Suspension from attending Spectrum Writing sessions while the Management Team conducts its investigation

Internal improvements made to Spectrum Writing processes and programs

Any other reasonable course of action that the Management Team sees fit to pursue.

If our Code of Conduct is found to have been seriously breached, the offending parties will be removed from Spectrum Writing and:

If a participant, their Service Agreement will be immediately terminated

If a staff member, their contract or agreement immediately terminated

If the matter is of a serious nature and does not involve suspected harm or risk of harm, Spectrum Writing still reserves the right to immediately contact authorities such as the Police or any other relevant government department with relation to the Complaint or Feedback.

Spectrum Writing also reserves the rights to engage the services of an external investigator to conduct interviews on its behalf and prepare a report relating to any complaints or feedback.

A full report including the outcomes of the investigation will be offered to all parties concerned, while still meeting the relevant portions of our Privacy Policy including the protection of personal information.

12. Strategies to Minimise Risk

Spectrum Writing takes steps to minimise the risks to children due to the actions or omissions of staff or other people within our practice. We undertake regular reviews to address any new or emerging risks in order to maintain a safe environment for children.

Strategies implemented to minimise and control risks to children and young people include:

- All staff are required to abide by our Child Safe Policy.
- Spectrum Writing will undertake to ensure that the Management Team will hold current, accredited Child Safe Environments certificates, as well as identifying opportunities for other employees to obtain the same.
- Spectrum Writing requires that all staff provide evidence of current DCSI Working with Children Checks at commencement of engagement and renew every five years as applicable.
- Staff of Spectrum Writing will take reasonable steps to ensure they are responsive to the particular needs and vulnerabilities of children and young people (such as age, language barriers, developmental capabilities, disability, mental health, trauma or harm).
- Spectrum Writing will take reasonable steps to ensure that we respond to any concerns that children, or their families or carers raise quickly and fairly.
- Staff understand their obligation to notify the **Child Abuse Report Line on 13 14 78** as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm.
- We ensure a physically and socially safe environment for children and young people that is free of any identifiable hazards.
- Spectrum Writing Code of conduct (see Appendix B)
- Template statement to be signed by staff indicating they have read and will abide by this policy (see Appendix C)
- Evaluation of these strategies and the development of additional strategies to minimise and control risks to children and young people occurs as part of our ongoing risk management process.

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13. Harassment/ Bullying

Spectrum Writing opposes all forms of harassment, discrimination and bullying. We take this issue seriously and encourage anyone who believes that they, or another person, has been harassed, discriminated against or bullied to raise this issue with the Management Team.

14. Communication

Spectrum Writing will ensure that everyone to whom this policy applies is aware of and has had an opportunity to read the policy. This policy will be made available via the Spectrum Writing website, and all participants made available of its existence

We also ask staff to sign a written statement indicating that they have read and will abide by our Child-Safe Policy. We retain a copy of all signed statements.

15. Related Policies and Procedures

The policies and procedures that support our Child-Safe Policy include, but are not limited to:

- Any relevant policies or procedures that our organisation has developed to protect children, including:
- Spectrum Writing Code of Conduct;
- Spectrum Writing Privacy Policy;
- Spectrum Writing Subcontractor Contracts and Agreements, which outlines requirement to have a satisfactory DCSI Working with Children Screening as a condition of entering into employment and being engaged in continuing employment.

16. Policy Review

- Spectrum Writing will, at a minimum, review the policies and procedures once every 5 years as required by the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 or,
- When situations arise due to our Complaints and Feedbacks process where a change to our document set is required, or
- At any other time the Management Team sees fit.
- Spectrum Writing will lodge a new child safe environments compliance statement with the Department of Human Services each time we review and update our policy.

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Policy Approved: 20/08/2021

Policy Review Date: 20/08/2026

17. APPENDIX A - CONDUCTING WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS

A current Working with Children Check shall be obtained from the Department of Human Service's Screening Unit as a precondition of employment, volunteering or undertaking work experience placements at Spectrum Writing. The cost of obtaining a letter of clearance will be at the expense of the employee, or will be paid for by Spectrum Writing at their discretion.

This Working with Children check must be kept current at all times, and responsibility for this upkeep rests with the staff member. This is an expectation added to all staff contracts or agreements. A shared expectation rests with Spectrum Writing to ensure that staff hold these Working with Children checks prior to working with children.

18. APPENDIX B – CODE OF CONDUCT

Code of Conduct for all Staff of Spectrum Writing Including Child Protection Guidelines

Caring for children and young people brings additional responsibilities for the staff of Spectrum Writing. All staff are responsible for promoting the safety and well-being of children and young people.

The Spectrum Writing Staff Code of Conduct is as follows, and is included in all staff contracts and agreements as a condition of working within Spectrum Writing

Code of Conduct

- Communicate openly and honestly
- Treat all Participants with courtesy and respect
- To display and model appropriate and respectful behaviour at all times.
- To be inclusive of all Participants in the group settings
- To maintain confidentiality and to uphold Spectrum Writing's Privacy Policy with regards to the Participants' personal information.

Child Protection Guidelines

- Ensuring the safety and welfare of the child or young person is paramount at all times.
- Treating all children and young people with dignity, equality and respect.
- Adhering to this Child Safe Environments Policy at all times.
- Listening and responding appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people within Spectrum Writing.
- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people within Spectrum Writing.
- Where appropriate, ensuring that another adult (such as a Session Assistant) is present with a Session Facilitator at all times during Spectrum Writing group sessions.
- Ensuring children and young people understand their rights and explaining to the child in age-appropriate language what they can expect during Spectrum Writing sessions.
- Responding quickly, fairly and transparently to any serious complaints made by a child, young person or their parent/guardian.
- Notifying the **Child Abuse Report Line on 13 14 78** as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

Staff will not:

- Take part in any unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person.
- Discriminate against any child or young person because of age, gender, cultural background, religion, vulnerability or sexuality.
- Develop any 'special' relationships with children or young people outside of the professional relationship.

19. APPENDIX C – STAFF STATEMENT



Spectrum Writing

I.....have read and understand the Spectrum Writing Child Safe Environments Organisational Policy, and hereby agree to adhere to this policy as part of my working conditions for Spectrum Writing, in addition to all of the existing conditions listed in my original Contract/Agreement

Signed

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Date

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