



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

MultiLink Community Services Inc.
38 Blackwood Road,
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Telephone: (07) 3808 4463
Fax: (07) 3808 6337
Email: reception@multilink.org.au
ABN 21728003819

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

MultiLink Community Services Inc. is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children, young adults, vulnerable people and people at risk. We have zero tolerance for any form of physical and /or sexual abuse.

Everyone working at MultiLink is responsible for the care and protection of children, young adults, vulnerable people and people at risk and reporting information about any form of physical and/or sexual abuse.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. All people, regardless of their age, gender, race, religious beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
2. MultiLink commits to promoting and protecting the welfare and human rights of people that interact with, or are affected by, our work - particularly those that may be at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
3. MultiLink has no tolerance for abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
4. All staff, volunteers, contractors and third parties of MultiLink share responsibility for protecting everyone from abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
5. MultiLink has a process for managing incidents that must be followed when one arises.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is:

1. To protect people that interact with, or are affected by MultiLink.
2. To take all reasonable steps to facilitate the prevention of physical and /or sexual abuse occurring within MultiLink.
3. To support a positive and effective culture towards Safeguarding.
4. Set out and develop the way MultiLink manages Safeguarding risks.
5. To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for physical and /or sexual abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
6. To provide guidance to staff, volunteers, contractors and third parties as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation and provide assurance that all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

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SCOPE

This Policy applies to:

1. All staff of MultiLink, volunteers, board members and any other person associated or working under contract with MultiLink; and
2. All MultiLink visitors, partners, and contractors.

Failure to comply with the policy and related procedures may result in disciplinary action.

SAFEGUARDING DEFINITIONS

Abuse	All forms of physical and mental abuse, exploitation, coercion or ill-treatment. This might include, for example: • physical abuse; • emotional abuse; • financial abuse; • elder abuse; • threats of, or actual violence, verbal, emotional or social abuse; • sexual harassment, bullying or abuse; • sexual criminal offences; • cultural or identity abuse, such as racial, sexual or gender-based discrimination or hate crime; • coercion and exploitation; • abuse of power; and • neglect
Child or young person	A person under the age of 18 years.
Person at Risk	Person aged 18 years and over who: a) has care and support needs; b) is being abused or neglected, or are at risk of abuse or neglect; and c) is unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect because of their care and support needs.



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Child Safe Organisation	An organisation that consciously and systematically: • Embeds child safety and wellbeing into organisational leadership, governance and culture • Informs children and young people about their rights and are taken seriously, and encourages participation in the decisions affecting them • Informs and involves families and communities in promoting child safety and wellbeing • Upholds equity and ensures diverse needs are respected in policy and proactive • Ensures people working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice • Ensures processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused • Ensures staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training • Ensures physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed • Regularly reviews and improves implementation of the National Child Safe principles • Ensures documented policies and procedures demonstrate how the organisation is safe for children and young people, creating conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying and reporting of harm and responding appropriately to disclosures, allegations and suspicions of harm.
Reasonable grounds for belief	A situation where a person has information that leads them to believe that abuse, neglect or exploitation has taken place, is taking place, or may take place. A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that: • the person is in need of protection; • the person has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury; or • the parents or guardians are unable or unwilling to protect the person.
Reportable Conduct	a sexual offence, such as: • sexual touching of a person without consent; • a child grooming offence; or • production, dissemination, or possession of child abuse material.



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	Sexual misconduct, such as: - descriptions of sexual acts without a legitimate reason to provide the descriptions; - inappropriate or unsolicited sexual comments, conversations, or communications; or - comments to a child, young person or vulnerable person that express a desire to act in a sexual manner towards that person or another person.
	Ill-treatment of a child, young person or vulnerable person, such as: - making excessive or degrading demands of a child, young person or vulnerable person; - a pattern of hostile or degrading comments or behaviour towards a child, young person, or vulnerable person; or - using inappropriate forms of behaviour management towards a child, young person, or vulnerable person.
	<i>An assault against a child, young person, or vulnerable person, such as:</i> - hitting, striking, kicking, punching, or dragging a child, young person or vulnerable person; or - threatening to physically harm a child, young person, or vulnerable person.
	<i>Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child, young person, or vulnerable person such as:</i> - displaying behaviour patterns that are out of character; - regressive behaviour; or - anxiety or self-harm.
<u>Safeguarding</u>	Protecting the welfare and human rights of people that are, in some way, connected with your organisation and its work – particularly people that may be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.
<u>Vulnerable person</u>	A child or an individual aged 18 years and above who is or may be unable to take care of themselves or is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason.
<u>Whistle-blower</u>	Anyone who makes or attempts to make a report of Reportable Conduct under this Policy, and is, or has previously been, an employee, volunteer, contractor, third party, child, young person, or vulnerable person in the care of MultiLink is a relative or dependent of such persons.



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SAFEGUARDING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Management Committee (Board)	- Responsible for ensuring that all reasonable steps are taken to protect people that interact with MultiLink Community Services. - Responsible for ensuring appropriate Safeguarding governance, policies and procedures are in place. - Responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place. - Ensuring that MultiLink observes all relevant laws and regulations relating to Safeguarding.
Chief Executive Officer	- Dealing with and investigating reports of abuse. - Ensuring that all staff, volunteers, and contractors are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Code of Conduct. - Ensuring that all MultiLink staff, volunteers, and contractors are aware of their obligation to report suspected abuse of a child, young person or vulnerable person in accordance with these policies and procedures. - Ensure MultiLink effective and appropriate ways to manage Safeguarding and legal compliance. - Ensure that reports to external parties are made where required.
Executives and Managers	- Promote a culture of safety for children, young persons, and vulnerable people. - Implement this policy in their area of responsibility. - Assess the risk of abuse to children, young persons and vulnerable people within their area and ensure controls are in place to prevent, detect and respond to incidents. - Facilitate the reporting of any suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation. - Ensure that there is appropriate Safeguarding training in place for staff.
Staff volunteers and contractors	- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children, young persons and vulnerable people emotional and physical safety. - Familiarise themselves with MultiLink's policy, procedures, Code of Conduct and relevant laws in relation to Safeguarding protection. - Report any reasonable belief or incident that a child, young person or vulnerable person safety or welfare is at risk to responsible persons in the organisation. or authorities (such as the police and/or the child protection service). - Fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters.



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PROCEDURES

EMPLOYMENT OF NEW EMPLOYEES

Safe Recruitment & Selection:

MultiLink is committed to safe employment and recruitment practices, that reduce the risk of harm to children, young adults and vulnerable people from people unsuitable to work with them or have contact with them.

MultiLink requires all employees, volunteers and contractors to go through the organisation's recruitment screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with MultiLink.

This includes undertaking a formal interview which includes an analysis of past experience in working with children, young person or vulnerable persons.

Multilink will require applicants to provide the following before commencing with the organisation and at regular intervals during employment:

- A police check;
- Working with Children Check (Blue Card);
- NDIS Worker Screening (Yellow Card); and
- Proof of any Safeguarding training undertaken.

MultiLink will undertake thorough reference checking prior to commencement including at least two (2) previous line managers to determine the applicants Safeguarding experience.

Training and Awareness:

MultiLink will ensure an appropriate level of Safeguarding training is available to its employees, volunteers, contractors and any relevant persons linked to the organisation who requires it.

All staff, volunteer's contractors and third parties must undertake mandatory Safeguarding training as part of their induction.

For all employees who are working or volunteering with children, young persons or vulnerable persons, this requires as a minimum to have awareness that enables them to:

- Understand what Safeguarding is and their role in Safeguarding children, young people, or vulnerable persons.
- Recognise a child, young person or vulnerable person potentially in need of Safeguarding and take action.
- The process of when and how to report:
 - an incident.
 - potential incident. or
 - if a child, young person or vulnerable person safety or welfare is at risk.

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MANAGING SAFEGUARDING RISK

MultiLink will ensure that safety of children, young people, or vulnerable persons is a part of its overall risk management approach.

MultiLink Risk and Compliance Committee is committed to identifying and managing risks at MultiLink Risk and Compliance committee members will receive regular training in relation to Safeguarding.

MultiLink will manage the risk of Safeguarding by:

- Having an action plan that sets out how it will manage Safeguarding;
- Having up-to-date and documented risk assessments;
- Maintaining a register of MultiLink legal obligations for Safeguarding and workplace health and safety in all jurisdictions in which it operates;
- Implementing policies, procedures and systems that introduce controls to reduce the likelihood and consequence of incidents;
- Maintaining two reporting processes: the confidential reporting process, and the overt reporting process;
- Having an incident response plan;
- Undertaking audits of staff, volunteers, contractors and third parties to ensure adherence to MultiLink's Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct; and
- Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of its Safeguarding program.

WORKING ALONE WITH CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Any work one-on-one with a child, young person or vulnerable adult is transparent, authorised and purposeful. This means -

- Be a required and authorised part of the work role and in line with any applicable service or program guidelines;
- Meet an identified need of the child, young person or vulnerable adult, such as through an agreed care/support plan or rostered services that have been approved/accepted by the client and/or their parent, guardian or carer;
- Be conducted generally during normal working hours and not for unnecessary prolonged periods of time;
- Be documented appropriately;
- Be conducted in unlocked rooms with some form of visibility such as part-glass doors, located near traffic areas and, where practicable, in the line of sight of other workers or adults;
- Not to be conducted in private or personal spaces, wherever practicable.

Responsible staff will conduct risk assessment of specific external rooms/spaces/homes to ensure it meets the requirements of MultiLink's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures before authorisation.

- Any required specific Risk Mitigation strategies identified to be implemented to be formally, and a clearly communicated to the worker by their Line Manager and adhered to.

If a room/space is used which does **NOT** have a clear line of sight into the room (e.g. Window/open door) by an external adult

- Leave the meeting room door open or ajar to allow others to have reasonable visibility

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- ensure there is a second staff member (or responsible adult witness) present or close by
- Ensure, where possible, appropriate seating arrangements (i.e., worker to avoid placing themselves between the client and the exit)
- Consider appropriate proximity considerations, body language, tone of voice, attitude

Staff who are working with a child, young person or vulnerable adult should always consider using a public space rather than a secluded or remote meeting space, with the consent of Line Manager and client/parent/carer or guardian. Staff to always have a charged mobile phone with them to communicate any risk situation to Line Manager.

TRANSPORTING LONE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Staff will ensure that any transport delivered as part of service provision with a child, young person or vulnerable adult is transparent, authorised and purposeful. This means -

- Be a required and authorised part of the work role and in line with any applicable service or program guidelines;
- Meet an identified need of the child, young person or vulnerable adult, such as through an agreed care/support plan or rostered services that have been approved/accepted by the client and/or their parent, guardian or carer;
- Be conducted generally during normal working hours and not for unnecessary prolonged periods of time;
- Be documented appropriately;
- Be conducted in approved MultiLink vehicles, or if provided through a staff member's vehicle, these vehicles are registered, roadworthy, regularly maintained, have current Comprehensive and CTP Insurance, maximum capacity is not exceeded, the driver is fit to drive without any impact from drugs or alcohol and MultiLink has copies of current vehicle probity on file. The driver is legally responsible for ensuring all passengers wear seat belts and car seats are used as required under current legislation.

Responsible staff will conduct risk assessment of specific transport activities to ensure it meets MultiLink's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures before authorisation.

Risk assessment to give consideration to elements such as:

- The route and duration of transportation
- Pick-up and drop-off locations
- Means of transport
- Requirements for seatbelts and/or other safety restraints (including wheelchair restraints)
- Road hazards
- Number of individuals, adults and/or children involved in the transportation.
- Number of adults appropriate to provide supervision including whether any adult requires specialised skills or training.
- Items required to be available while transporting, including mobile phone, emergency contact list, first aid kit.
- Documented process for embarking and disembarking the vehicle.

For regular transportation services, risk assessment will be conducted every 12 months or when circumstances relating to transportation significantly change. When transport is not regular, a risk assessment will be undertaken each time transportation is proposed.

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- Any required specific Risk Mitigation strategies identified to be implemented to be formally, and a clearly communicated to the worker by their Line Manager, implemented and adhered to.

If the behaviour of any vulnerable person is felt to be putting staff, volunteers or other passengers at risk whilst driving, the driver should park the car at the first safe opportunity, take the keys out of the vehicle and step out of the vehicle in order to call a designated Line Manager to take instruction.

Staff will not be asked to drive more than 2 hours without at least a 15 minute break as recommended. When considering drivers' hours, MultiLink and staff must consider non-driving work prior to journeys and the fatigue that may arise from this.

Transport delivered in a one-to-one situation should be avoided where **alternative transport options** are available -

- Couples, neighbours, siblings, kin group or group pick-ups should be conducted first, individual clients picked up next. Routes must be organised to ensure this is possible.
- Reverse process is followed in regard to client drop-offs;
- Where alternatives are not possible**, these journeys should be undertaken only with a specific purpose relevant to the work of the organisation, by prior arrangement and with permission of the client and/or their parent, guardian or carer; and
- A second staff member must be present at all times during transport.
- In an emergency transport situation, a second staff is to be present.
- Child, young person or vulnerable adult, to be seated in rear of vehicle or bus and not alongside the driver.
- If elements of risk to an individual or vulnerable individuals cannot be mitigated to the confidence of the WHSO and Line Manager, the child, young person or vulnerable adult, may be supplied with a taxi voucher to facilitate transport – but only with prior arrangement and with permission of the client and/or their parent, guardian or carer; or
- Transport support is **NOT** provided by MultiLink and client must arrange alternate personal options.

Staff to always have a charged mobile phone with them to communicate any risk situation to line manager

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

Managing Safeguarding Incidents

All staff, volunteers, contractors and third parties who have grounds to suspect abusive activity must report any suspicion that an incident:

- has taken place.
- may be taking place.
- could take place.

Any staff, volunteer's contractors or third parties who have grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify MultiLink management and where necessary appropriate authorities including the police.

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Reporting within the organisation may directed through:

- Any Management Committee member (Board member).
- The Chief Executive Officer.
- Any Manager or Supervisor.
- The organisation's incident management system.

If a person believes that another person is at risk of immediate harm or the victim of a criminal offence, they must call the relevant authorities including police. The number for the police is 000.

Responding to Suspected Incidents

All suspected, perceived, potential or actual incidents must also be reported and recorded in the organisations incident management system and will be managed through an incident response plan.

Investigating

All incidents or suspected incidents will be investigated following the MultiLink Incident Management procedure.

If appropriate authorities or the police decide to investigate a reported incident, all employees, volunteers and contractors must co-operate fully.

If it is decided that it will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the Chief Executive Officer will conduct an internal investigation, all staff, volunteers, and contractors must co-operate fully.

MultiLink will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

While an investigation is conducted MultiLink reserves the right to:

- Report the matter to relevant authorities including the police.
- Stand the staff, volunteer or contractor down (with pay, where applicable).

At the conclusion of any investigation and a breach of the organisation's policies or Code of Conduct is identified MultiLink reserves the right to:

- Take disciplinary action against those it believes are responsible, which may include dismissal.+
- Dismiss or require the person/persons to cease involvement with MultiLink.
- Take Legal Action.

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PRIVACY AND INFORMATION SHARING

MultiLink expects all employees, volunteers and contractors to maintain confidentiality.

All personal information identified or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. MultiLink has policies and procedures to ensure any personal information is protected.

However, information should be shared with relevant authorities (including Police) if a child, young person or vulnerable person is deemed to be at risk of harm, in immediate danger, or a crime has been committed.

WHISTLE-BLOWER PROTECTION

It is important that people within MultiLink have the confidence to come forward to speak or act if they have any concerns or incidents of behaviour that contradicts any behaviour outlined in the Code of Conduct.

The [MultiLink Whistleblower Policy](#) describes how to report a concern and the protections available to whistle-blowers, what matters are reportable, how employees, volunteers and contractors can report concerns without fear of harm, and how MultiLink will support and protect them.

RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND DOCUMENTS

This policy must be read in conjunction with MultiLink's policies and procedures:

- Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- Workplace Code of Conduct
- Whistleblower Policy
- Privacy Policy
- The Organisation's Employment Practices policy, Including induction and training procedures
- Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures.
- Risk Management Policy
- The relevant laws of the Commonwealth or state or territory

RESOURCES

Child Safe Organisations:

<https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/tools-resources/links-resources>

<https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/tools-resources/practical-tools>

Australian Charities and Not-For Profits Commission:

<https://www.acnc.gov.au/for-charities/manage-your-charity/governance-hub/governance-toolkit/governance-toolkit-safeguarding>

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Our Community:

<https://www.ourcommunity.com.au/search/?q=child+protection>

STATE AND TERRITORY RESOURCES

The following links provide information about child safe requirements, initiatives and resources for Queensland.

Queensland

- [Queensland Family and Child Commission](#)
- [Office of the Public Guardian](#)
- [Queensland Working with Children Check](#)

VARIATIONS

MultiLink reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this Policy from time to time. This document is scheduled for annual review.

VERSION AND REVISION INFORMATION

Policy authorised by:	Chief Executive Officer
Policy maintained by:	Corporate Services Manager
Approved By:	Management Committee
Approval Date:	21 March 2023
Version:	V3