

## Policy: **Child Protection Policy**

**Policy number:** CP 1.1  
**Date approved:** 23/06/2022  
**Review date:** 23/06/2024

**Related policies:** CP 1.1 Code of Conduct  
HR 3.8 Employee Recruitment Policy

**Contact Officer** Chief Executive Officer

**Applies to** All employees, contractors, students, and volunteers over the age of 16 years. The policy forms part of the employment agreement between Human Nature and its employees.

### Policy

Human Nature is a child-safe organisation. This Child Protection Policy demonstrates the strong commitment Human Nature has to creating and maintaining child-safe and child-friendly environments and is designed to ensure all employees are aware of their responsibilities and commitment to child safety.

### Purpose

To promote the care and protection of children and young people involved in Human Nature Adventure Therapy Ltd.'s programs and activities as part of Human Nature's commitment to NSW Child Safe Standards.

### Rationale

Our vision is a world where young people triumph over adversity and thrive.

It is of paramount importance that all young people involved in our activities are in a safe environment and this informs our Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

### Definitions

**Mandatory reporting** is the legislative requirement for selected classes of people to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities. In NSW, mandatory reporting is regulated by the [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#) (the Care Act).

**Mandatory reporter** is (a) a person who, in the course of his or her professional work or other paid employment delivers health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services, or law enforcement, wholly or partly, to children, and (b) a person who holds a management position in an organisation the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services, or law enforcement, wholly or partly, to children

**Child and young person** - Within the NSW Child Protection (Care and Protection) Act, a child is defined as a person up to the age of 16 and a young person from 16 to 18 years. This policy is relevant to all children and young people under 18 years of age who access Human Nature's services.

## Application

### **Human Nature Child Safety Statement of Commitment**

All children and young people have a right to feel safe, and to be safe at all times. Human Nature will not tolerate any abuse or neglect of children or young people involved with our services. 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 Human Nature staff, Board Members, volunteers, and contractors. Human Nature 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.
- 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.
- Ensuring staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe.
- 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.
- Providing young people with the knowledge and skills to understand and maintain their own personal safety as appropriate or as required.

### **Our Code of conduct**

- Communicates the values and attitudes of Human Nature on the issue of child protection and child-safe environments.
- Identifies appropriate and inappropriate behaviours.
- Guides Human Nature's expectations regarding attitudes, responsibilities, behaviours, and partnerships.
- Is signed by all staff and volunteers and revisited in supervision and refresher training.

### **Participation and empowerment of children and young people**

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

### **Employee recruitment and selection**

Human Nature will maintain rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening and selection processes. The recruitment policy requires that:

- a formal interview is undertaken for all candidates for any position involving contact with children;
- All staff, contractors, and volunteers have a current Working with Children Check (WWCC);
- All staff, contractors, and volunteers are informed of the priority Human Nature has in relation to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and mandatory reporting responsibilities;
- All staff and volunteers will have a National Police Check;
- Job descriptions or duty statements provide a clear understanding of the expectations and accountability of staff and volunteers in regard to Child protection.

### **Staff/Volunteer support, supervision, performance review, and professional development**

- Human Nature Adventure Therapy Ltd is committed to ensuring that staff and volunteers have professional development and ongoing training in child protection issues at least annually.
- All new staff/volunteers/ sub-contractors will be given an overview of our Child Protection Policy and detailed information about our procedures as part of their induction.
- All new staff and volunteers will sign the Code of Conduct.

## **Incident management and reporting**

- Incident reporting procedures are clear to all staff in Human Nature as part of the induction procedure / on-boarding, case review, and supervision processes.

## **Reporting child protection concerns**

- As an organisation working with young people we are committed to helping keep children safe. In an emergency, or if there are grounds for having immediate, serious concerns about the safety of a child or young person, staff will contact the police.
- Mandatory reporters are required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities. All Human Nature staff who deliver services to children and young people, and those in management positions in the organisation, are Mandatory Reporters.
- All staff and volunteers will be provided with Human Nature's Child Protection procedure at induction and undertake at least annual refresher training on the policy and procedures.
- 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)
  - 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**

- Staff 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.
- Human Nature's therapeutic practices involve supporting young people to develop communication strategies that empower them to speak up when they are feeling uncomfortable or vulnerable.
- All staff listen to young peoples' views and respect what they have to say.

## Reportable Conduct

- Human Nature is a company limited by guarantee and is legally Incorporated. Human Nature operates under the NSW legislation and within the regulatory and statutory requirements of NSW, thereby having obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme within the Office of the Children's Guardian.
- The Children's Guardian Act 2019 defines reportable conduct as:
  - a sexual offence
  - sexual misconduct
  - ill-treatment of a child
  - neglect of a child
  - an assault against a child
  - an offence under s 43B (failure to protect) or s 316A (failure to report) of the Crimes Act 1900; and
  - behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.
- Human Nature's obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme include systems in place to keep children and young people safe and ensure that employees are treated fairly when an allegation is investigated. See Human Nature Procedure for Responding to Allegation of Reportable Conduct
- Human Nature will notify the Office of the Children's Guardian of any work-related reportable allegations or convictions against their employees which includes notification of reportable allegations or convictions that happen outside of work where the employee, volunteer or contractor is required to hold a WWCC for their work.
- Human Nature will notify the Reportable Conduct Scheme of the reportable allegation or reportable conviction within seven business days of becoming aware of it.
- Human Nature Adventure Therapy will:
  - a) Be mindful of the principles of procedural fairness;
  - b) Provide the employee/ volunteer / participant with a written outline of Human Nature's obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme including the obligation to investigate all allegations of a child protection nature against employees, including volunteers or contractors.
  - c) Inform the employee/volunteer/young participant of the allegation made against them;
  - d) Provide the employee/volunteer/young participant with a reasonable opportunity to put their case, either in writing or as part of an interview
  - e) The employee/volunteer/young participant should be provided with information around having a support person, how to access Employee Assistance Program or other supports the agency can make available
  - d) If the allegation is being assessed or investigated by Police or the Department of Communities and Justice, HNAT's obligations to investigate the reportable allegations are suspended. This also applies if the allegation is before the Courts.
  - e) The investigator will need to consider all the relevant available evidence within a reasonable timeframe and provide a finding to the Head of the agency which might also include recommendations
  - f) Conduct the investigation in the timeframes as set out by the Reportable Conduct Scheme or if delays occur to provide the relevant notification forms to the

Office of the Children’s Guardian. The forms are available at [Reportable conduct notification forms](#).

## Communicating with different stakeholders

### Young people:

- We communicate clearly about our Child Protection policy and procedures. This includes printed information in a Welcome Pack, and staff talking with the young person about their right to a safe environment and how to report a concern
- All young people are informed about making a complaint and the process this involves
- Human Nature seeks to gain feedback from the young person during their involvement in the program through verbal discussion and surveys.

### Families:

- Human Nature provides family members with information through the consent form process and Welcome Pack on the service’s Child Protection policy and procedures.
- All family members are informed about making a complaint and the process this involves.

### Staff/Volunteers:

- Child protection and safety information will be prominent in all information given to new volunteers and employees.
- All prospective employees, volunteers, and sub-contractors will be advised that a current ‘working with children’ check is a prerequisite.
- All employees/volunteers/contractors will sign a Code of Conduct

## Policy Breaches

Any employee, contractor, student or volunteer of Human Nature identified as breaching the policy will be subject to appropriate action.

For employees, this will result in termination of employment.

## Responsibility

Board	The Board is responsible for setting the policy and ensuring it is reviewed.
CEO	The CEO is responsible for implementing the policy and recommending changes to the Board.
Senior Leadership Team	Are responsible for monitoring the policy and ensuring that Staff comply with the requirements in the policy.
All staff	Responsible for implementing the policy.

## Reference Documents

- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Incident Reporting Form](#)
- [Child Protection Procedure](#)
- [Procedure for Responding to Allegation of Reportable Conduct](#)
- [Employee Recruitment Policy](#)
- Employee induction checklist
- [Transporting Clients procedure](#)
- Procedure for handling complaints

### **Policy Review**

- Human Nature Adventure Therapy will review the Child Protection Policy and procedures, and related documents, including behaviours and practices every two years.
- Children and families are encouraged to collaborate with the service to review the policy and procedures.
- Staff, volunteers, and sub-contractors are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be encouraged to be actively involved.