



CHILD, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

STEPS is a not-for-profit organisation committed to *making a difference by providing opportunity*.

STEPS is committed to providing a service environment that protects children, youth and vulnerable people from harm, and focusses on their safety and wellbeing in accordance with legislation, including the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* (Qld); and the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* (NT).

The purpose of this policy and the associated procedures is to provide a framework for ensuring children, youth and vulnerable people are protected and that all workers know how to mitigate the risks of harm to children, youth and vulnerable people in our service environment and also, know what to do should they become aware of conduct that does not support this policy and commitment.

STEPS' child, youth and vulnerable people risk management framework contains policies and procedures including Recognising and Responding to Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation; Incident Notification; Code of Conduct and Ethical Behaviour; Recruitment and Selection; Criminal History Checks; STEPS Feedback and Complaints Policy; Feedback Procedure; Complaints Procedure; Risk Management and Employee Grievance.

This policy is built on the following principles:

- Supporting procedures provide a seamless link between prevention, reporting, investigating and determining solutions for incidents or suspicion of abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- All workers delivering services to children and youth at STEPS will be required to hold a positive notice letter and the relevant card in accordance with state and commonwealth legislation (for example blue card, ochre card).
- Workers will receive information and training during their induction and throughout their employment on STEPS child and youth risk management strategy and the associated policies and procedures.
- Managers/supervisors and workers will undertake risk assessments when undertaking activities or special events involving children and young people to identify potential risks and develop and implement effective risk management plans to remove or minimise the risks of harm to children and young people.
- All reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation will be taken seriously and responded to promptly and confidentially.
- If abuse, neglect or exploitation is reported or suspected workers should respond:
 - Calmly and with sensitivity
 - Providing a safe and private environment
 - Explaining that the information will need to be reported
 - Limiting questions to facts (what, when, where, who), avoiding probing questions
- Workers must inform their managers/supervisors of any incidents or disclosures. Managers/supervisors will evaluate the risk and will consider the need for internal investigation or appropriate referral of the incident or disclosure. They will also determine reporting requirements to relevant Government services if the child or youth is receiving funding through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commission will need to be notified within 24 hours in accordance with the NDIS Incident Management and Reportable Incident Rules 2018.
- Workers will be supported during any part of the process and will be offered debriefing services or Employee Assistance.
- A worker in breach of this policy or a worker who makes a vexatious or malicious complaint will be managed through a disciplinary process which may include suspension from work if the worker is under investigation (internally or by the police) for committing abuse, neglect and exploitation through to terminating the employment of an employee and ceasing all involvement of a volunteer.

Approval Date: 6 May 2025.