

## LIFE INDEPENDENCE DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

[www.lifeindependence.com.au](http://www.lifeindependence.com.au)

Ph: 0429 225 993, 0488 061 999

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# CHILD SAFE CODE OF CONDUCT

Policy number	8	Version	1
Drafted by	Merryn Farnsworth	Approved by	20/11/2020 manager
Responsible person	Merryn Farnsworth	Scheduled review date	20/11/2021

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this code is to ensure that all children or young people receiving a service from Life Independence are provided services that are safe, appropriate, transparent and easily understandable. This code is written in a manner to be understandable by any child aged eighteen years or under and who are receiving support services from Life Independence as part of their funding from the National Disability Scheme (NDIS).

This code is also designed to be read by any applicable family members, carers, supports, external stakeholders and staff of Life Independence to ensure full understanding of what the service will do and expects in order to keep children safe from abuse. This code will be available for anyone considering the services of Life Independence to assist in understanding the steps that Life Independence takes to keep children safe. The purpose of the code is to allow any person who reads it to have an understanding of all child safe principles employed by Life Independence including specific expectations of behaviour that must or must not be demonstrated by the service.

Any person can use this code as a guide to be able to easily identify positive or inappropriate behaviour towards children. It also provides guidance for understanding ways of reporting behaviours that do not seem consistent with child safe principles and practices. This code is designed to create a clear understanding of appropriate steps the service will take to create a safe environment for children such as pre-employment checks to ensure that children and/or their supporters feel safe and empowered to ask for proof of reputable service and protection by child safe strategies and practices in place during service delivery.

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### **PURPOSE**

This code establishes a child safe way of service delivery in the community of disabled children as part of NDIS funded packages. It achieves this by outlining a framework based on the Child Safe Standards of Victoria. Life Independence strives to meet each of the following aspirational goals and standards as follows:

- Creating a culture of child safety through clear and effective leadership
- Commitment to child safety with policy or statement
- A clear code of conduct establishing appropriate behaviour with children or young people
- Appropriate screening, supervision and training of staff to ensure competence and reduced risk of child abuse
- Clear processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- Identification of child abuse risks and strategies and processes to reduce them
- Empowering of children and young people to share their feedback, thoughts and experiences in a safe environment

### **CODE OF CONDUCT ETHOS**

The clear ethos of this code of conduct is the promotion of safe service delivery ensuring child safety by providing a zero tolerance stance on abuse or any action or practice that would put a child or young person in an unsafe position or environment. Life Independence commits to the following:

- To take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- Treating all people with respect
- Listening and responding to the views, opinions and concerns of children. Particularly if related to reports that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
- Promoting participation, empowerment and cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- Promoting participation, empowerment and cultural safety of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds when working in public on skills building programs or activities

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- Promoting participation, safety and empowerment to children with a disability when working in public providing skills building programs or activities
- Taking all reasonable measures to ensure that adults delivering services for Life Independence are not left alone with a child in any private place out of view of the general public or a supporter of the child
- Reporting and any all allegations of child abuse to the police or child protection agencies
- Ensuring the safety of a child as quickly as possible should an allegation of child abuse be made
- Encouraging children to participate and contribute to the planning of all relevant organizational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them

### **CODE OF CONDUCT INTENTION**

Life Independence commits to complying with Victorian compulsory child safe standards by doing the following:

- Promoting cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- Promoting the safety of children with a disability
- Provide a child safe service guided by clear policies, processes, procedures governed by leadership to create a culture that makes child safety paramount
- Promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Ensure child safety is the top priority in the organization's operations
- Application of a strong governance, providing easily obtainable and understandable documentation outlining how duty of care responsibilities to children will be met
- Acknowledging the vulnerability of children and young people with a disability and ensuring that child safe procedures are followed to protect the safety of the child
- Ensuring that all applicable and mandatory certifications, training and licensing are current. Further ensuring that the suitability of staff is supported by a current

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National Police check, Working With Childrens Check, Worker Exclusion Scheme Check and a commitment to ongoing child safe practices and training.

### **CODE OF CONDUCT SCOPE**

This code of conduct applies to all staff of Life Independence while providing services or outside of service delivery. There will be no exceptions to this. The consequences of non-compliance to this code of conduct for any person delivering services on behalf of Life Independence may include disciplinary action resulting in dismissal or reporting to the relevant authorities dependent on the nature and severity of the non-compliance.

### **CODE OF CONDUCT PRINCIPLES**

This code commits to upholding the safety and rights of children and young people with a disability by agreeing to demonstrate in words, deeds and actions that we believe and adhere to the following:

- All children and young people with a disability have the same rights as any member of Australian society entitling them to respect, dignity and to live lives free from abuse, neglect and exploitation
- That this right extends to special considerations of the vulnerability of children and young people with a disability reflected in practice
- Children and young people with disabilities should be supported in all dealings and communications with the service ensuring their capacity to exercise choice and control is maximised in a way that is appropriate to their circumstances and cultural needs or requirements
- All children and young people with a disability are supported to participate and contribute to social and economic life to the extent they are able
- All children and young people with a disability are supported to exercise choice, including informed choice and reasonable risk, to work towards their goals and in the planning of and delivery of their supports
- All children and young people with a disability have the right to privacy and dignity
- All children and young people with a disability should be supported to receive supports outside the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), and be

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assisted to coordinate these supports in collaboration with the supports provided under the NDIS

- Acknowledgement and respect is to be given to the families, carers or any other significant stakeholder in the life of the children or young person with a disability
- Continuous improvement, quality of service and best contemporary practices based on evidence and effectiveness will be promoted in the provision of supports and services to children and young people with a disability
- All children and young people with a disability should be supported to be involved in all decisions that affect them and make decisions for themselves wherever possible and appropriate
- Culture, linguistic circumstances and gender of children and young people with a disability should be considered
- Advocacy in respect to the interest of children and young people with a disability is respected and acknowledged by:
  - Promoting independence
  - Promoting social and economic participation
  - Promoting choice and control in relation to goals and the planning of service delivery and supports
  - Promoting independence and community inclusion of people with a disability

Life Independence uses these principles to conduct and provide services to assist children and young people with disabilities build capacity to receive services through coordination of supports. Life Independence acknowledges that children and young people with a disability may be vulnerable due to the following:

- Social exclusion or isolation
- Limited access to information such as developmentally appropriate information on relationships or sexuality
- Communication difficulties
- Low levels of expectation regarding capacity to identify and report concerns
- Inability or lack of access to report concerns
- Signs of abuse misidentified as signs of the child or young persons disability

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- Personal care requirements involving different levels of supervision

Life Independence identifies and responds appropriately to these potential experiences of NDIS participants in order to keep children and young people safe. This is done through promotion of a child safe culture with risk assessment activities along with safe recruitment and operating procedures and policies to be adhered to by all staff. Life Independence responds to these responsibilities with a strong provision of information available on the organisation web site to enable children to understand how to make a complaint along with our form and clear policies to help this process including special communication assistance.

### **LEGISLATION & REGULATIONS**

Any person receiving services from Life Independence can expect that services will be delivered in compliance with all applicable legislation and guidelines including the conditions and requirements as described in the following:

- Child Well-Being and Safety Act, 2005 (Victoria)
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act, 2006
- Disability Act, 2006 (Vic)
- National Disability Insurance Agency Act, 2013 (Cwlth)
- Victorian Child Safe Standards, 2018.

### **PROCEDURES**

The procedures of Life Independence are designed to ensure all actions and service delivery is in keeping with this code of conduct. Intake procedures and any necessary referrals are to be completed in the presence of an adult who is accepted as a supporter of the child or young person wherever possible. Similarly wherever possible service delivery will be planned in the presence of an adult who is accepted as a supporter of the child, or acting on an initial exchange of information with that adult relating to what services for each occasion will involve. Case notes will be made to our client management system as soon as possible after each delivery of service outlining

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what was done and why providing a clear record of how Life Independence is working to this code of conduct.

Clear communication is used to inform and alert children and any applicable supporters of actions and behaviours that not only will be followed but those that will not be tolerated or supported. Examples of inappropriate behaviours that are not supported or part of Life Independence procedures are as follows:

- Development of a relationship with a child or young person that could be seen as favouritism or special treatment for specific children such as offering gifts
- Activities or behaviours with children which could be interpreted as unnecessarily physical such as 'play wrestling' during service delivery
- Allowing children to be put at risk of abuse through actions such as locking doors
- Performing actions that a child is capable of performing themselves such as toileting or changing clothes
- Discussing personal matters or engaging in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of a child or young person
- The use of inappropriate or obscene language in the presence of a child or young person
- Expressing personal views on topics such as culture, race or sexuality in the presence of a child or young person
- Have contact with a child or their family outside of the organisations service delivery shifts for purposes such as baby sitting or catching up for a coffee without delivery of service
- Have any on-line contact with a child or their family except for a legitimate purpose such as arranging or changing appointments
- Ignoring or disregarding any suspected or disclosed child abuse

A full list of our operating procedures is contained in our record holdings and can be viewed by any child or their supporter if requested. Any person can also go to the Life Independence web site which gives an overview of how to make a complaint about any action or inaction that may put a child in danger. The web site also includes information on signs of possible endangerment of children that children or their supporters can use to identify an unsafe practice.