

# Deadly Descendants Child Safe Policy

## **Purpose**

This policy serves as a testament to Deadly Descendants' unwavering commitment to the safety, wellbeing, and protection of children and young people under our care. It is designed to:

- Explicitly assert our organization's zero-tolerance stance on child abuse and affirm our dedication to creating a nurturing environment where children are valued, respected, and safe.
- Guide all members of our organisation, including leaders, staff, volunteers, and associates, on their ethical obligations and roles in safeguarding children, promoting their welfare, and preventing harm.
- Provide a comprehensive framework for actions and procedures aimed at ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children across all facets of our organisation's operations.

## **Scope and Audience**

This policy is applicable to every individual associated with Deadly Descendants, encompassing board members, executive leadership, employees, volunteers, interns, trainees, contractors, and consultants. It governs all organisational activities that involve, lead to, or are associated with interactions with children and young people.

## Responsibilities

Responsibilities under this policy are delineated across various organisational levels, including:

- **Board Members and Executive Leadership:** To champion and oversee the implementation of child safety and wellbeing policies.

***Anastasia Elliott; Founding Director:*** The founding director of Deadly Descendants is fundamentally responsible for ensuring the organisation's adherence to a robust child safety policy. This role involves upholding duties outlined under national and state legislation, emphasising care, diligence, and good faith to safeguard the interests of the organisation and the children it serves. The director must proactively establish and maintain a culture of child safety, ensuring compliance with legal obligations to prevent harm and abuse. In response to potential risks, including financial liabilities from negligence claims and reputational damage, the director plays a crucial role in strategic decision-making, including participation in child protection schemes and managing the organisation's response to historical abuse allegations. Central to these responsibilities is the cultivation of an organisational culture that places child safety at the forefront of its mission, guided by the core purpose of Deadly Descendants and the values it embodies.

***Tracee Wilcock; Child Safeguarding Officer:***

The child safeguarding officer at Deadly Descendants bears critical responsibility for operationalizing the organisation's child safety policy. This role involves direct oversight of the policy's implementation, training staff and volunteers on child safety protocols, managing and responding to child safety reports and concerns, and ensuring compliance with legal and organisational standards for protecting children. The officer acts as the primary point of contact for all child safety inquiries, fostering an environment where children's welfare is prioritised, and a culture of safety and respect is embedded throughout the organisation.

- **Managers and Staff:** To ensure adherence to child safety protocols and act in the best interest of child welfare at all times.
- **Volunteers, Interns, and Trainees:** To embody the organisation's commitment to child safety in their conduct and activities.

- **Contractors and Consultants:** To comply with child safety policies and procedures in their service delivery.

This encompasses obligations towards policy compliance, ethical conduct, recruitment practices, staff training, handling complaints, risk management, and adhering to the code of conduct.

## Definitions

- **Child/Children**
  - **Definition:** "Child" or "Children" refers to individuals under the age of 18 years. This definition recognizes that individuals in this age group are entitled to special protection under both national legislation, such as the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW), and international agreements like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It underscores our commitment to upholding these protections in all our interactions and interventions involving young people.
- **Child Harm or Abuse**
  - **Definition:** "Child Harm or Abuse" encompasses all forms of physical, sexual, emotional (or psychological) abuse, and neglect of a child. This includes but is not limited to:
    - Physical abuse: Any non-accidental physical act inflicted upon a child by a person in a position of power or trust.
    - Sexual abuse: Any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond their understanding or contrary to accepted community standards.
    - Emotional or Psychological abuse: This includes actions or inactions causing, or likely to cause, harm to a child's emotional health or development, such as manipulation, rejection, isolation, intimidation, or exploitation.
    - Neglect: The failure to provide for a child's basic needs, including food, housing, health care, and supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development are, or are likely to be, significantly harmed.
  - This definition aligns with the standards set by the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, emphasising the breadth of behaviours that constitute abuse and the imperative to protect children from harm.

- **Mandatory Reporting**
  - **Definition:** "Mandatory Reporting" is the legal obligation to report any suspicions or knowledge of child abuse or neglect to relevant authorities. In NSW, this duty applies to professionals and community members identified in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW), including educators, health care professionals, and those in child-related work. This policy acknowledges the critical role mandatory reporting plays in child protection by ensuring that concerns are promptly and appropriately addressed to safeguard the welfare and rights of children.
- **Cultural Safety**
  - **Definition:** "Cultural Safety" involves creating environments within our organisation that are spiritually, socially, emotionally, and physically safe for people. It is where individuals feel respected and valued, and where there is no assault, challenge, or denial of their identity, including their cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds. This concept extends beyond the absence of racism or discrimination, to include proactive measures that respect and celebrate cultural diversity, and empower children and families from all cultural backgrounds. Implementing cultural safety practices is crucial in supporting the identity and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as well as children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, reflecting our commitment to inclusivity and respect as outlined by the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

## Reporting Thresholds

### Internal Reporting Obligations

- **Immediate Reporting:** Employees, volunteers, and contractors must report any concerns or suspicions of child harm or abuse to the Child Safeguarding Officer, Tracee Wilcock, [cso@deadlydescendants.com.au](mailto:cso@deadlydescendants.com.au) as soon as they become aware. This is completed through the Deadly Descendants website.
- **Clear Procedures:** Please see Deadly Descendants Child Safe Reporting Policy for procedures.

- **Supportive Environment:** Deadly Descendants commits to ensuring that staff and volunteers feel safe and supported in making reports, with assurances that their concerns will be taken seriously, handled sensitively, and investigated appropriately.

## External Reporting Obligations

- **Legal Compliance:** Deadly Descendants must comply with national and state legal requirements regarding mandatory reporting of child abuse or neglect. This includes understanding when and how to report suspected abuse to child protection services or law enforcement agencies. Please see the relevant legislation outlined in the policy.
- **Mandatory Reporting:**  
Mandatory reporting is a legal requirement for all Deadly Descendants staff who, in the course of their professional duties, have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm due to abuse or neglect and those concerns are formed on the basis of:
  - First-hand observations.
  - Direct disclosures by the child or a third party.
  - Indicators of harm consistent with abuse or neglect, as recognized through professional training and guidelines.

### Reporting Process

**Immediate Action:** Any staff member who believes, on reasonable grounds, that a child is in immediate danger or has been a victim of a serious offence should contact the NSW Police Force without delay.

**Internal Notification:** Staff members must promptly report their concerns to the designated Child Safeguarding Officer within Deadly Descendants. This does not replace the legal obligation to report directly to the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) but ensures organisational support and appropriate internal response.

External Reporting: Following internal notification, and in accordance with organisational support, the staff member or the designated Child Safeguarding Officer will make an official report to the Child Protection Helpline operated by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) via the prescribed method (phone or online reporting tool). This report should be made as soon as possible after forming the suspicion of risk to the child.

Documentation: All suspicions, discussions, and actions taken must be thoroughly documented and stored securely in compliance with our data protection policies.

Confidentiality: The identity of the reporter is protected by law and must not be disclosed without the reporter's consent, except as required by law.

Support and Training: Deadly Descendants commits to providing ongoing support and training to all staff on recognizing signs of abuse and neglect, understanding legal obligations for mandatory reporting, and navigating the reporting process effectively.

- **Liaison with Authorities:**

## **Engaging with External Agencies: A Procedure for Deadly Descendants Staff**

### Introduction

This procedure aims to guide staff through the process of safely and effectively liaising with external agencies, such as DCJ and NSW Police, ensuring the protection and welfare of children in accordance with NSW OCG Child Safe Standards.

### Step 1: Identifying the Need for External Liaison

Immediate Risk: If you observe or are made aware of a situation where a child is in immediate danger, call 000 to contact NSW Police without delay.

Concerns of Harm: For concerns where a child is not in immediate danger but you suspect harm or risk of harm, document your observations and any disclosures or signs of abuse or neglect.

## **Step 2: Internal Reporting**

Inform the Child Safeguarding Officer (CSO): Contact Tracee Wilcock, the CSO, at [cso@deadlydescendants.com.au](mailto:cso@deadlydescendants.com.au) with your concerns, providing a summary of the situation.

Documentation: Complete an Incident Report Form with all relevant details (date, time, nature of concern, any actions taken) and submit it to the CSO.

## **Step 3: Decision Making**

Assessment by CSO: The CSO will assess the situation, considering the child's immediate safety, the seriousness of the concern, and whether it warrants external reporting.

Consultation: If necessary, the CSO may consult with senior management or legal advisors to decide on the best course of action.

## **Step 4: External Reporting**

Reporting to DCJ or NSW Police: If it's determined that external reporting is necessary:

- DCJ: For concerns of abuse or neglect where the child is not in immediate danger, the CSO will report to the DCJ using their prescribed procedures.
- NSW Police: For criminal matters or if a child is in immediate danger, the CSO will contact NSW Police directly.

Information Sharing: Share relevant information with external agencies as required, ensuring compliance with privacy laws and the child's best interests.

## **Step 5: Cooperation and Support**

Follow-Up: Cooperate with DCJ, NSW Police, and any other involved agencies during their investigation, providing additional information as requested.

Support for the Child and Family: Ensure appropriate support is available for the child and their family, referring them to counselling or other services if needed.

## **Step 6: Documentation and Review**

Record Keeping: Maintain detailed records of all concerns reported, actions taken, and communications with external agencies, ensuring confidentiality.

Review and Reflect: Participate in a debrief with the CSO and/or senior management to review the case and identify any improvements to policies or procedures.

### **Step 7: Policy and Procedure Updates**

Continuous Improvement: Regularly update child protection policies and liaison procedures based on feedback and evolving best practices, ensuring ongoing compliance with NSW OCG Child Safe Standards.

### **Conclusion**

This procedure is designed to provide staff with a clear, step-by-step guide for engaging with external agencies in situations involving child welfare concerns. It emphasises the importance of internal reporting, decision-making protocols, cooperation with authorities, and the need for ongoing support and review. Following this procedure ensures that all actions taken are in the best interests of the child and comply with legal and regulatory requirements.

## **What The Policy Covers**

Deadly Descendants is committed to upholding the highest standards of child safety and wellbeing in all aspects of our operations. Our expectations of child safe practice are grounded in the 10 child safe standards outlined by the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, ensuring a comprehensive and proactive approach to safeguarding children and young people.

## **1. Child Safety is Embedded in Organisational Leadership and Culture**

- **Leadership Commitment:** Our leaders at every level actively demonstrate their commitment to child safety, setting clear expectations and fostering a culture of openness, inclusivity, and accountability.



- **Continuous Improvement:** We are dedicated to continuously improving our child safety practices, learning from experiences, and adapting to new insights and challenges.

## 2. Children Participate and are Empowered in Decisions

### Affecting Them

- **Inclusivity:** Children and young people are encouraged to share their views and participate in decisions that affect their lives, ensuring their voices are heard and valued.
- **Empowerment:** We provide safe and appropriate ways for children to express their ideas, concerns, and experiences, empowering them to contribute to a safe organisational environment.

## 3. Families and Communities are Informed and Involved

- **Engagement:** We actively engage with families and communities, providing them with information about our child safety practices and involving them in our efforts to create safe environments.
- **Collaboration:** Collaboration with families and communities is key to enhancing our child safety framework, respecting diverse perspectives and cultural practices.

## 4. Equity is Upheld and Diverse Needs are Taken into Account

- **Respect for Diversity:** We recognize and respect the diverse backgrounds of the children and families we serve, including cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity, and adapt our practices to meet their needs.
- **Accessibility:** Our programs, services, and communication strategies are accessible and inclusive, ensuring all children and families can participate fully and safely.

## 5. People Working with Children are Suitable and Supported

- **Screening and Training:** All staff, volunteers, and associates undergo rigorous screening and receive ongoing training to ensure they are suitable and equipped to work safely with children.
- **Support and Supervision:** Our workforce is supported with clear guidelines, supervision, and opportunities for professional development related to child safety.

## **6. Processes to Respond to Complaints and Concerns are Child-focused**

- **Responsive Mechanisms:** We have clear, accessible, and effective mechanisms for receiving and responding to complaints and concerns, ensuring they are managed promptly and with a focus on the best interests of the child.
- **Transparency:** Our processes for dealing with complaints and concerns are transparent, upholding the rights of children and ensuring accountability.

## **7. Staff and Volunteers are Equipped with the Knowledge, Skills, and Awareness to Keep Children Safe**

- **Comprehensive Training:** Ongoing education and training on child safety are provided to all staff and volunteers, fostering a shared understanding of our child safe practices and responsibilities.
- **Awareness:** We promote awareness of child safety issues within our organisation, ensuring that keeping children safe is a shared responsibility.

## **8. Physical and Online Environments Minimise the Opportunity for Abuse to Occur**

- **Safe Environments:** We rigorously assess and manage the physical and online environments associated with our services to minimise risks and ensure they are safe for children.
- **Risk Management:** Effective risk management strategies are in place to identify, assess, and mitigate potential dangers to children's safety and wellbeing.

## 9. Implementation of Child Safe Practices is Continuously Reviewed and Improved

- **Regular Reviews:** Our child safety practices are regularly reviewed and evaluated to ensure they are effective and remain aligned with current standards and community expectations.
- **Adaptation and Improvement:** Feedback from children, families, staff, and the wider community is actively sought and used to inform ongoing improvements to our child safety framework.

## 10. Policies and Procedures Document How the Organization is Safe for Children

- **Comprehensive Documentation:** Our child safety policies and procedures are comprehensive, clearly documented, and easily accessible, outlining how we create and maintain environments that are safe for children.
- **Policy Awareness:** We ensure that all members of our organisation are aware of and understand these policies and procedures, and their role in implementing them.

At Deadly Descendants, these expectations form the foundation of our unwavering commitment to child safety. By adhering to these standards and principles, we strive to protect and nurture the children and young people in our care, ensuring they can thrive in a safe, supportive, and empowering environment.

## Relevant Legislation and Standards

- **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC):** An international treaty that sets out the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of children. It emphasises the importance of ensuring children's rights are protected and that they are treated with dignity and fairness.

- **National Principles for Child Safe Organisations:** Developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission and endorsed by all Australian governments, these principles provide a nationally consistent approach to creating organisational cultures that foster child safety and wellbeing. They emphasise the importance of child-centred practices, cultural safety for Indigenous children, and the engagement of families and communities.
- **Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW):** This Act is the primary legislation in New South Wales providing for the care and protection of children and young people. It outlines the legal requirements and responsibilities to ensure the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of children in NSW.
- **Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW):** This legislation requires individuals in child-related work to obtain a Working with Children Check, ensuring they are cleared to work with children and young people.
- **Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW):** Establishes the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian as the regulator of organisations that provide services to children, outlining standards for child-safe practices.
- **Privacy Act 1988 (Cth):** This Act includes the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs), which outline how personal information should be handled, used, and managed, ensuring the protection of personal information of individuals, including children, in accordance with national privacy standards.
- **Education and Care Services National Law (NSW):** Applies to the regulation of early childhood education and care services in NSW, setting standards for the safety, health, and wellbeing of children attending these services.
- **Ombudsman Act 1974 (NSW):** Relevant for its provisions related to the reporting of allegations of child abuse or neglect by certain professionals.
- **Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth):** Although primarily focused on providing access to information held by the government, it's pertinent for organizations to be aware of its principles regarding the transparency and accessibility of information, ensuring that personal information is handled appropriately, especially in relation to children's information and records.

## Related Organisational Policies and Procedures

References to related policies include:

- Charter of Commitment to Children and Young People

- Child Safe Code of Conduct.
- Child Safe Complaints Handling Policy
- Child Safe Risk Management Policy
- Child Safe Reporting Policy
- Child Safe Screening and Recruitment Policy

## **Publication, Communication and Engagement**

Deadly Descendants is committed to actively promoting and communicating our Child Safe Policy and its underlying principles to ensure all stakeholders are informed and engaged in our collective responsibility towards child safety.

### **Publication:**

- **Accessibility:** Our Child Safe Policy, along with related procedures and resources, will be publicly accessible on the Deadly Descendants website, ensuring transparency and availability to families, children, staff, and the broader community.
- **Formats:** To accommodate diverse needs, the policy will be available in multiple formats, including easy-read versions and key languages spoken by our community members, ensuring inclusivity and comprehensibility.

### **Communication:**

- **Internal Communication:** Regular training sessions, newsletters, and meetings will be utilised to reinforce the policy's importance and updates among staff, volunteers, and associates. This ensures that everyone within Deadly Descendants is equipped with the knowledge and skills to uphold and advocate for child safety.
- **External Communication:** Through social media, public forums, and partnerships with local communities and organisations, Deadly Descendants will promote awareness about child safety, our policy, and our ongoing efforts to maintain a safe environment for all children and young people.

## Engagement:

- **Stakeholder Involvement:** We will actively involve children, young people, and their families in the development, review, and continuous improvement of our Child Safe Policy. This will include surveys, feedback sessions, and participation in policy review committees, ensuring their voices and perspectives shape our approach to child safety.
- **Collaboration:** Deadly Descendants will collaborate with child safety experts, community leaders, and other mental health and child welfare organisations to stay informed of best practices and innovations in child safety. Through these partnerships, we aim to enhance our policy and practices continually.

## Monitoring and Reporting:

- **Feedback and Suggestions:** An open and secure channel for feedback and suggestions regarding our Child Safe Policy and practices will be maintained. This ensures ongoing dialogue with our community and stakeholders about how we can improve our child safety efforts.
- **Reporting Compliance and Improvements:** Annually, Deadly Descendants will report on our compliance with our Child Safe Policy, highlighting improvements made, challenges encountered, and our strategies for addressing them. This report will be shared with our stakeholders, including regulatory bodies, to demonstrate our commitment to transparency and accountability in child safety.

Through these publication, communication, and engagement efforts, Deadly Descendants pledges to foster a culture of openness, inclusivity, and continuous improvement in safeguarding the wellbeing of children and young people in our care.

## **Policy Status and Review**

This policy was approved by the Deadly Descendants Founding Director Anastasia Elliott and Child Safeguarding Officer Tracee Wilcock on the 28th March 2024 and took effect on 28th March 2024. For further information or assistance, please contact [cso@deadlydescendants.com.au](mailto:cso@deadlydescendants.com.au).

The policy is scheduled for review on 28th September 2024 by the Child Safeguarding Officer.

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By implementing these guidelines, Deadly Descendants commits to upholding the highest standards of child safety and wellbeing, ensuring a secure, inclusive, and supportive environment for all children.