



Supporting Children After Separation

Client Handbook

Contents

Welcome to Relationships Australia Tasmania	3
Who we are	3
What you can expect from us	3
SCAS program	4
Frequently Asked Questions	4

Cost of Counselling.....	5
Support person and other children/siblings	7
Your Rights	8
Your Responsibilities	8
Privacy and Confidentiality	9
Making a complaint and giving feedback.....	9

Attachments:

- 1. SCAS Fee schedule**
- 2. Safeguarding Children and Young People Policies and Information for Parents**
- 3.3. Children and Young People Risk Management and Abuse Reporting Policy**

Welcome to Relationships Australia Tasmania

We want your experience with us to be a positive one and to make a positive difference in your life.

Relationships Australia Tasmania works with people to change and transform their lives through counselling, mediation, dispute resolution, support and training. At Relationships Australia

Tasmania we are;

- ✓ Client Centred
- ✓ Clear in our purpose and expectations
- ✓ Optimistic and hopeful
- ✓ Part of a collective effort
- ✓ Committed to outstanding service
- ✓ Professional and responsible

These values are demonstrated through positive client experience of services and a well-functioning organisation.

This handbook is intended to provide you with important information about using our Family Dispute Resolution and Mediation services.

If you would like to talk to someone about Relationships Australia Tasmania, or any of the information in this handbook, you can speak to our Intake worker by phoning 1300 364 277 or visit our website www.tas.relationships.org.au.

Who we are

Relationships Australia Tasmania are a leading not-for-profit provider of relationship support services.

We have a team of highly qualified professionals offering state-wide services including support to Tasmanian's living on the Islands.

We have 70 years of experience, helping over 8000 Tasmanians every year.

We have no religious affiliations. Our services are for all members of the community, regardless of religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, lifestyle choice, cultural background or economic circumstances.

We offer people the services and support they need, when they need it to assist them when life presents challenges. This may include relationships, work, past trauma or other personal challenges.

Relationships Australia Tasmania are committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for children. We recognise that children can be vulnerable in a number of different ways, and we regard our responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of children as paramount in any decisions about their welfare.

What you can expect from us

Family Dispute Resolution and Mediation are designed to help navigate and negotiate things which need to be resolved, through Dispute Resolution we can help people reach agreement on things that matter. Our Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners (Mediators) hold a Vocational Graduate Diploma of Family Dispute Resolution. All Mediators are also formally registered as Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners with the Attorney General's Department.

Supporting Children After Separation program (SCAS)

RA Tas offers a service called Supporting Children After Separation (SCAS), a counselling service for children from separated/separating families.

This is a specialist counselling and support service for children and adolescents aged 5-17 years.

The SCAS program provides a safe space for children to express their thoughts and feelings associated with their parents'/caregivers' separation and assists children to deal with a range of issues within the context of their family, and to manage and enhance their relationships during and after the separation.

Counselling may address the following concerns:

- parental separation
- depression
- anxiety
- bullying
- grief and loss
- improving relationships
- behavioural problems
- self-esteem

SCAS also offers education and information groups for parents, and peer support groups around grief and loss for children and young people.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the process?

Parents are required to book in for a parent intake without the child being present. Intakes for up to two children may be done in the same appointment. Where counselling for more siblings is requested, a separate intake for each additional child is required. If the children attend different counsellors, a parent intake for the relevant child with each practitioner is required.

To participate in the program consent is only required from one parent, however both parents are welcome to be involved. An intake appointment with the relevant parent is needed before any confidential information can be released.

Why should both parents/care-givers complete an intake? What if the other party doesn't wish to engage? Ideally both parents/care-givers would complete a separate intake with the SCAS Counsellor so that the counsellor can understand the full picture behind the separation, from both sides of the story. Having both parties complete an intake also helps to put everyone on the same page for the child's sake. Hence when counselling with the child begins, this means that both parties can be kept informed of progress (with the child's consent), and strategies discussed in a counselling session can be implemented in both households (which is often more effective for supporting the child).

It may not always be appropriate/safe for the other party to be involved with the SCAS process. This will be discussed in your initial intake appointment and you can decide with the SCAS Counsellor whether it is appropriate to contact the other party. Sometimes the other party may not wish to be involved with the process and that is

okay – they can always phone Relationships Australia to book in an intake later if they decide they would like to be part of the process.

When does my child see a SCAS Counsellor?

Your child/ren will see a SCAS Counsellor once the consenting adult/s involved in the child/ren’s care have completed an intake. This can be booked straight after your initial intake session (i.e., if the other party won’t be involved), or you are welcome to phone Relationships Australia later to organise a child intake (e.g., in case the other party wishes to be involved and you need to speak with them first).

I have a few children that need support, can they all see a SCAS Counsellor?

As long as your child/ren are between the ages of 5-17 years old, they can all seek support under the SCAS program. Whether or not your child needs support through SCAS can be discussed in your initial intake session.

What will happen in my child’s first session with the SCAS Counsellor?

At the initial child appointment, the child/ren are greeted by their counsellor in the waiting area and are consulted as to whether they would like their parent/care-giver to participate in part of the session (i.e., be present at the beginning or end of the session).

Sessions with the children generally in a child- friendly area with games and other age-appropriate resources. If you have attended Relationships Australia with more than one child, the SCAS Counsellor may invite you to sit in the waiting room with the other child/ren. The first session with the child/ren and the SCAS Counsellor will involve everyone getting to know each other and feel comfortable, and usually involves playing games, whilst finding out general information from the child, such as who is in the child’s family, what their interests are, where they go to school, etc.

If I have more than one child that needs support, are they all seen together in session?

Sometimes siblings will come to the first session together as this helps them to feel more comfortable as they get to know the SCAS Counsellor. Usually after that initial session, it will be encouraged that each child will be seen separately thereafter to obtain individual and age-appropriate support from a SCAS Counsellor.

How many sessions will my child need?

The number of sessions your child/ren may require will vary depending upon their concerns, what support they require, and what is going on in the world around them. This can be discussed in more depth with the SCAS Counsellor as sessions progress. The frequency of sessions can be discussed on a case-by-case basis. The SCAS counsellor will provide an update and feedback to the Parent/Caregiver at the third session, and determine arrangements for ongoing appointments.

What kind of things will my child be doing in a session with a SCAS Counsellor?

Each counselling session will involve initially checking in with the child in regards to any changes in their circumstances, whilst encouraging them to express how they might be feeling and what concerns they may have. Each session will generally employ play-based therapies to maximise engagement and therapeutic skill acquisition (e.g., playing board games, making stress balls).

Counsellors may then recap what was covered in previous sessions (i.e., any tasks that the child was asked to try at home, such as breathing exercises when anxious) and discuss whether these were effective or what could be changed. The majority of each session will involve engagement, continual rapport building to create a safe environment to share, discussing any concerns the child has and how to overcome these, learning/practising new techniques and then helping the child to inform their parent/s about anything they would like to share..

What if my child lies in their session, i.e., around circumstances at home?

The main priority for a SCAS Counsellor is to keep anyone safe who may be at risk of harm. The consequences of lying and the importance of truth-telling will often be discussed in sessions with children, but regardless of whether the information is perceived to be a lie or not, the SCAS Counsellor will act in accordance with the confidentiality guidelines outlined to you and your child/ren in the initial sessions.

Can I get feedback on how my child is going in the sessions?

The same confidentiality guidelines that apply to you, apply to your child/ren in their sessions. The SCAS Counsellor can provide feedback to you (with or without the child present), as long as your child gives permission for them to do so.

One of my children is seeing a SCAS Counsellor but now I think one of the other children needs support, can they join the SCAS process? What does this involve?

Yes, your other child can join the SCAS process at any time. If specific details surrounding that child weren't covered in your initial intake, then a follow-up intake with a parent/care-giver will need to be booked first so this information can be obtained. After this is completed, the child can be booked in with the SCAS Counsellor.

I don't think my child needs support from a SCAS Counsellor anymore – what should I do?

This can be discussed specifically with yourself, the SCAS Counsellor and the child, if appropriate.

My child has attended a few sessions but now my finances are an issue – what should I do?

Please consult with the SCAS Counsellor as they may be able to assist you with this.

I am having difficulties getting my child to sessions / the session times don't work for me, what can I do?

Please consult with the SCAS Counsellor as they may be able to assist you with this and/or provide alternative times for sessions.

I need a report completed for the court in regards to my child, can the SCAS Counsellor write one for me?

No, SCAS Counsellors are not able to provide any court-related documents for you. Information disclosed in counselling sessions is protected under the Family Law Act (1975). Your counsellor will clarify any questions you may have around this.

My children are getting support through the SCAS program but I need some support too, where can I go?

Relationships Australia run many programs, including a Post-Separation Counselling support service. Please speak with the SCAS Counsellor, Front of House staff, or phone 1300 364 277 to find out more information.

Safeguarding Children at our service

RA Tas is an accredited provider under the safeguarding children system. As such we want to ensure children are safe when attending our services and we have relevant policies and procedures in place, as well as other mechanisms. These include all staff possessing a Working with Vulnerable People card, and up-to-date police checks. We also ask your consent to operate cameras in our counselling rooms. These will livestream the session to a manager's or senior practitioner's computer so that they can monitor the interaction between counsellor and child. The session is not recorded.

Cost of Counselling

Relationships Australia Tasmania (RA Tas) is actively committed to ensuring that affordable services are provided to all members of the Tasmanian community. Whilst most services provided by RA Tas are funded by the Commonwealth or Tasmanian governments, it is necessary to charge a fee for some services. All client fees are directed back into services and any fees that we charge are based on people's capacity to pay.

You will be advised of RA Tas' fee policy prior to receiving a service. When you arrive at reception, you will need to pay for your appointment prior to receiving the service. Once you have paid, you will be provided with a receipt.

We understand that from time to time things can come up or plans change and that you may not be able to attend your appointment. If this happens, please contact us to reschedule or cancel your appointment. If you do not attend your appointment and have not contacted us, you will be charged the full fee for the service.

RA Tas will not refuse a service if you are not able to afford to pay the fee for any service. If you are finding it difficult to pay the fees for your service, you can request a fee reduction by completing a fee reduction form that will then need to be approved.

RA Tas is committed to ensuring that your privacy and confidentiality is maintained in all instances and this commitment is continued throughout the fee collection processes with particular consideration given to couples who are separated.

A schedule of fees for other services provided by RA Tas is available on request.

Please refer to the fees scheduled at [attachment one](#).

Parents as support person and other children/siblings

As a parent you may attend a session or part thereof as a support person for your child. This can be particularly the case during the intake appointment and for very young children. The SCAS counsellor will aim to work with your child on a one-on-one basis as much as possible.

It is appreciated if you wait nearby during your child's appointment e.g. near the premises or in the waiting area.

The counsellor will always work with one child at a time but if you have several children attending SCAS it may be possible to book their individual appointments on the same day.

At the counsellor's discretion there may be an option to attend a session together with your child as part of family therapy. Your counsellor will advise you if this seems beneficial in your circumstances.

Your Rights

At Relationships Australia Tasmania we are committed to providing an outstanding service that meets the needs of our clients. This means offering a service that:

- Respects the uniqueness of you, your situation and your family
- Recognises your need and identity, with respect to culture, religion, gender, sexuality, language, disability or mental health
- Supports your access to an interpreter if required
- Respects your privacy and confidentiality, dignity and lifestyle
- Is inclusive and free from abuse, discrimination, neglect, force and favouritism
- Is in an environment that is safe, accessible, clean and secure
- Is engaging and empowering

In addition, we are committed to ensuring the safety, wellbeing and empowerment of children. This means:

- A zero tolerance approach towards all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and young people
- Creation of child safe services and environments
- Engagement and empowerment of children and young people and their families
- Care, protection and support from all the adults involved in their lives

Your Responsibilities

When you use a service you not only have rights, you also have some responsibilities. The responsibilities you have are towards all people that access our service including yourself, other clients and their children and staff. These responsibilities are:

- To respect the rights of others, such as their privacy and safety
- To help create a safe environment for all, free from harm and violence
- To tell us if you have any problems as soon as you can
- To help create a welcoming environment
- To pay fees as appropriate to your service

Privacy and Confidentiality

We care about your privacy and confidentiality and are committed to protecting it.

When providing you with a service, we need to collect information about you and your circumstances. We will only do this when it is relevant to your service or if it is required by law.

Our services are completely confidential. We will not give your name or any information about you to anyone outside Relationships Australia, unless someone's personal safety is at risk, or it is required by law.

In protecting your privacy we must:

- Keep all information we collect about you confidential
- Respect your safety, privacy and dignity when using your information
- Protect information from any misuse or loss
- Take steps to ensure that the information we have about you is accurate, complete, up to date and relevant to the service you are accessing
- Not share your information with anyone else unless you have given clear written consent or if it is necessary to maintain your safety or otherwise required by law.

You have a right to:

- Complain if you feel we have not respected your privacy
- Know why and how your personal information is collected
- Know how your personal information is used, who it may be shared with and when
- Give or refuse consent before information is collected about you
- Ask for information or records to be explained or changed if you believe it is inaccurate, misleading, incomplete or out of date
- Request a copy of our Privacy and Confidentiality Policies

Making a complaint and giving feedback

If you have comments to make about your experience of our services - whether it's a compliment or complaint, we want to hear from you. We know one of the best ways for us to improve our services and your experience, is through receiving your feedback. You have a right to:

- Make a complaint about the service you receive
- Be listened to respectfully
- Have your complaint kept private
- Have your complaint responded to fairly and in a timely manner
- Give feedback on what is working well or what could be improved at any time

- Be informed of what has happened with your complaint or feedback
- Be safe from negative consequences should you make a complaint

We will review all feedback and complaints to evaluate the quality of our services, identify what is, and what is not, working well, and consider how we can improve our services.

How can you make a complaint or provide feedback?

You can raise a complaint, compliment or give feedback to the Intake Worker, Practitioner or their Manager.

Complaints and feedback can also be given via:

Our website: <http://www.tas.relationships.org.au/>

Phone: 1300 364 277 or Post:

South: 20 Clare Street, New Town, 7008

North: 6 Paterson, Launceston, 7250

North West: 68 North Fenton Street, Devonport, 7360

If you are not satisfied with the outcome from RA Tas, client's may contact our funding body.

Information about the Attorney-General's Department's Family Law Services complaint process can be found on the AGD website or by using contact details below.

Attorney-General's Department

[Online Complaints Form](#)

Telephone: 02 6141 6666

Email: fiscomplaints@ag.gov.au

Mail: Family Law Services Complaints, 3–5 National Circuit, Barton, ACT, 2600

Attachment 1



FEES – Supporting Children after Separation

	Concession Card Holders	No Concession Card
First session (intake)	\$20	\$40
Subsequent sessions (counselling)	\$30	\$60
Non-arrival No notification	Session fee	Session fee

Fees as at August 2024

Information for Parents About Safeguarding Children and Young People

Our Commitment

At Relationships Australia Tasmania (RA Tas) we consider the health, safety and wellbeing of all children and young people to be our highest priority. We strive to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people through our *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy*.

Our *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy* has been adopted, approved, and endorsed by our Chief Executive Officer. It underpins a set of policies and procedures in relation to the protection of children and young people which guide:

- The screening and recruitment of our staff
- The behaviour of our staff towards children and young people
- The induction and training of our staff about safeguarding children and young people
- Our open and effective communication with children and young people and their parents and guardians
- Our responses to the abuse and neglect of children if it occurs and
- Our maintenance of a safeguarding culture in the organisation

All personnel must ensure that their approach and interactions with children and young people are sensitive, respectful, and inclusive of all backgrounds and abilities. We promote equity and respect diversity by:

- actively anticipating children's diverse circumstances and responding effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities
- by giving all children access to information, support, and complaints processes, and
- paying particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with a disability and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Our personnel are required to:

- undergo an extensive screening process including a Working with Children Check and a National Criminal Records Check
- behave professionally and with care towards children and young people by not acting outside the boundaries of their duties or using their position with the organisation to seek work with or initiate contact with children and young people who are clients of our organisation
- understand the important responsibility they have to protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying and exploitation either by our personnel or that occurs outside the scope of our operations and services; and
- create and maintain a child safe culture.

We expect all within our organisation, regardless of their role or level of responsibility, to safeguard children and young people from harm by:

- adopting the practices and behaviour we have set as our standard when carrying out their roles, and
- reporting any abuse or neglect of which they become aware to our management and/or to external authorities responsible for child protection or to police, regardless of whether that abuse is being perpetrated by staff within our organisation, or by those outside our organisation including those from the child's family, extended family, their family's extended network or strangers.

We are dedicated to protecting the children and young people in our community and have successfully achieved Accreditation with the Australian Childhood Foundation's Safeguarding Children Program.

Responding to Child Abuse Reports and Allegations

We consider any form of child abuse including emotional, physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, family violence, grooming or neglect as intolerable under any circumstances.

We have a legal, moral and mission driven responsibility to protect children and young people from harm and to ensure that any incident of suspected child abuse is promptly and appropriately dealt with. Our personnel are required to report suspected child abuse to their direct supervisor/manager and the child protection authorities or the police. RA Tas will co-operate with the child protection authorities and police and other agencies as required by law.

Practice and Behaviour Guidelines

RA Tas staff, volunteers and students are required to maintain the highest standards of professional conduct towards children and young people. We have developed Practice and Behaviour Guidelines to identify and prevent behaviour that may be harmful to the children and young people in our care. The following is a summary to those Guidelines.

Supervision

Our personnel are required to, where possible, avoid one-to-one unsupervised situations with children and young people to whom we provide services. Where possible staff are to conduct all activities and/or discussions with children and young people in view of other staff or by utilising our 'live streaming' technology.

Transport

RA Tas prohibits staff from providing transport to children and young people as part of our service, unless there has been specific prior authorisation from a Manager and the child or young person's parent or guardian. To gain approval from RA Tas, our staff are required to submit details about the proposed journey including the form of transport, the reason, and details of who will be present.

Overnight Stays

RA Tas prohibit overnight stays as part of the service we provide to children and young people.

Physical Contact

Any physical contact with children and young people must be appropriate to the delivery of RA Tas services and based on the needs of the child or young person (such as to assist or comfort a distressed child or young person) rather than on the needs of our staff.

Positive Guidance

We aim to make children and young people aware of the acceptable limits of their behaviour. Children and young people are encouraged to feel and be safe. There are times when our staff may be required to use appropriate behavioural management strategies to ensure:

- an effective and positive environment
- the safety and wellbeing of children, young people or personnel participating in our services.

Any behaviour management strategy used must be fair, respectful and appropriate to the developmental stage of the children or young people involved.

The child or young person is to be provided with clear directions and given an opportunity to redirect their misbehaviour in a positive way. Under no circumstances are our staff to take disciplinary action involving physical punishment or any form of treatment that could reasonably be considered as degrading, cruel, frightening or humiliating.

Use of language and tone of voice

Language and tone of voice used in the presence of children and young people should not be harmful to children and young people and should provide clear direction, boost their confidence, encourage or affirm them.

Professional role boundaries

Our staff are not to act outside the confines of their duties, as specified in their position description, when helping to deliver our services.

If an RA Tas staff member becomes aware of a situation in which a child or young person requires assistance that is beyond the confines of that person's role, or beyond the scope of our organisation's usual service, they will at the earliest opportunity:

- refer the matter to an appropriate support agency
- refer the child or young person to an appropriate support agency
- Contact the child or young person's parent or guardian, and
- Seek advice and inform RA Tas management of any of the above.

RA Tas prohibit staff from attending any private social function at the request of a child or young person, or their family who has participated in, or is participating in RA Tas services.

Photographs of children and young people

Children and young people to whom RA Tas deliver services are to be photographed while involved in our services only if:

- A Manager has granted prior and specific approval
- Prior written parental/guardian authorisation is obtained
- The context is directly related to participation in our services
- The child or young person is appropriately dressed and posed

Use of electronic and online communication

Where possible, email and text messages sent to a child or young person are to be copied to their parent or guardian. Any communication is to be restricted to issues directly associated with delivering our services, such as advising that a scheduled event is cancelled.

Use, possession or supply of alcohol or drugs

Whilst delivering services, staff must not use or be in possession of an illegal drug or alcohol, be incapacitated by any other legal drug such as prescription or over the counter drugs or supply alcohol or drugs (including tobacco) to children or young people participating in our service.

Giving Gifts

Giving of gifts by our service delivery staff to children and young people to whom we provide a service is subject to obtaining prior authorisation from a Manager and the child's parent or guardian.

Promoting equality and diversity

All staff must ensure that their approach and interaction with children and young people are sensitive, respectful and inclusive of all backgrounds and abilities. Where RA Tas is involved with children and young people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds or who have a disability, our personnel will promote their safety (including cultural safety), participation and empowerment.

Further Information

If you have any concerns regarding the safety of a child or young person or would like to discuss any of the information further, please contact RA Tas on 1300 364 277.

For more information about child safety and to view our full safeguarding children policies visit our website <http://www.tas.relationships.org.au/>

Guidelines for Parents/Carers

Our Commitment

At Relationships Australia Tasmania (RA Tas) we are committed to creating an environment where all its community can participate in our programs without experiencing abuse insults threats or other anti-social behaviour.

We call on all parents/carers (and other people accessing our services) to:

- Observe our organisations guidelines for parents/carers,
- politely and respectfully remind others of their obligation under these guidelines, and
- In the event of serious or ongoing breaches of these guidelines by another person, report the matter to a staff member to take an appropriate action

Our Guidelines for Parents/Carers

The participation and safety of your children, other children and other young people in RA Tas programs are our primary consideration. As parents/carers your role is to support these by:

- Encouraging your child's participation in a positive manner,
- Advising your Practitioner of any additional support that your child may have or develops while accessing the program, to assist in the safe participation of the program,
- Advising the Practitioner of any changes in contact information in the event of an emergency,
- Not engaging in behaviour that discriminates against any other person based on gender, sexuality, sexual identity, race, ability, colour, religion, language, politics or national or ethnic origin,
- Not engaging in, threatening to engage in, violent, physical, or verbal confrontations with any other person,
- Engagement with RA Tas personnel in a positive manner and do not criticise the personnel in the presence of your child. Report any concerns to the program manager,
- Ensuring your child has adequate supervision at all times when waiting for your appointment,
- Ensuring that your child is picked up on time at the conclusion of their appointment.
- Notify the Practitioner prior to the session commencing if your child is to be picked up by a person unknown to the RA Tas staff member.
- Not taking photos of children unless you have consent from an RA Tas staff member and other children's parents or guardians.
- Not being affected by alcohol, drugs and other behaviour altering substances.
- Not requesting contact with staff outside of the RA Tas program.
- Not requesting personnel to provide any support or services outside the boundaries of the RA Tas program.
- Report any concerns regarding the safety, wellbeing and welfare of a child or young person to a staff member immediately.

Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

1. Purpose

Relationships Australia Tasmania is a community-based, not-for-profit organisation providing services to all Tasmanian's including children and young people between the ages of 0 and 18 years.

Our organisation operates from three main office locations: Hobart, Launceston and Devonport and provides a wide range of services. The services specifically related to children and young people including.

- Supporting Children After Separation
- Children's Contact Service
- Family Dispute Resolution Services
- Reconnect
- Family and Relationship Counselling
- Community Based Mental Health Care Services

RA Tas are committed to the rights of children and young people to feel safe and be safe when engaging in our services. We take seriously our responsibility to deliver support in an environment that is caring, nurturing and safe.

We promote equity and respect diversity by:

- actively anticipating child and young person's diverse circumstances and responding effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities
- giving all children and young people access to information, support, and complaints processes, and
- paying particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with a disability and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Our Board of Directors approves and endorses RA Tas's commitment to zero tolerance of child abuse and to safeguard children and young people from abuse and neglect.

It is the responsibility of all at RA Tas, from executive to staff and volunteers, to:

- protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying and exploitation by our people;
- be alert to incidents of child abuse and neglect occurring outside the scope of our operations and services that may have an impact on the children and young people to whom we provide a service; and
- create and maintain a child safe culture that is understood, endorsed and put into action by all the individuals who work for, volunteer or access our programs and services.

We expect all within our organisation, regardless of their role or level of responsibility, to act to safeguard children and young people from such harm by:

- adopting the practices and behaviour we have set as our standard when carrying out their roles, and
- reporting any abuse or neglect of which they become aware to our management and/or to external authorities responsible for child protection or to police, regardless of whether that abuse is being perpetrated by personnel within our organisation, or by those outside our organisation including those from the child’s family, extended family, their family’s extended network or strangers.

2. Scope

The *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy* applies to all personnel involved with RA Tas.

3. Related Documents

The following RA Tas policies must be considered in relation to this document:

- Client Risk Assessment Guidelines
- Code of Ethics
- Code of Conduct
- Practice and Behaviour Guidelines
- Children and Young People Risk Management and Abuse Reporting Policy • Employee Lifecycle Policies and Procedures

4. Related Legislation

In upholding this Policy, the following legislation and guidelines must be considered by all Relationship Australia Tasmania personnel:

- Family Violence Act 2004 (TAS)
- Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 2013 (TAS)
- Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013 (TAS)
- APS Guidelines: Legal and Ethical Aspects of Working with Young People

5. Definitions

Definitions are included in Appendix 1.

6. Responsibilities

The Board of Directors of RA Tas is responsible for the development and endorsement of the Relationship Australia Tasmania *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy*. It delegates the implementation of the Policy to the CEO. The role of each entity in relation to the development and compliance of the Relationship Australia Tasmania *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy* is detailed in the table below.

Entity	Role/Responsibility
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CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the commitment to this Policy and its expectations. • Support policy review on a three-yearly cycle as a minimum or at a time governed by legislation, regulations, or organisational learnings that promote a change to the Policy and all relevant policy or procedural guidelines. • Ensure compliance to the Policy via an inbuilt review mechanism. • Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow for the development and effective implementation of this policy.
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Entity	Role/Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop opportunities for regular discussion at all levels to support a culture of openness, continued improvement and accountability to child protection and member welfare. • Advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young people in support of this Policy and its expectations.

<p>CEO COO CFO Directors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all involved personnel understand their obligations in accordance with the <i>Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy</i> and any relevant policy and procedural documentation. This includes induction, a minimum of one compulsory training session, and regular discussion and guidance at supervision and team meetings. • Ensure the <i>Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy</i> is implemented and adhered to amongst relevant member stakeholders. • Ensure the development and implementation of required internal policy/work procedures and guidelines are in place to support child protection practice in accordance with the expectations of the <i>Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy</i>. • Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow effective implementation of the <i>Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy</i>. • Ensure to support personnel in a joint way with a decision to initiate any form of action to protect a child or young person from abuse, neglect, grooming or exploitation. • Ensure appropriate supports, such as counselling and formal debriefing, are provided for any personnel involved in a matter relating to responding to a concern for the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person. • Advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young people in support of this Policy. • Proactively share resources and experience in the development of child safe initiatives as they are identified. • Develop opportunities for regular discussion at all levels to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability of child protection and member welfare. • Ensure that our personnel are aware of the appropriate recruitment, screening, and employment practice in relation to individuals with specific roles in working, coaching, or volunteering with children and families.
<p>All Personnel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a full understanding of the commitments and expectations of this Policy, as well as all other policy relevant to safeguarding children and young people. • To undertake any induction and training in relation to policy and procedures relevant to safeguarding children and young people. • To seek guidance from a supervisor or manager if there is ever any lack of understanding in relation to the commitments and expectations as set out in this Policy.

Entity	Role/Responsibility
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- To take action to protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying, exploitation, and harm.
- To assist in creating and maintaining a child safe culture and a culture of inclusion and safety

7. Our Commitment

RA Tas is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who access our activities, programs, services, or facilities. Our policies and procedures seek to address risks to child safety and to establish a safeguarding culture and practices. Our Safeguarding Children and Young People policies and procedures are accessible

- in forms that are easy to understand
- have been informed by stakeholder consultation
- communicated to children, young people and their families, our personnel, and the general public.

We regularly review our policies, gain endorsement of changes and advise our personnel of changes.

We are committed to safeguarding children & young people

Through our policy we document our clear commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. We communicate our commitment to all our personnel and give them access to a copy of our policy.

Our personnel know the behaviour we expect

- We ensure that each person involved in delivery of our services to children and young people understand their role and the behaviour we expect in relation to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect.
- We utilise clear position descriptions which clearly state relevant safeguarding requirements.
- We have a code of conduct, code of ethics and practice and behaviour guidelines which are approved and endorsed from the highest levels of our organisation. These codes and guidelines outline our expectations for behaviour towards children and young people. Our personnel are given a copy of and have access to the code of conduct, code of ethics and practice and behaviour guidelines. Our personnel indicate, in writing, that they have read and are committed to the code of conduct, code of ethics and practice and behaviour guidelines.

We minimise the likelihood of recruiting a person who is unsuitable

We have appropriate measures in place to minimise the likelihood that we will recruit a person who is unsuitable to work / volunteer with children or young people. We have recruitment procedures that ensure:

- our safeguarding commitment is communicated to potential applicants for positions
- face-to-face interviews are held which includes safeguarding-related questions
- two professional reference checks are undertaken
- screening checks are undertaken, including identity, criminal record, international criminal record, working with children checks and qualification checks.

Induction and training are part of our commitment

- We provide all new personnel with information during their induction about our commitment to safeguarding including our *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, Code of Conduct, Code of Ethics and Practice and Behaviour Guidelines* and *Children and Young People Risk Management and Abuse Reporting Policy*.
- We have a process for ensuring all our personnel complete Safeguarding Children training.
- We support ongoing education and training for our personnel to ensure safeguarding information is provided in an ongoing way.

We encourage the involvement of children, young people and their parents

We involve and communicate with children and young people, and their families in developing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment. We provide information to children and their carers (such as brochures, posters, handbooks, guidelines) about:

- our commitment to safeguarding children, young people and their rights
- the behaviour we expect of our personnel and of themselves
- our policy about responding to child abuse

We have processes for encouraging two-way communication with children and families. We seek their feedback and have a process for responding. We respect diversity and seek to facilitate effective communication and involvement.

Our personnel understand their responsibility for reporting child abuse

Our policy for responding to child abuse is approved and endorsed from the highest levels of our organisation and applies to all our personnel. The policy states that:

- personnel must immediately report abuse or neglect and any concerns with policies, practices, or the behaviour of personnel.
- personnel must meet any legislated mandatory reporting requirements
- personnel must follow a specified process when reporting abuse or neglect failure to report is a serious misconduct.

Our personnel are given a copy of and have access to the policy and understand the implications of the policy for their role. We document any allegation, disclosure or concern regarding child abuse and monitor responses to all allegations, disclosures or concerns.

We maintain and improve our policies and practices

- We are committed to maintaining and improving our policies, procedures, and practices to safeguard children and young people from neglect and abuse.
- We have assigned responsibility for maintaining and improving our policies and procedures to a 'Safeguarding Children Program Coordinator'
- We monitor our personnel and external providers to ensure appropriate practice and behaviour, and policies are followed.
- We communicate with our personnel to ensure that they understand our policies and that the policies are effective in the workplace.

- We require our personnel to disclose convictions or charges affecting their suitability to work with children and young people and we review police record and Working with Children Checks periodically.
- We have formally reviewed our service delivery to identify and document potential risks to children or young people.
- We undertake formal reviews, at least annually, to identify and document potential risks to children or young people associated with our service delivery.
- We have a procedure to undertake annual reviews, as part of our ongoing compliance with safeguarding requirements.

8. Records and Documentation

We retain records of changes to this document (see 10. Monitoring and Review).

9. Communication

RA Tas commits to ensuring our *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy* is communicated to: **Service users**

- on our website
- in age-accessible formats for children and young people
- as part of enrolment forms and program information provided to parents and families

All 'Involved' Personnel

- during recruitment and induction processes
- during compulsory training on safeguarding children and young people policies and procedures
- on agendas for team meetings
- when there are any updates or changes to this document

10. Monitoring and Review

This document will be reviewed at least every 3 years, after consultation. Some circumstances may trigger an early review, this includes but is not limited to legislative changes, organisational changes, incident outcomes and other matters deemed appropriate by the Chief Executive Officer. We retain records to document each review undertaken. Records may include minutes of meetings and documentation of changes to policies and procedures that result from a review.

External audit and verification based on a sample, conducted by the Australian Childhood Foundation shall occur at 3 yearly intervals.

11. Supporting Resources

RA Tas Child Risk Assessment Tool
Core Competency - Child Safety

Reporting of Notifiable Client Matters Policy and Procedures
Client Risk Assessment Guidelines

Appendix 1

Term	Definition
Bullying	<p>Bullying involves the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another less powerful person or group and is generally an act that is repeated over time. Bullying has been described by researchers as taking many forms which are often interrelated and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Verbal</i> (name calling, put downs, threats); • <i>Physical</i> (hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting); • <i>Social</i> (ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating); and/or • <i>Psychological</i> (spreading rumours, stalking, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions).
Child or young person	A person under the age of eighteen years.
Practice and Behaviour Guidelines	The Practice and Behaviour Guidelines aim to identify and prevent behaviour that may be harmful to children and young people in our support service communities. The Safeguarding Code of Conduct outlines what is and is not acceptable behaviour or practice when working or engaging with children and young people.
Direct role in providing activities, programs and services to children and young people	A direct role is considered one that has contact with children and young people that is not incidental, but normally part of providing a service, program or activity for children and young people. This direct delivery may require regular physical contact and forms of ongoing communication. For example, coaching.
Emotional or psychological abuse	Can occur where the behaviour of their parent or caregiver damages the confidence and self-esteem of the child or young person, resulting in serious emotional disturbance or psychological trauma. This can include a range of behaviours such as excessive criticism, withholding affection, exposure to domestic violence, intimidation or threatening behaviour.

Family Violence	Family violence occurs when children or young people are forced to live with violence between adults in their home. It is harmful to children or young people. It can include witnessing violence or the consequences of violence. Family violence is defined as violence between members of a family or extended family or those fulfilling the role of family in a child or young person's life. Exposure to family violence places children and young people at increased risk of physical injury and harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.
Grooming	Grooming is when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a child or young person with a view to abusing them at some stage. There is no set pattern to groom a child or young person. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy

Term	Definition
	period before the abuse begins. The child may be given special attention and, what starts as an apparently normal display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation and then into more serious sexual behaviour. Other perpetrators may draw a child or young person in and abuse them relatively quickly. Some abusers do not groom children but abuse them without forming a relationship at all. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sports and religious activities, or in internet chatrooms, social media or by other technological channels.
Harm	Harm to a child or young person, is defined as any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological, or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical, psychological, or emotional abuse or neglect • sexual abuse or exploitation • a single act, omission, or circumstance; and • a series or combination of acts, omissions, or circumstances.
Neglect	Neglect is the persistent failure or deliberate denial to provide the child or young person with the basic necessities of life. Such neglect includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, clean water, medical attention or supervision to the extent that the child or young person's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed. Categories of neglect include physical, medical, abandonment or desertion, emotional and educational neglect. The issue of neglect must be considered within the context of resources reasonably available.
Personnel	All staff, volunteers and students who work for the organisation whether in a paid or unpaid capacity.

Physical abuse	Physical abuse occurs when a person subjects a child or young person to nonaccidental physically aggressive acts. The abuser may inflict an injury intentionally or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a child or young person. Physically abusive behavior includes (but is not limited to) shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, excessive and physically harmful over training, and kicking. It also includes giving children or young people harmful substances such as drugs, alcohol or poison. Certain types of punishment, whilst not causing injury can also be considered physical abuse if they place a child or young person at risk of being hurt.
Sexual abuse	Sexual abuse occurs when an adult or a person of authority (e.g. older) involves a child or young person in any sexual activity. Perpetrators of sexual abuse take advantage of their power, authority or position over the child or young person for their own benefit. It can include making sexual comments, engaging them to participate in sexual conversations over the internet or on social media, kissing, touching their genitals or breasts, oral sex or intercourse with a child or young person. Encouraging a child or young person to view pornographic magazines, websites and videos is also sexual abuse. Engaging children or young people to participate in sexual conversations over the internet is also considered sexual abuse.

Term	Definition
Sexual exploitation	Sexual exploitation occurs when children or young people are forced into sexual activities that are then recorded in some way and/or used to produce pornography. Such pornography can be in the form of actual photos or videos or published on the internet. Exploitation can also involve children or young people who are forced into prostitution.

Approval and Endorsement:

Approved By:	Michael Kelly (Chief Executive Officer)
Endorsed By:	Board of Relationships Australia Tasmania
Date of Endorsement:	21/12/2021
Review Date:	30/09/2021

Children and Young People Risk Management and Abuse Reporting Policy

1. Aim and Justification

This policy describes Relationships Australia Tasmania's (RA Tas) risk management strategies and reporting mechanisms which seek to safeguard children and young people from abuse or neglect (including sexual abuse).

According to the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) as many as one in three women and one in twelve men experience some form of sexual abuse as a child.¹ Furthermore, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has identified that there is not only opportunity for children to be abused in their own homes and social circles, but also in the organisations they spend time in.

This policy defines the roles and responsibilities of all our employees, volunteers, students and contractors to protect children from abuse and neglect. It provides information on the appropriate actions which are to be taken when a child has been abused or has suffered neglect, or when there are reasonable grounds to believe this is likely to occur.

Through the implementation of this policy we will meet relevant state and federal laws relating to safeguarding of children and young people.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all RA Tas Board members, employees, volunteers, students and contractors and includes all forms of abuse and neglect.

3. Policy

Our commitment

RA Tas is committed to promoting and protecting the best interests of children and young people involved in its programs. We believe that all children and young people, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse, and neglect (including sexual abuse).

All board members, employees, volunteers, students and contractors have a responsibility to take reasonable action to ensure that any child or young person engaged in our services or programs is protected from abuse and neglect. Everyone connected with RA Tas has a responsibility to report any information about suspected child abuse or neglect in line with the state laws.

Expectations

RA Tas expects that employees, volunteers, students and contractors:

- Make themselves aware of their obligations to report any concerns in line with relevant state law;
- Become aware of their obligation to observe the *Code of Conduct* as it relates to child safety;
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety;
- Understand and implement strategies to detect and prevent child abuse and neglect,

RA Tas meets these expectations by ensuring that all concerns are responded and reported to the relevant child safety authorities and/or the Police. **Strategies**

RA Tas monitors its programs, the physical, social and online environments around which they are delivered to identify issues that may expose children or young people to abuse or neglect. We assess the likelihood and probable impact of these concerns and employ a range of preventative strategies to manage and minimise the risk of offending behaviour towards children and young people. These include developing and implementing:

- rigorous screening and selection processes to eliminate potential offenders and to identify people with the correct values to work with children;
- a code of conduct;
- a code of ethics;
- Practice and Behaviour Guidelines;
- training and supervision activities to develop staff skills;
- strategies to identify and respond to unprofessional relationships and grooming behaviours between children and young people and adults;
- programs to develop family strengths;
- child risk assessments;
- strategies to ensure children and young people have access to transparent and clear information regarding their rights and healthy relationships;
- procedures to reporting and acting upon risks or concerns.

We believe that the collective implementation of these strategies can significantly contribute to the safety of children and young people.

The implementation of this policy will be monitored and evaluated by our Chief Executive Officer and Senior Management Group.

A shared responsibility to report any concern

RA Tas board members, employees, volunteers, students and contractors are expected to acknowledge their legal and moral obligation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children or young people associated with the organisation.

Everyone working at RA Tas has a direct or indirect responsibility to ensure that children are protected from abuse and neglect. Everyone connected with RA Tas has a responsibility to report any information about suspected child abuse and neglect (including sexual abuse). This expectation applies regardless of whether the person has statutory mandatory reporting responsibilities or not.

RA Tas describes these responsibilities in the *Code of Conduct, Practice and Behaviour Guidelines* and *Reporting Issues of Significance Policy*.

Obligation to internally report

RA Tas expects that any employee, volunteer, student or contractor will report any allegation or suspected incident relating to the abuse (including the sexual abuse) of a child or young person. This expectation applies regardless of whether the person has statutory mandatory reporting responsibilities or not.

RA Tas describes these responsibilities in the *Code of Conduct, Practice and Behaviour Guidelines, Reporting of Notifiable Client Matters Policy* and *Reporting Issues of Significance Policy*. These policies and procedures comply with the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997. This Act provides a penalty of a fine for mandatory reporters who do not report their suspicions of child abuse and neglect.

All allegations of abuse are reported to the relevant agencies identified within local state legislation or to the police if the child or young person is at imminent risk of harm or abuse. RA Tas will also make a report to the Australian Childhood Foundation if an allegation of child abuse is made against one of our employees or volunteers.

4. Definitions

Child abuse: For the purposes of this policy, child abuse constitutes any act committed against a child involving:

- physical abuse,
- sexual abuse (and grooming),
- emotional or psychological abuse,
- cumulative abuse and neglect. See below for further descriptions.

Child sexual abuse: Child sexual abuse occurs when an adult or a person of authority (e.g. older) involves a child or young person in any sexual activity. Perpetrators of sexual abuse take advantage of their power, authority or position over the child or young person for their own benefit. It can include:

- making sexual comments, engaging them to participate in sexual conversations over the internet or on social media,
- kissing,
- touching their genitals or breasts,
- oral sex or intercourse with a child or young person.
- encouraging a child or young person to view pornographic magazines, websites and videos is also sexual abuse.
- engaging children or young people to participate in sexual conversations over the internet is also considered sexual abuse.

Cumulative harm: Refers to a series of acts or omissions that, when viewed separately may not indicate significant risk, but when viewed together suggest a pattern of significant harm.

Emotional or psychological abuse: Can occur where the behaviour of their parent or caregiver damages the confidence and self-esteem of the child or young person, resulting in serious emotional disturbance or psychological trauma. This can include a range of behaviours such as excessive criticism, withholding affection, exposure to domestic violence, intimidation or threatening behaviour.

Grooming:

Grooming is when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a child or young person with a view to abusing them at some stage. There is no set pattern to groom a child or young person. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period before the abuse begins. The child may be given special attention and, what starts as an apparently normal display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation and then into more serious sexual behaviour. Grooming may also include the perpetrator building a relationship with a child's parent/caregiver as a trusted adult to gain access to the child. Other perpetrators may draw a child or young person in and abuse them relatively quickly. Some abusers do not groom children but abuse them without forming a relationship at all. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sports and religious activities, or in internet chatrooms, social media or by other technological channels.

Neglect:

Neglect is the persistent failure or deliberate denial to provide the child or young person with the basics of life. This includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, clean water, medical attention or supervision to the extent that the child or young person's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed.

Categories of neglect include physical, medical, abandonment or desertion, emotional and educational neglect. The issue of neglect must be considered within the context of resources reasonably available.

Physical abuse:

Physical abuse occurs when a person subjects a child or young person to nonaccidental physically aggressive acts. The abuser may inflict an injury intentionally or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a child or young person. Physically abusive behavior includes (but is not limited to) shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, excessive and physically harmful over training, and kicking. It also includes giving children or young people harmful substances such as drugs, alcohol or poison. Certain types of punishment, whilst not causing injury can also be considered physical abuse if they place a child or young person at risk of being hurt.

Associated policies and procedures:

This policy is supported by the following RA Tas policies:

- Code of Conduct
- Code of Ethics
- Practice and Behaviour Guidelines
- Police Check and Working with Children Registration Policy and Procedures
- Reporting Issues of Significance Policy
- Reporting of Notifiable Client Matters Policy

References:

The relevant legislation, standards and references that apply to this policy include: Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997

Approval and Endorsement:

Approved By:	Michael Kelly (Chief Executive Officer)
Endorsed By:	Board of Relationships Australia Tasmania
Date of Endorsement:	21/12/2021
Review Date:	31/10/2022
