**South Sudanese Christian Welfare Association**Safety of Children and Young People Policy

* **Purpose**

South Sudanese Christian Welfare Association’s Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy outlines how the organisation prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and what steps we will take to do this. It sets out the organisation’s expectations about child safe practices for staff, volunteers and the broader organisational community.

* **Policy Statement**

South Sudanese Christian Welfare Association (SSCWA) upholds that all children and young people have a right to feel safe and be safe. We are committed to providing environments where children and young people are respected, nurtured and cared for.

SSCWA acknowledges that abuse, harm and neglect to children and young people may come from:

* parents/caregivers
* guardians or supervisors
* people engaged by SSCWA
* members of the public
* other children or young people

SSCWA aims to create a safe, culturally safe and inclusive environment for all children and young people, and actively promotes:

* cultural safety of children and young people that identify as First Nations people
* cultural safety of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
* the safety of children and young people with a disability
* the safety of children and young people that identify as LGBTQI+
* the safety of children and young people that do not live at home.

This policy intends to:

* articulate the SSCWA commitment to keeping children and young people safe.
* reinforce a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse, harm and neglect.
* document the key principles and components which help maintain a child safe environment.
* promote the rights, empowerment and diverse circumstances of all children and young people.
* raise awareness for SSCWA representatives of their conduct and responsibilities when working with and engaging with children and young people at any time.
* identify risks and appropriate responses to concerns of child abuse, harm and neglect.
* protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, harm and neglect in the delivery of activities, services and programs.
* **Scope**

The South Sudanese Christian Welfare Association (SSCWA) is committed to ensuring that all children and young people have the right to feel safe and be safe. We are dedicated to creating environments where children and young people are respected, nurtured, and supported, in line with the Child Safe Standards.

SSCWA acknowledges that abuse, harm, and neglect can come from various sources, including:

* Parents and caregivers
* Guardians or supervisors
* People engaged by SSCWA
* Members of the public
* Other children or young people

We aim to create a safe, inclusive, and culturally sensitive environment for all children and young people, in alignment with the Child Safe Standards, with a particular focus on promoting:

* Cultural safety for children and young people who identify as First Nations
* Cultural safety for children and young people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds
* Safety for children and young people with disabilities
* Safety for children and young people who identify as LGBTQI+
* Safety for children and young people who are not living at home

This policy aims to:

* Clearly articulate SSCWA's commitment to keeping children and young people safe in accordance with the Child Safe Standards
* Reinforce a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse, harm, and neglect
* Outline the key principles and practices that support a child-safe environment
* Promote the rights, empowerment, and diverse circumstances of all children and young people
* Raise awareness among SSCWA staff, volunteers, and representatives of their responsibilities when engaging with children and young people
* Identify potential risks and appropriate responses to concerns about child abuse, harm, and neglect
* Ensure the protection of children and young people from all forms of abuse, harm, and neglect in the delivery of SSCWA’s activities, services, and programs, in full compliance with the Child Safe Standards.

By adhering to these principles, SSCWA upholds its responsibility to create an environment where children and young people can grow, learn, and participate safely, as mandated by the Child Safe Standards.

* **Responsibilities**
* SSCWA Board
The SSCWA Board holds responsibility for:
* Overseeing the SSCWA Child Safety strategy and policy
* Providing governance and guidance on child-safe practices across the organisation
* Ensuring sufficient resources are allocated to support the implementation of child safety measures
* Promoting child safety practices within SSCWA and with partner organisations
* Monitoring compliance with relevant legislation and key frameworks
* Ensuring that proper procedures are followed when concerns of child abuse, harm, or neglect are raised.
* SSCWA Staff are responsible for:
* Ensuring the implementation of SSCWA’s Child Safety strategies and policies across the organisation
* Prioritising child safety practices at all operational levels
* Ensuring SSCWA representatives are appropriately skilled, well-informed, and aware of their roles and responsibilities in maintaining child safety
* Advocating for child safety practices both within SSCWA and with partner organisations
* Ensuring compliance with relevant legislation, frameworks, and regulatory requirements related to child safety
* Role modelling and fostering a child-safe, open, and supportive organisational culture
* Providing training and resources to staff and volunteers to strengthen child safety awareness and practices
* Promoting continuous improvement in child safety measures and responding proactively to emerging risks
* Ensuring that all staff, volunteers, and partners understand the importance of child safety and are supported in their efforts to uphold these practices
* Adhering to SSCWA’s Child Safety policies and procedures
* Actively promoting and supporting a safe and respectful environment for children and young people
* Reporting any concerns, disclosures, or suspicions of child abuse, harm, or neglect according to SSCWA’s reporting procedures
* Maintaining an understanding of child safety risks and ensuring all interactions with children and young people are respectful and appropriate
* Participating in regular training and professional development on child safety matters
* Collaborating with other staff and volunteers to create a culture of safety and wellbeing for children and young people at all times.
* **Definitions**

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| **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** | A person who is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait descent, identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community. |
| **Abuse** |  |
| Sexual abuse | Child sexual abuse is when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity. It includes a broad range of behaviours involving a sexual element that are committed against, with or in the presence of a child. Sexual offences may involve contact, like touching or penetration. They also include acts that do not involve physical contact like ‘flashing’, possessing child abuse material or grooming. |
| Sexual misconduct | Sexual misconduct includes a variety of sexualised behaviours against, with or in the presence of a child. These behaviours may not meet the threshold for a sexual offence but can still pose a significant risk to children. Behaviours could include inappropriate conversations of a sexual nature, comments that express a desire to act in a sexual manner, or in some cases, behaviour that crosses a professional boundary, such as having or seeking to establish an inappropriate or overly personal or intimate relationship with a child. |
| Grooming | Grooming behaviour can involve the use of a variety of manipulative and controlling techniques used to build trust or normalise sexually harmful behaviour. Grooming is often described as the ‘preparation’ phase of child sexual abuse, undertaken by the perpetrator to gain the trust of a child, and to establish secrecy and silence. Perpetrators may groom to gain access to a child, initiate and maintain sexual abuse of that child, and to conceal the sexual abuse from others who may identify it. |
| Harmful Sexual Behaviour | Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children and young people and which may be harmful or abusive. It can be displayed towards younger children, peers, older children or adults. It is harmful to the children and young people who display it, as well as those it is directed towards. |
| Physical abuse | Physical violence can occur when a person intentionally or recklessly uses physical force against, with or in the presence of a child without their consent, which causes, or could cause, the child harm. Physical violence can include hitting, punching, kicking, pushing or throwing something that strikes a child. It also includes the use of words or gestures that cause a child to believe that they are about to suffer physical violence. |
| Emotional or psychological abuse | Emotional and psychological abuse may arise in circumstances that involve persistent verbal abuse, coercive or manipulative behaviour, hostility towards a child, humiliation, belittling or scapegoating, conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, inadequate or rejected, or causing a child to frequently feel frightened or in danger. |
| Cultural Abuse | Cultural abuse can cause emotional and psychological harm. Cultural abuse occurs when the culture of a people is ignored, denigrated or intentionally attacked. It can be overt or covert, for example, a lack of cultural sensitivity or absence of positive images about another culture. Cultural abuse is especially harmful for children |
| Exposure to Family Violence | Exposure to violent, threatening or other behaviour by a person that coerces or controls a member of the person’s family (the family member), or causes the family member to be fearful. A child is exposed to violence if that child sees or hears family violence or otherwise experiences the effects of family violence. |
| **Neglect** | Neglect is a failure to meet the basic needs of a child (such as their wellbeing and safety). Neglect can arise as a result of a single event or a combination of different events. Some neglectful behaviours that can occur in organisations include: * supervisory neglect (failure to appropriately exercise adequate supervision or control of a child)
* physical neglect (failure to meet a child’s physical needs including the provision of adequate and appropriate food, clothing, shelter or physical hygiene)
* educational neglect (failure to ensure that a child’s formal educational needs are being met)
* emotional neglect (failure to provide adequate nurturing, encouragement and support to a child).
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| **Child** | Any person under the age of 18 years old (typically 0-12 years) |
| **Child Safe** | An environment where children and young people’s safety and wellbeing is at the centre of values and actions and where there is an emphasis on genuine engagement with and valuing of children and young people. Conditions reduce the likelihood of harm to children and young people, increase the likelihood of identifying any harm and responds to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm. |
| **Child Friendly** | Behaviour, conduct, practice, process, attitude, environment and / or treatment that is humane, considerate and in the best interest of children and young people. |
| **Child Protection** | Statutory authority responsible for child protection, and all measures taken to minimise the risk of child abuse. |
| **Child Safety Code of Conduct** | A document which specifies behaviours expected of all people of the organisation when engaging with children or young people. |
| **Contractor** | A person or organisation that undertakes a contract to provide labour, a service or job. |
| **Cultural safety** | The positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination, and more than cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. It is an environment which is socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for children. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening. |
| **Culturally and/or linguistically diverse background (CALD)** | Identification with particular cultural or linguistic affiliations by virtue of place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language or language spoken at home or because of parents’ identification on a similar basis. |
| **Disability** | Any physical, sensory, neurological disability acquired brain injury or intellectual disability or developmental delay that affects a child’s ability to undertake everyday activities. A disability can occur at any time in life. Some disabilities may be obvious while others are hidden. |
| **Disclosure** | A child or young person telling someone (through words, drawings or actions that they feel unsafe or have been harmed. |
| **Harm (of a child/ young person)** | Damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child/young person, as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children/young people. It includes physical, emotional, sexual and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time. |
| **Leaders** | Leader refers to any employee or volunteer who holds management responsibilities. |
| **Volunteer** | An unpaid member of SSCWA supporting program delivery or operations. |
| **Young Person** | Any person under the age of 18 years (typically 13-18yrs). |

* **Relevant legislation and standards**
* [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](https://www.unicef.org.au/our-work/information-for-children/un-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child)
* [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/National_Principles_for_Child_Safe_Organisations2019.pdf)
* [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/child-wellbeing-and-safety-act-2005/034)
* **Related organisational policies and procedures**

• Code of Conduct

• Complaint handling policy and procedure

• Risk management plan

• Human resources, recruitment and screening policies and procedures

• Disciplinary policy and procedure

* **External Documents**
* Victorian Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP)
* [A guide for creating a Child Safe Organisation](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/New-CSS/A-guide-for-creating-a-Child-Safe-Organisation-27.04.23.pdf)
* [A short guide to the Child Safe Standards](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/New-CSS/A-short-guide-to-the-Child-Safe-Standards-27.04.23.pdf)
* [Empowerment and participation- a guide for organisations working with children and young people](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/Empowerment-and-Participation-Guide/CCYP-Empowerment-and-participation-guide-for-web.pdf)
* [Safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/tipsheet-safety-children-cult-ling-diverse.pdf)
* [Creating a Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/New-CSS/Creating-a-Child-Safety-and-Wellbeing-Policy.docx)
* [Child Safe Standards](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/the-11-child-safe-standards/)
* **Access to the policy**

The policy can be accessed hard copy in our office and sent electronically upon request.

* **Policy status and review**
* Policy approved by the Board on 09/11/24.
* Organisation contact person for information or assistance with policy including identification of breaches to the policy David Manyok.
* The policy is due to be reviewed by 31 October 2025.
* The responsible person to lead the review process David Manyok*.*