

Beyond Talk Counselling

Child Safe Environments Policy

Purpose of policy

This policy outlines my commitment to ensuring the safety of children and young people in my private practice Beyond Talk Counselling. I recognize that children and young people have a right to be safe and always protected from harm. I acknowledge that I have a responsibility to:

- Adopt a proactive approach to child wellbeing and safety
- Appreciate and accept the views of children and young people
- Motivate children and young people to reach their full potential
- Take action to protect children and young people from harm or risk of harm.

Commitment to the safety of children and young people

As the sole proprietor and operator of this practice, I believe that all children should be safe, happy, and empowered. This policy complies with the child safe provisions of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, as well as the national principles for child safe organisations. Accordingly, I take my legal and moral obligations to report concerns of child's safety seriously and am committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early.

Consequently, I am committed to:

- Making sure that children and young people are valued, respected and encouraged to participate and that the safety and protection of children and young people is always a priority
- Ensuring that this policy complies with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- Valuing diversity and making sure that all children and young people are accepted equally regardless of their abilities, sex, gender, or social economic or cultural background and equity is upheld
- Making certain that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated
- Displaying information about services that can assist children and young people in my consulting area such as the Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 and Youth Helpline on 1300 13 17 19.

The foundation of my counselling practice and philosophy is non-judgmental, strength-based and client-centered for all people coming to my service, regardless of their age, gender, support needs, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

Scope of policy

This policy refers to myself as the sole trader of Beyond Talk Counselling, as well as the children, young people and families that I work with or provide services to.

Beyond Talk Counselling

Child Safe Environments Policy

Communication

As specified in Chapter 8 (Section 114[5]) of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, a copy of this child safe environment policy will be accessible on the Beyond Talk Counselling website and be available as a paper copy for children, young people and families in my practice rooms.

The content of this Child Safe Environments Policy will also be conveyed and discussed in age and developmentally appropriate language at the start of the first counselling session.

Participation of families, children and young people

I will advise children, young people and families about their rights via policy and procedure documents, including the service agreement, information sharing and consent form as well as privacy policy.

Children and young people will be encouraged to participate and raise any matters of concern via the following means:

- Encouraging them in age and developmentally appropriate language at the start of the counselling session to raise their concerns, including what they would like to change or have different from coming and seeing me.
- Checking with them whether they had wanted to come to the session out of their own volition or were told to come by a parent or caregiver and making sure they are feeling safe and comfortable to see me.
- Informing them in age and developmentally appropriate language about issues of privacy and confidentiality, their rights to express their views and/or refuse receiving counselling, and that they are welcome to provide feedback verbally and/or via a feedback form at the end of the session.
- Encouraging children and young people to participate in the set-up of and use of materials for the session, eg choice of chairs, side tables, sitting on the floor, choice of drawing implements, including bringing their own drawing utensils.
- Offering materials and encouraging them to scribble or doodle and/or use fidgety toys during the session to increase safety and comfort levels. Young people are also supported to bring their own comfort toys and/or transitional objects.
- Offering an introductory drawing activity to young people showing, describing and exploring their safe space (preferences and requirements) on an A3 page (derived from Interactive Drawing Therapy or IDT).

Code of Conduct

Beyond Talk Counselling's Code of Conduct provides the minimum expected behaviour of myself as a sole trader and is embedded within this Child Safe Environments Policy. Any breach of the Code of Conduct can be reported through the Beyond Talk Counselling's feedback, complaints and disputes process as detailed below or by providing informal feedback.

Beyond Talk Counselling

Child Safe Environments Policy

As a sole proprietor of Beyond Talk Counselling I am committed to promote and protect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by:

- Always adhering to my organisation's child safe policy and taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people
- Being a positive role model in all my conduct with children and young people
- Maintaining clear boundaries about appropriate behaviour between myself and the children and young people in my counselling practice
- Listening and responding appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people.
- Being alert to children and young people who are, or may be at risk of harm, and will report this quickly to the Child Abuse Report Line (13 14 78).
- Responding quickly, fairly and transparently to any serious complaints made by a child, young person or their parent/guardian.
- Encouraging children and young people to freely express their opinions and concerns on any issues that are important to them.

I will not:

- engage in rough physical games
- develop any 'special' relationships with children and young people that could be seen as favoritism such as the offering of gifts or special treatment
- do things of a personal nature that a child or young person can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- discriminate against any child or young person because of age, gender, cultural background, religion, vulnerability or sexuality.

If a child, young person or family ascertains that I have breached the Code of Conduct I am committed to resolve this issue. This may include active efforts to address the breach, consultation with an external supervisor, consultation with the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation Australia (PACFA) or by discontinuing the business.

Any potential breach of conduct can be reported by contacting me on 0490 307 406 or by emailing me at beyondtalktherapies@gmail.com . If concerned clients are not satisfied with the outcome, they can lodge a grievance or complaint with PACFA via the following link: [PACFA Lodge an ethical grievance or complaint](#)

Beyond Talk Counselling Child Safe Environments Policy

Feedback, complaints and disputes

As a Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation Australia (PACFA) member and clinical counsellor I work to high ethical standards. Under my clinical registration with PACFA I am required to comply with the [PACFA Code of Ethics 2017](#) .

I welcome all feedback and complaints to ensure best practice in my counselling service. Any clients who want to provide feedback or raise a complaint can contact me on 0490 307 406 or email beyondtalktherapies@gmail.com . If concerned clients are not satisfied with the outcome, they can lodge a grievance or complaint with PACFA via the following link: [PACFA Lodge an ethical grievance or complaint](#)

I will handle all complaints and feedback promptly, sensitively and fairly by:

- listening to the complaint/feedback and recording it
- advising of the time expected for an outcome
- replying to the complainant with an outcome
- documenting and securely storing decisions and actions taken resulting from complaints and feedback
- ensuring that procedural fairness is always followed.

Working with Children Check

I am a sole trader with no employees or volunteers. In accordance with the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016, I hold a current, 'not prohibited' Working with Children Check (WWCC) issued by the Screening Unit of the Department of Human Services which permits me to work with children and young people in South Australia and I will renew this every 5 years.

Supervision and training

I am dedicated to participating in ongoing supervision and training to uphold child safe environments.

Supervision includes regular sessions with a qualified supervisor which include a focus on child safety and wellbeing as well as performance evaluations.

Training includes:

- Making sure that I have read and understood the Mandatory Notification Information Booklet (see: https://dhs.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/103179/CSE-Mandatory-notification-information-booklet.PDF)
- Completing and updating the 'Safe Environments: Through Their Eyes' training course
- Reviewing the resources 'Keeping our kids safe' developed by SNAICC at <https://www.snaicc.org.au/policy-and-research/child-safety-and-wellbeing/keeping-our-kids-safe/>

Beyond Talk Counselling

Child Safe Environments Policy

- Examining web-based resources about issues concerning child safety and wellbeing
- Participating in professional development opportunities to increase knowledge and skills regarding the wellbeing and development of children and young people
- Undertaking the Child Safe Environments training every 3 years to maintain best practice.

Reporting and responding to harm or risk of harm

In accordance with section 30 of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, as a clinical counsellor, working with children and young people, I am a mandated notifier and must by law make the notification as soon as is reasonably practicable after forming the suspicion of harm or risk of harm.

As a mandated notifier I am required to notify the Department for Child Protection if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is, or may be, at risk of harm.

I will make reports concerning the reasonable belief that a child or young person is, or may be, at risk of harm to the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 or if at immediate risk, report to South Australia Police (SAPOL) on 000. In matters concerning Aboriginal children and young people, assistance is provided by Yaitya Tirramangkotti – an Aboriginal team, via the CARL number.

I understand as an adult worker, I have a legal obligation to report child sexual abuse to the police and to protect a child from sexual abuse. Failure to meet these obligations may be considered a criminal offence.

I will be guided by the relevant authority (Department for Child Protection/ SA Police) about how to proceed after a notification.

Following a report to CARL/ SAPOL, I will continue to provide a service to the child or young person and their family while monitoring their situation. I will also refer them to other appropriate services as needed.

Risk management

The following risks have been recognized as applicable to the counselling services I provide:

- The culture of the business may not be child-safe focused
- The present code of conduct may not be position specific or focused on the business
- Children and young people may not feel included
- Children, young people and their families may not be sufficiently supported to report concerns, complaints and feedback
- Children and young people may not be adequately supported when harm occurs
- I may not fully understand my obligations to report harm and risk of harm to the Child Abuse Report Line and SA Police if child/young person is at immediate risk
- Inappropriate use of power to harm, scare or control children and young people

Beyond Talk Counselling

Child Safe Environments Policy

- Discouraging children or young people to participate in spiritual or religious practices that are important to them
- Children and young people may be provided with unsupervised services
- Physical environment may not be supportive of children and young people
- Children and young people's privacy and confidentiality may not be sufficiently protected

Actions to minimise risk:

- A child focused Code of Conduct has been established to set the behavioural standards expected including what happens when a breach occurs
- Procedures are in place to make sure that child safety (through the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations) is embedded in my practice
- My business meets the requirements of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* (which mandates child safe environments) and the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016* (which mandates Working with Children Checks)
- My service uses inclusive, developmentally- appropriate language and resources to support children and young people to feel valued, respected and included
- The child safe environments policy is reviewed at least once every 5 years and a new child safe environments compliance statement is lodged with the Department of Human Services
- Processes to implement a child safe organisational culture are routinely reviewed and updated
- I will regularly review the Child Safe Environments Policy, Code of Conduct, Child Safe Environments Mandatory Notification Information Booklet and take up relevant training opportunities
- I will continue to update my 'Safe environments – through their eyes' training to understand my obligations to report harm and risk of harm
- I undertake ongoing supervision and training to further my understanding of how to work effectively with children and young people, as well as increasing my understanding of harm and risk of harm and how to report
- Complaints processes are in place and conveyed to children, young people and their families to make sure that they feel safe reporting to the organisation
- Beyond Talk Counselling's child safe environments policy (including Code of Conduct) is provided to children, young people and their families during the initial appointment and when requested
- I will maintain regular communication with the child/ young person's legal guardian regarding the details of the service provided and any concerns
- When providing one-to-one consultations with a child or young person, it will be with the parent/caregiver/other responsible in line of sight of the child, unless otherwise requested by the young person
- Children, young people and their families are encouraged to participate and provide feedback during sessions
- Any physical contact if necessary is undertaken in a safe way by explaining why contact is called for and what will happen, as well as asking the child or young person for their permission (or their family if appropriate) before going ahead

Beyond Talk Counselling

Child Safe Environments Policy

- Making sure that I hold a valid Working with Children Check (WWCC), to be verified in the Screening Unit portal.

Policy review

In accordance with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 I will review the child safe environments policy at least once every 5 years.

Other occasions when this policy will be reviewed include the following:

- Awareness of or compliance with the child safe policy is low
- A critical incident where a child or young person is exposed to harm through involvement in my counselling service
- Additional risks are identified for children or young people, which may require a change in the child safe environments policy
- Concerns are raised by anyone involved in my service about child safety or welfare in the business.

Each time this policy is reviewed and updated, I will lodge a new compliance statement with the Department of Human Services.

End of document