

Child Safety POLICY

Title: Assessing and responding to self-harm and suicide risk

Policy No: 605-3

Policy Statement:

The Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (Child Safety) will promote the safety, belonging, wellbeing and best interest of children through the implementation of effective and culturally appropriate self-harm and suicide risk management practices.

Child Safety is committed to respecting, protecting and promoting human rights. Under the *Human Rights Act 2019*, Child Safety has an obligation to act and make decisions about assessing and responding to self-harm and suicide risk in a way that is compatible with human rights and, when making a decision, to give proper consideration to human rights.

The safe care and connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with family, community, culture and country will be a key consideration when responding to self-harm and suicide risk for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Principles:

- The safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child, both throughout childhood and the rest of the child's life, are paramount.
- Child Safety staff will act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights and obligations under the *Human Rights Act 2019*.
- The five elements of the child placement principle (prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection) outline in the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 5C, apply to all processes, decisions and actions for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child.
- Children have a right to be safe and protected from harm.
- Child Safety staff will take seriously and respond to all acts of self-harm or suicide risk, including threats and gestures.
- Safety and risk assessment are fundamental to identifying and meeting children's safety, wellbeing and belonging needs.
- Children in the custody or guardianship of the chief executive have the right to access medical and therapeutic services necessary to address their self-harming behaviour and/or risk of suicide.

Objectives:

This policy aims to ensure that:

- children who demonstrate or have demonstrated self-harming or suicide risk behaviours, are responded to in ways that:
 - safeguard their immediate safety to the extent possible in the circumstances
 - prevent harm from occurring or reduce the risk of harm, and
 - promote their ongoing wellbeing by addressing harmful behaviours and underlying causes.
- risk factors, warning signs and cultural considerations are taken into account when assessing and responding to self-harm or suicide risk
- Child Safety Service Centre, Child Safety After Hours Service Centre and the Regional Intake Service staff will be provided with information and procedures about assessing and responding to self-harming and suicidal behaviours
- All children subject to a self-harm alert or suicide risk alert have a corresponding self-harm or suicide risk management plan.

Scope:

This policy refers to children in contact with Child Safety across all child protection phases, including:

- intake – where the child is the subject of an intake enquiry or child concern report and self-harm or suicide risk is part of the presenting problem
- investigation and assessment
- ongoing intervention through a support service case, intervention with parental agreement, a child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the chief executive (including interim orders) and a child protection order granting guardianship to a suitable person.

In addition to assessing and responding to self-harm and suicide risk, this policy will be implemented in conjunction with the Critical Incident Reporting policy and procedure.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The roles and responsibilities of Child Safety staff in relation to assessing and responding to self-harm and suicide risk are outlined in the Child Safety Practice Manual and associated resources.

Authority:

Child Protection Act 1999, sections 5, 6, 7, 74, 97, 122, 246A-H.

Delegations:

Refer to instruments of delegation for delegations relevant to decisions regarding the recording of a notification and medical and therapeutic decisions for children in care.

Records File No.: CHS/03376
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Date to be reviewed: 06 July 2023

Office: Child and Family Operations
Help Contact: Operational Support

Links:

Related legislation

Human Rights Act 2019

Procedures

Child Safety Practice Manual
Critical Incident Reporting
Practice kit – Mental Health
Practice guide – Evolve Therapeutic Services

Related policy

Child death case review policy and procedures (361)
Critical Incident Reporting
Obligations, actions and responsibilities upon the death of a child in care (421)

Rescinded Policy

605-2 Assessing and responding to self-harm and suicide risk

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