Child Players ACT
Child Safe Code of Conduct
for Staff and Volunteers

What is a Child Safe Code of Conduct

A Child Safe Code of Conduct is a document designed to protect children from harm by outlining a clear set of policies and procedures in line with Child Players ACT's child safe culture and values. It covers how Child Players ACT expects all staff and volunteers in our organisation to behave around and interact with children in both our physical spaces and online (including staff and volunteers under 18 years old age).

Our Child Safe Code of Conduct clearly describes the acceptable and unacceptable behaviours for all staff and volunteers engaging with children. Our Child Safe Code of Conduct identifies:

'I will' child safe behaviours that we consider acceptable

'I won't' behaviours that we consider unacceptable.

Engaging in unacceptable behaviour is a breach of Child Players ACT's Child Safe Code of Conduct and may result in disciplinary action.

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Purpose of the Policy

This Child Safe Code of Conduct provides guidance for all Child Players ACT's staff and volunteers around the high-quality standards of behaviour. By having clear rules and expectations of how staff and volunteers are to interact with children, Child Players ACT aims to promote a positive, safe, and respectful environment; help prevent harm and abuse; and encourage reporting. This code ensures that all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities and acceptable ways to behave that help foster children's safety and wellbeing. It ensures consistency, accountability, and transparency across all levels of an organisation. By establishing clear guidelines, the Child Safety Code of Conduct minimises risks, fosters trust within the community, and reinforces our organisation's commitment to child safety.

Definitions of Terminology

- **Adults**: People over 18 years of age and older.
- **Children**: People under 18 years of age.
- **Young People:** Specifically, people aged between 12 years and 18 years of age.
    - The word 'children' is used to describe everyone under18 year olds. When specifically referring to teenagers, sometimes the phrase 'young people' is used.
- **Staff:** People, both over and under the age of 18 years, who do work of any kind with Child Players ACT and receive a monetary payment of any kind (i.e., an honorarium).
- **Volunteers:** People, both over and under the age of 18 years, who do work of any kind with Child Players ACT and do not receive a monetary payment.
    - Some of Child Players ACT's staff and volunteers are young people aged between 16 and 18 years of age. When we refer to staff and volunteers, we are referring to both young people and adults; except if specifically stated otherwise.
    - All staff and volunteers under 18 years of age are expected to follow the child safe policies and procedures that guide our interactions with children, even though they themselves are children too.
    - <u>All the policies and procedures in place to protect children from harm, also apply to staff and volunteers under the age of 18 years.</u>
- **Participant:** A child or young person who is involved in any kind of Child Players ACT theatre programs, classes, activities, and/or productions; both fee paying and not fee paying.
    - Some people involved in our programs or productions are adults over the age of 18. For the child safe policy documents, the word 'participants' is referring to only children and young people under 18 years of age).
- **Parent/Carers:** An adult who is the primary caregiver of a participant who is a child or young person.
- **Families:** Any person that a participant, and their parent/carer, consider to be family (related or otherwise), including adults, young people, and children.
    - Some parents/carers and family are also staff or volunteers who work with Child Players ACT.

Child Safe Terminology:

- **Policy:** A rule or guideline.
- **Procedure:** The behaviours or actions that are done to follow the policies.
- **Disclosure:** Is when a child or young person tells another person about an incident that happened, or interactions they or another person had, that affected their safety and wellbeing in any way (including physical, emotional, or sexual harm or abuse).
- **Reporting:** Is when a person tells a person in authority about an incident that affected a child's safety and wellbeing. This could be an internal report to a company's Child Safety Officer, or an external report made to the legal authorities, such as the Australian Federal Police.

Definitions of Harm and Abuse

Psychological abuse (also known as emotional abuse): Psychological abuse is when someone causes emotional or mental harm through direct or indirect behaviours. Examples of psychological abuse include bullying, threatening and abusive language, intimidation, shaming, name-calling, ignoring, and isolating a child, and exposure to family violence.

Physical abuse: Physical abuse is when someone intentionally applies physical force against a child without lawful justification or excuse. Examples of physical abuse include hitting, striking, kicking, punching, or dragging a child. It also involves threatening to physically harm a child through words and/or gestures.

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse is when a person uses power or authority over a child to expose them to or involve them in sexual activity. Example of sexual abuse includes the sexual touching or sexual assault of a child, grooming, and production, distribution, or possession of child abuse material.

Neglect (or Lack of appropriate care): Neglect is a failure to provide a child with adequate and proper supervision, nourishment, clothing, shelter, education, or medical care.

Grooming: Grooming is a process when a person engages in manipulative predatory conduct to establish a position of 'trust' and prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or those looking after them, including parents or whole organisations.

Misconduct: This is inappropriate behaviour that may not be as severe as abuse but could indicate that abuse is occurring and is in breach of Child Players ACT's Child Safe Code of Conduct. This could include showing a child something inappropriate on a phone, or inappropriate conversations or touching.

Ill-Treatment: This is conduct towards a child that is unreasonable and seriously inappropriate, improper, inhumane, or cruel. Ill-treatment can include a range of conduct such as making excessive or degrading demands of a child; a pattern of hostile or degrading comments or behaviour towards a child; and using inappropriate forms of behaviour management towards a child.

Unacceptable Behaviours: This is any behaviour that is in breach of an organisation's child safety policies or procedures.

Concerning Behaviours: Behaviours that on their own may not constitute a breach of our Child Safe Code of Conduct but when viewed together are concerning and may indicate grooming behaviour.

Bullying (between peers). Child Players ACT '**zero tolerance for bullying policy'.**

- **Verbal bullying** includes name calling or insulting someone verbally
- **Physical bullying** includes threatening physical contact, or damaging or stealing their belongings
- **Social bullying** which includes consistently excluding another person, threats, gaslighting or sharing information or images that will have a harmful effect on the other person.

- **Direct or overt bullying -** physical bullying behaviours are easy to see This type of bullying can include physical violence such as hitting, or verbal bullying such as name calling.
- **Covert and indirect bullying** - is hard for others to see. This type of bullying can include spreading rumours, stealing friends, gossiping, criticising clothes and personalities, excluding a person, restricting where a person can sit or talking about a person behind their back to others. Indirect covert bullying mostly inflicts harm by damaging another's social reputation, peer relationships, and self-esteem, through psychological harm.

Outline of Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviours

The following list outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in different situations and practises. It is designed to guide staff and volunteers on which procedure is expected while at Child Players ACT. The examples cannot cover every situation, and staff are expected to use good judgement and common sense in situations that are not specifically covered in the examples. The list is in alphabetical order, and not in order of 'importance'. Each policy and procedure is equally important and all work together to create a safe environment where all children are protected from all types of harm and abuse.

Situations Outlines in Code of Conduct

1. A child's disclosure
2. Alone with a child
3. Equity and Respect
4. Illness and Injury - risk management plan
5. Photos and Videos
6. Professional Boundaries
7. Physical Contact with Children
8. Reporting
9. Social Media and Online
10. Supervision
11. Talking with Children

Acceptable Behaviours:	Unacceptable Behaviours:

1. A Child's Disclosure

Staff and volunteers at Child Players ACT are trained in how to support a child when they disclose an incident that affects their safety and wellbeing.

I will:	I will not:
1. Be alert to a child's behaviour, and actively look for and listen for changes in mood.	**1.** Ignore a child if they are actively sad or disengaged.
2. Give a child an opportunity to talk if I think they have something to disclose.	**2.** Expect a child to be responsible for disclosing all by themselves, without any support.
3. Make sure a child feels listened to and believed if they disclose to me.	**3.** Disbelieve a child or act shocked or dismissive if they disclose to me.
4. Respond calmly, ask open-questions, let the child use their own words and accept when the child wishes to move on.	**4.** Respond emotionally, ask leading questions and push the child to continue disclosing when they are no longer comfortable.
5. Explain what will happen next, manage expectations and reassure them.	**5.** Promise that the disclosure will remain a secret between us.
6. Document and report all disclosures to the Child Safety Officer, no matter how 'small'.	**6.** Ignore a disclosure if I do not think it is important.
7. Respect the child's right to privacy and keep their disclosure private and only tell people that need to know and can help.	**7.** Gossip about the child's disclosure, or tell people that are not involved in the internal reporting process.
8. Report the disclosure to external authorities if necessary (with support).	**8.** Refuse to be involved in reporting the disclosure to external authorities.

2. Alone With Children

Staff and volunteers working with Child Players ACT will put measures into place to avoid being alone with a child, when possible. The main measure is an 'open door' policy and not to be 'secretive'.

I will:

1. Avoid being alone with a child and endeavour to always be visible to another person.
2. Try to ensure that other people (children or adults) can see me when I am with a child.
3. Keep the door open so that others can see in, if I am in a room alone with a child.
4. Keep the door to the 'quiet area' open during breaks if there is only one child in there.
5. Try to have 'private conversations' with children in sight of others.
6. Remind children of the 'Buddy System' and ensure they are with a buddy of the same age and gender when they are not with the group.
7. Make sure that I am not alone with a child in a dressing room.
8. Stand at the door and ask a child to come out of a dressing room, if they are in there alone and I need to talk to them.
9. Ensure that there are always 2 children in the tech box with me when I'm supervising.
10. Ask a child to sit in the back seat of the car if I have to give them a ride alone.

I will not:

1. Forget that I should not be alone with a child, for both the child's safety and my safety.
2. Be out of sight of other people when I am in the company of a single child.
3. Go into a room alone with a child and close the door.
4. Close the door to the 'quiet area' if there is only one child in there.
5. Go to a private location away from everyone to have a 'private conversation' with a child.
6. Allow children to leave the group (i.e. to go to the toilet or get a drink) without suitable buddies of the same age and gender.
7. If I find myself alone with a child in a dressing room I will leave or ask the child to leave.
8. Go into the dressing room to get a child or talk to a child, when the child is in the room alone (unless it is an emergency).
9. Be alone with one child in the tech box. If one leaves, the other will leave the box with them.
10. Give a child a ride in my car by themselves (unless it is an emergency or with specific agreement with their parents/carers).

3. Equity, Equality and Respect

Staff and volunteers will treat all children with respect. They will appreciate that all children are unique, ensure that every child is given the support they need to participate to their full capacity.

I will:

1. Understand that every child has their own abilities and challenges and treat them as individuals to achieve equitable outcomes.
2. Give a participant the support and extra help they require to participate to the best of their ability.

I will not:

1. Expect every participant to learn the same way or be able to do the same things as every other participant.
2. Ignore the special needs or learning requirements a student has and not care if they do not participate.

3. Treat all children with respect and treat them as an equal.
4. Respect a child's right to privacy and keep any learning requirements or mental, or physical health private.
5. Ensure that my facial expressions, reactions, and gestures are kind and respectful.
6. Treat all children with the same level of friendliness.
7. Give all children the same gifts or 'warm and fuzzies'.

3. Talk down to a child or speak with a disrespectful attitude.
4. Talk about a child's personal learning requirements or mental or physical health in front of other children.
5. Use disrespectful or unkind facial expressions or gestures.
6. Show favouritism and be extra friendly to one child over others.
7. Give bigger or more expensive gifts to one child.

4. Illness and Injury Management

Staff and volunteers will give first aid, or medications, as required and with consent, when possible. Each program will have at least one First Aid Officer (a staff member with a current first aid certificate). Staff will be familiar with the medical requirements of children they have responsibility for.

I will:

1. Be aware of who the First Aid Officer is on any given day.
2. Be aware of any medical conditions of all the children in my care.
3. Check that we have parent/carers consent before giving a child any medication.
4. Fill out the Medicine Form every time I give a child medication of any kind.
5. Stay calm and help a child injured while in my care.
6. Send someone to get the first aid officer immediately if I see a child get injured.
7. Call an 000 immediately in the case of a life-threatening emergency.

I will not:

1. Supervise children, without knowing who to get if medical help is required.
2. Forget to check the document that lists all participants with specific requirements.
3. Give mediation to a child without first checking with the First Aid Officer.
4. Get distracted and forget to fill out the Medicine Form when giving medication.
5. Panic or freeze up if a child is injured in my care.
6. Try to help an injured child by myself without notifying the First Aid Officer.
7. Hesitate to call 000 if there is a very serious injury.

5. Photos, Videos, and the Use of Children's Images

Photos and videos of children can only be taken, and used, with the permission of parents /carers. Photos will only be taken on official devices, rather than personal devices.

I will:

1. Only take photos of a child using a device owned by the company, rather than a personal device. (unless I'm the official photographer).
2. Only use images of participants in promotional material (both online and not) with the parents/ carers' consent.

I will not:

1. Take photos of a child on any personal devices, unless I am the official photographer or appointed videographer
2. Use images of a participant on any promotional material unless their parents/carer has given consent.

3. Keep images of children that I have access to private.
4. Take photos of children for costume or blocking purposes if required, but I will delete these photos after use.

3. Share images of children without their parents/ carers' direct consent.
4. Keep any photos of children I took for costume or rehearsal reasons after the show if finished.

6. Professional Boundaries

Staff and volunteers will act professionally when they are at Child Players ACT and maintain professional boundaries with participants and families.

I will:

1. Only visit children outside of Child Players ACT if I have a previous relationship with them or their family and their parents are aware.
2. Have out of hours meetings with young people who are staff or volunteers, if this involves Child Players ACT business and the Child Safety Officer is aware.
3. Only be friends with a child outside of Child Players ACT's activities if we first became friends when I was under 18 years of age and we are within 3 years of age of each other.
4. Be friendly with children, but not consider them as a 'friend' outside of the company.
5. Change in and out of costumes in a location where there are not children (i.e. adults dressing room).
6. Support children by watching them performing in shows with other companies.
7. Avoid excessive displays of affections towards other staff or volunteers in front of children.

I will not:

1. Visit with, go out with, or babysit a child out of hours that I only know through Child Players ACT.
2. Exclude young people who are staff or volunteers from participating in meetings involving Child Players ACT business without the Child Safety Officer's prior approval.
3. Become friends with a Child Players ACT participant that I first met through Child Players ACT when I was over 18 years of age and I am 3 or more years older than.
4. Develop a special friendship with a participant that is considerably younger than me.
5. Get changed in or out of costume, or be partially naked, in front of a child or in a dressing room where children are getting changed.
6. Ask participants to come and see a show I am in if it is not age-appropriate.
7. Display signs of affections in front of children, (e.g., holding hands, sitting on laps or kissing).

7. Physical Contact with Children

Physical contact with children should be kept to a minimum. Everyone working in the organisation is expected to have healthy physical boundaries with children.

I will:

1. Be open and ensure any physical contact happens in front of other adults or children.
2. Ask for a child's consent before touching them for legitimate reasons (i.e., helping with costume, applying make-up, or doing hair).

I will not:

1. Be secretive or have physical contact with a child in a private location.
2. Touch a child unless there is a legitimate reason. I will not hold hands, carry or tickle a child unless it is part of a stage performance.

3. Establish and maintain my own boundaries in regards to physical touch, and communicate these to children.
4. Endeavour to touch children above the shoulder, below the knees and on the arm or head, when possible.
5. Respond positively to children who instigate physical contact, calmly and patiently implementing boundaries if need be.
6. Follow the 'Disney Rule' and hug a child if they initiate it, and I will let go when they do, so they are in control.
7. Put my arm around a child's shoulder during a hug.
8. Only physically restrain a child to prevent harm (i.e., to stop a fight or to avoid an accident).
9. Only let a child do my hair or apply make-up if I am in a show and the child is a member of the make-up team.
10. Report any incidents of others using corporal or physical punishment on a child.

3. Assume that everyone will know my boundaries in regards to physical touch.
4. Touch a child between the shoulders and the knees unless it is necessary (for example adjusting a costume).
5. Shun a child who initiates a hug or needs physical contact (i.e., to comfort)
6. Initiate a hug with a child, but will respond appropriately if the child initiates the contact.
7. Put my arm around a child's waist when hugging them.
8. Physically restrain a child when there is no risk of harm prevalent.
9. Let a child touch me unnecessarily. (i.e., sitting on my lap, applying make-up on me or doing my hair). This does not mean a hug (see above)
10. Use any form of corporal or physical punishment on a child.

8. Reporting:

Staff support a culture of reporting' and report all breaches or disclosures. Staff and volunteers should report everything in person to BJ or Production Manager and through the online reporting form here . There are paper incident report forms for all accidents and near misses.

I will:

1. Report any disclosures that children make to me
2. Any breaches of the Code of Conduct from staff and volunteers,
3. Read and report all breaches to the Participant's Behaviour Agreement.
4. Fill out an incident report form to report all accidents or near misses or ask PM to fill out form.

I will not:

1. Discuss private disclosures with other staff except BJ and Production Manager
2. Not gossip about any breaches I see or hear with other staff or volunteers
3. Ignore any breaches the children make to their behaviour agreement.
4. Ignore near misses and not think it's work filling out an incident report form.

9. Social Media Use and Online Communication

Staff and volunteers will avoid communicating privately with a child without including the child's parent / carer.

I will:

1. Include a child's parent/carer if I am emailing or texting or messaging a child.
2. Call a child's parent/carer if I need to speak to a child on the phone.
3. Respect professional boundaries and not 'friend' or 'follow' children on social media.
4. Only message children on social media though the Child Players ACT social media account(s).
5. Only follow children on social media though the Child Players ACT social media account(s).
6. Only remain friends or follow online with someone under 18 years of age if we were friends before I turn 18 years old.
7. Only post or repost photos of children on the Child Players ACT social media account(s), and only with both the children and parent's consent.

I will not:

1. Email or text a child without cc'ing the parent/carer in the correspondence.
2. Call a child directly and have a private conversation with them on the phone.
3. Be 'friends with' or 'follow' any child on private pages on social media or any online platform.
4. Message children from my private social media account(s).
5. Let children friend me or follow me on my private social media account(s).
6. Remove online friends if we were online friends when we were both under 18 years of age.
7. Post photos of a child on my personal social media account(s) even if the child has given me their consent.

10. Supervision of Children

All staff, over the age of 18 years, working for Child Players ACT has a duty of care to all children in our programs, classes and activities. Staff will practise active supervision and be aware of potential hazards.

I will:

1. Only look at my phone while supervising if I need to check the time or set an alarm.
2. Always have an adult nearby if I am supervising a group of children by myself if I am under 18 years old.
3. Sit on a chair or stand, so that children can see me easily.
4. Sit facing the children and be actively watching, where possible.
5. Actively supervise the children at all times and try to anticipate any problems or issues.
6. Talk to all the children.
7. Respect a child's right to privacy in the toilets and not enter the cubicle.

I will not:

1. Not look or 'play' on my phone while I am supervising
2. Supervise a group of children by myself if I am under 18 years old without an adult nearby.
3. Sit on the floor and be difficult for all the children to see.
4. Sit with my back to the majority of children that I am supervising.
5. Just talk to the other staff or volunteers supervising and ignore the children.
6. Just talk with one specific child or group.
7. Enter the toilet cubicle with a child and lock the door.

8. Monitor the toilet block when children are in there to ensure the public do not enter.
9. Report any incidents that I see or hear between children that could possibly be bullying or behaving negatively to another child.

8. Allow the 'general public' to enter the toilet block when a child is in there.
9. Ignore anything that is said or done between children that could be considered bullying, or other negative behaviour.

11. Talking with Children

Children need to be talked to with kindness and respect. All topics of conversations with children need to be age-appropriate.

I will:

1. Use a kind, gentle and calm tone of voice that affirms the child's worth and value.
2. Use age-appropriate, G-rated language.
3. Only discuss G-rated topics of conversations with children.
4. Use inclusive language that values and affirms the child's self-identity.
5. Use positive and affirming words and tone when talking to children.
6. Always use the child's preferred name and pronouns.
7. Use humour that is respectful to all children at appropriate times.
8. Avoid using sarcasm when talking to children and other adults.
9. Encourage the development of terms and jokes that foster community and inclusion.

I will not:

1. Use a harsh, or a mean tone of voice that devalues the child's worth.
2. Use swear words in front of children.
3. Talk about sex, sexuality, drugs, violence, death, or suicide when children are present. (unless instigated by child, in which case staff will use their discretion to determine if the topic is appropriate for other children or a private conversation)
4. Use language that discriminates based on gender, race, age, or ability.
5. Use negative words, put downs or derogatory tone when talking to children.
6. Give a child a 'pet name' or refuse to use their preferred pronoun.
7. Make jokes at the expense of a child or make jokes at inappropriate times.
8. Use sarcasm to mock and portray contempt, even as a 'joke'.
9. Develop and encourage inside jokes that excludes others based on experience or understanding.

My Obligations as Staff / Volunteer with Child Players ACT

I will attend and engage in all training focused on Child Players ACT's child safe policies and procedures.

I will obtain a Working with Vulnerable People (or equivalent) card, be responsible for keeping it up to date and provide it to Child Players ACT staff on request.

I will follow all the acceptable behaviours outlined in this Child Safe Code of Conduct and consciously avoid doing the unacceptable behaviours.

I will follow all policies and procedures outlined in Child Players ACT's Child Safe and Wellbeing Policy and all other policy documents.

I will foster the 'culture of reporting' and report all breaches from other staff and volunteers to this Child Safe Code of Conduct.

I will follow all the internal and external reporting obligations outlined in Child Players ACT's Child Safe Reporting and Complaint Handling Policy.

Breaches of the Code of Conduct

As a Child Safe Organisation, the safety and wellbeing of children is Child Players ACT's top priority.

Staff or volunteers who breach our Child Safe Code of Conduct (e.g. undertake unacceptable behaviours) will be subject to disciplinary action. This may include additional child safe training, increased supervision, suspension, or termination from the organisation. Disciplinary action will be decided by the Child Safety Officer on a case-by-case basis, and will depend on the severity and frequency of the breach.

If a breach by a staff member or volunteer involves a criminal offence, such as misconduct or abuse, or if they show a pattern of concerning behaviour that could be considered grooming, they will be removed immediately. Child Players ACT staff and volunteers are mandatory reporters and therefore legally required to report these types of offence(s) to the appropriate authorities (i.e. ACT Policing) for further investigation. The adult will be suspended (awaiting the results of the external investigations) or terminated. All disciplinary action will be decided by the Child Safety Officer in conjunction with the Production Manager. Their decision is final; there is no grievance process available.

Regular Review of Policy

All Child Players ACT's child safe policies documents are reviewed and updated regularly, to ensure they are current and effective. If you have any **feedback or suggestions on how to improve this Child Safe Code of Conduct policy document**, please talk to the Child Safety Officer (BJ) or email the production team at contact@childplayersact.net.

We value your feedback and suggestions to help us create a Child Safe Code of Conduct policy that is a practical, working document that can guide our everyday interactions with children.

Date document reviewed	Next review date
October 2026	October 2027