



Prevention of Abuse – Client Protection Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 Policy Statement

Ready to Read is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all of its employees, contractors and visitors, particularly vulnerable persons such as Children. Ready to Read aims to reduce the risk of Abuse occurring and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken should Abuse occur.

1.2 Scope

This Client Protection Policy applies to:

- All service Organisations or subsidiary bodies authorised by or under the control of Ready to Read
- All employees, Volunteers, contractors and visitors within Ready to Read or engaged by Ready to Read

1.3 Authority

This Client Protection Policy was adopted for use by Ready to Read on 1 August 2018. Ready to Read are committed to implementing the Client Protection Policy and to training our employees, contractors and Volunteers in its content and application.

1.4 Definitions

Abuse, can consist of one or more of but is not restricted to the following:

- Physical Abuse, any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as: hitting, punching, kicking (marks from belt buckles, fingers), shaking, burning (irons, cigarettes), biting, pulling out hair, alcohol and/or other drug administration.
- Sexual Abuse, any assault or Abuse of a sexual nature, sexual molestation, indecent exposure, sexual harassment or intimidation.
- Emotional Abuse, the chronic attitude or behaviour of one person which is directed at another person, or, the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a person's self-esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include: Insulting, bullying, devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or other extreme acts in the vulnerable person's presence.

Neglect, characterised by the failure to provide for basic needs. Any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a person's health or development.

Child/Children, any person/s under the age of 18.

Leader, any person (paid or unpaid) over the age of 18 who is responsible for the control and safety of Members placed in their care whilst holding a formal position in a named Organisation. A Leader could include but is not limited to: Activity Coordinators, Small group Leaders, Managers, Teachers, Teacher's Aides, Volunteers and Organisers.

Member, any person (adult or Child), who attends or participates in the named Organisation's activities, objectives or strategic plan.

Organisation, Ready to Read, located at 3/31 Terminus St, Castle Hill, NSW, Australia.

Volunteer, any unpaid person over the age of 16 who is invited to assist in helping.

Worker, any employee or contractor of Ready to Read.

2 Policy Review

This Client Protection Policy will be reviewed annually at the July Board of Directors' meeting. Any changes recommended by the interested parties should be submitted in writing to the governing body for consideration one month before the July annual review date. Any proposed changes will be submitted to the Board of Directors' meeting for approval before being implemented.

3 Obligations

3.1 Responsibility

The core expectations of any responsible Organisation requires us to treat all people with fairness and dignity and to care for those who are less powerful and in need of nurture and protection.

3.2 Legal

All relevant Organisations within Australia are bound by Federal and State legislation and principles established through common law. Ready to Read is committed to adhering to all relevant legislation.

3.4 Ethical

Some actions may not be regarded as Abuse, but are unacceptable behaviour for Ready to Read. These include:

- Inappropriate conversation of a sexual nature.
- Coarse language, especially that of a sexual nature.
- Suggestive gestures or remarks.
- Jokes of a sexual nature.
- Inappropriate touching.
- Inappropriate literature.
- Recording, photographing or filming without prior consent of Ready to Read head office.
- Acts of violence committed by a Worker, Leader or Volunteer in the course of an activity.

Ready to Read's governing body will ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained at all times.

Each client of Ready to Read has the right to:

- Full and effective use of his or her personal, civil, legal and consumer rights;
- Be treated with dignity and respect and to receive services without exploitation, Abuse or Neglect;
- Receive services without discrimination or victimisation;
- Personal privacy;
- Be treated and accepted as an individual and to have his or her individual preferences considered and treated with respect;
- Continue his or her cultural religious practices without discrimination;
- Freedom of speech;
- Complain and to act to resolve disputes;
- Have access to advocates and to other avenues of redress; and
- Be free from reprisals, or a well-founded fear of reprisal, in any form for acting to enforce his or her rights.

4 Selection and Screening

4.1 Employees, Agency Staff, Contractors & Volunteers

Employees, Agency Staff, Contractors and Volunteers involved in activities or programs with Children must be carefully selected and screened. Prior to commencing employment, contract or Volunteer services, the following precautions will be taken:

- All Workers and Volunteers must provide a resume/CV, including details of two referees and permission to contact them.
- Relevant referees will be checked and spoken to, using an agreed set of questions which have been drafted by Ready to Read. In addition, Ready to Read may also call an applicant's prior employer to also be checked and spoken to. The questions will seek to establish the applicant's suitability for the role or position.
- All short-listed candidates must undertake a formal interview which includes an analysis of past experience working with Children.
- All Workers and Volunteers are required to have a current Working with Children Check (WWCC) or police check, based on state requirements. Ready to Read will verify the WWCC online and require it to remain current whilst engaged with Ready to Read.
- There can only be two results for a new Working with Children Check – a clearance or a bar. People with a bar may not Work or Volunteer in Child-related roles.

Where the Organisation has identified that an applicant has previously committed a violent or sexually related offence, they cannot, under any circumstances, be considered for employment or engagement with Ready to Read.

5 Training

All new Workers/Employees, Contractors and Volunteers will be issued with a copy of this policy and receive formal training in;

- The content and application of the Organisation's Client Protection Policy,
- Reporting procedures and the associated legal requirements.

Refresher training courses based on current "best practice" and changes to legislation will be provided on an annual basis.

6 A Safe Environment

Incidents of Abuse are unlikely to take place in front of another person and the presence of a witness can assist in clarifying questionable allegations. For these reasons, entry doors to Ready to Read classrooms or other utilised spaces, should never be locked. If parents have no other way of being able to see into the classroom (e.g. there are no glass panels, glass door, etc.), the door must remain open.

Workers will respect a Member's feelings and privacy when engaging in physical contact of any kind.

Adults and Children are expected to respect each other's privacy. Workers will set an example by protecting their own privacy in similar situations. A Worker should not take a Child to the toilet under any circumstance. Parents are communicated at the start of

each term that they should take their Child to the bathroom prior to a class. As we encourage the parent to wait outside the classroom, they should be contacted to take their Child to the bathroom if needed.

Workers have the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present in a classroom during Ready to Read lessons, to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.

7 Disciplining Children

Is not the responsibility of Ready to Read or its Workers or Volunteers to discipline a Child. If a Child does not abide by the rules set down by the Organisation, or becomes an obstruction to the care of other Children and may cause harm, the Child will be removed and referred back to their parent or guardian. At no time will a Worker administer any form of physical or emotional discipline.

8 Reporting Procedures

- Ready to Read actively encourages the reporting of all Abuse, including Sexual Abuse.
- Ready to Read is committed to building an environment where either a victim or Worker/Volunteer feels able to report such Abuse.
- Workers/Volunteers must report Reasonable Suspicions of Abuse to the senior management of Ready to Read immediately.
- Reasonable Suspicion means fair and practical reason to believe an incident involving Abuse has occurred, based on either verbal communication, hearsay, rumour or observation of behaviour.
- An independent person will be appointed by Ready to Read with the specific duty of dealing with any allegations of harm or Abuse that may arise. Ready to Read designates that this independent person is the police force in the relevant state.
- The details of those reporting Abuse will be kept private and confidential.
- A documented reporting process with escalating procedures has been established by Ready to Read for handling allegations of Abuse. The process is as follows:
 - Workers:
 - For all Reasonable Suspicions, the Worker must immediately contact the Ready to Read head office and speak to a Company Director.
 - The Worker should verbally provide details of the alleged suspicion. This should include: Ready to Read location, Child's name, description/details of allegation which include details of the alleged perpetrator.
 - Ready to Read head office will document the details and provide the details (including the Worker's details) to the police. This will be provided confidentially to the police.
 - Customers:
 - For all Reasonable Suspicions, the customer must contact Ready to Read head office (1300-850-677) and speak to a Company Director.
 - Customers should provide details of the suspicion, which will be handled with the highest level of confidentiality. The Ready to Read

Director will document the conversation, which will be provided confidentially to the police.

The escalating procedures will be as follows:

- The automatic suspension from all work or other duties within Ready to Read of any person while under investigation by Ready to Read, or by the police, for committing Abuse;
- The automatic termination of their employment, contract or involvement with Ready to Read if found guilty of committing Abuse, either by internal investigation or by a court. If there is Reasonable Suspicion that a Member has been or is suffering Abuse, the Police and the Organisation's Insurer will be contacted immediately.
- The phone number for Castle Hill Police (nearest to the Ready to Read head office) is: (02) 9680-5399.

The Police will also be notified if a Member discloses an incident of Abuse that has occurred somewhere other than Ready to Read premises.

If a disclosure of Abuse is made, the person who receives the disclosure will maintain appropriate pastoral care to the one making the disclosure. This will include:

- Treating each allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or downplay or minimise the allegation's impact on the alleged victim.
- Not pushing the Member to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempting to investigate the allegation.
- Assuring the Member that they are understood: that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has happened is not their fault; and that they are correct in disclosing the incident.
- Reporting the Abuse to the police and Ready to Read insurer.
- Not contacting the alleged perpetrator. If the Worker or Volunteer is already providing counsel to the alleged perpetrator, it may be advisable for another person to assume this responsibility for the duration of any investigation.
- If the alleged assault has taken place recently, clothing worn by the Member should be, if reasonably practical, retained and handed to the police for forensic examination.
- Maintaining confidentiality.

Any disclosures by a Member, reports of suspected Abuse and all details of the subsequent investigation will be documented promptly and the documents will be held in a secure location where a breach of privacy cannot occur.

9 Alcohol & Drugs

The consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs on Ready to Read premises or location where Ready to Read classes are conducted is not to be allowed or condoned by any Worker. Any Member found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is to be counselled and family contacted.