

Code of Conduct

Applies to: All Koorana staff, students, volunteers, families and visitors as well as Koorana Board Members.

Purpose

1. To ensure that all interactions with children are conducted in a manner which upholds a child's dignity, provides guidance, support and assists in the development of self-esteem.
2. To provide an environment that is safe for children and free from risk of harm.
3. To detail the expected behaviours of Koorana staff, students, volunteers, families and visitors as well as Koorana Board Members.

Version: 2

Date approved: 12 February 2017

Next review date: 12 February 2019

Approved by: CEO

Policy context: This policy relates to

Standards or other external requirements

National Quality Standards – Quality Area 5 – Standard 5.1, Elements 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.3 & 5.2.3 [Preschool only]
<http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/National-Quality-Framework-Resources-Kit/NQF-Resource-03-Guide-to-NQS.pdf>
 NSW Disability Services Standards
<http://www.qip.com.au/standards/national-disability-services-nds-standards/>

Legislation or other requirements

Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010 [Preschool only]
<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/acts/2010-104.pdf>
 Education and Care Services National Regulations [Regulations 155 & 156; section (2)(i)(i) & (j) under Regulation 168] [Preschool only]
<http://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-regulations>
 Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998
<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/1998/146>

	<p>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/1998/157</p> <p>Ombudsman Act, 1974 http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/1974/68</p> <p>Work Health & Safety Act 2011 https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2016C00887</p>
Contractual obligations	N/A
Resources	<p>NSW Ombudsman, Child Protection fact sheet No 6 https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/news-and-publications/publications/fact-sheets/child-protection</p> <p>Child Safe Workshop – Activity Book, Office of the Children’s Guardian https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/child-safe-face-to-face</p>

Documents related to this policy	
Related policies	Behaviour Support Bullying and Harassment Child Protection Child Safe Environments [Preschool, SIBs, Playgroup] Compliments and Complaints Diversity and Inclusion Grievance Handling Guiding Children's Behaviour Performance Management and Discipline Professional Boundaries
Forms, record keeping or other organisational documents	Koorana Values Koorana Constitution

Definitions
<p><i>"Koorana" means Koorana Child and Family Services Incorporated.</i></p> <p><i>"Parents" includes a legal guardian.</i></p> <p><i>"Visitors" includes students, volunteers, visiting professionals, performers and contractors.</i></p> <p><i>"Staff" is a Koorana staff member working in the Preschool, e.g. Educator, Administrator or Key Worker. This may also include other Koorana staff such as Case Managers, Early Linker, Therapists, Head Office Administrators, Home and Community Based Key Workers and Koorana Management when visiting or working in the Preschool.</i></p>

POLICY STATEMENT

All staff and volunteers are accountable to Koorana Child and Family Services Incorporated (Koorana) for the delivery of effective and efficient services. All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to treat everyone they encounter through their work with dignity and respect, and a special duty of care towards those in Koorana's care who are most vulnerable.

Koorana's values encompass the rights of all clients to a safe physical and emotional environment that is free from harm. In the delivery of services, Koorana staff and volunteers will always respond in ways that promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of the children, young people and families that are in our care and in contact with us.

This Code of Conduct has been formulated to clarify for staff and volunteers the type of conduct that is expected of them in the nature of their interactions with people they encounter through their work, including clients and other staff and volunteers.

Further, the Code of Conduct outlines expected behaviours in relation to contact and interactions with children. It will ensure that Koorana complies with relevant child protection legislation and the licensing regulations for education and care services.

Staff working with children will have respectful relationships with children, so they may:

- Be encouraged to express themselves and their opinions,
- Be given the opportunity to become self-reliant and to develop self-esteem,
- Be given guidance as to positive and responsible behaviour, and
- Not be required to perform activities that are inappropriate, having regard to each child's family and cultural values, age and physical and intellectual development.

PRACTICES

Expectations of Behaviour

- Staff and volunteers must act honestly, in good faith and in the best interests of Koorana.
- Staff and volunteers are required to display skill, professionalism, care and diligence in the performance of their duties.
- Staff and volunteers must keep confidential within Koorana any information, records or other materials acquired or accessed during their employment/engagement with Koorana, both during their period of employment/engagement with Koorana and after the termination of their employment/engagement.
- Staff and volunteers must maintain their privacy and other staff members' and volunteers personal privacy, and personal contact details (including personal numbers, home address, personal email or social media contacts) must not be given to clients under any circumstances.
- Staff and volunteers must present a professional image at all times. Standard of dress is relative to the specific work carried out and so it may be necessary to bring a change of clothes to work if needing to attend a professional meeting. Staff and volunteer's must demonstrate sensitivity to and respect of the cultural backgrounds of the families they work with and the communities Koorana works within and are required to dress modestly. To comply with work health and safety requirements staff and volunteers must wear appropriate footwear to work; thongs are not appropriate footwear.
- Staff and volunteers must maintain punctuality - if you are late or cannot report for work, inform a senior staff member as soon as possible.
- Staff and volunteers must respect the property of Koorana and others. Koorana property includes all records, both hard copy and electronic.

- Staff and volunteers must not use work time for private gain - if there is a need to leave the work premises for personal reasons, a senior staff member must be advised well in advance.
- Staff, students and volunteers are obliged to comply with all reasonable and lawful instructions given by their direct Supervisor, and not make false representations in relation to their employment with Koorana.
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- Staff and volunteers must comply with all laws, regulations, policies, procedures and rules that apply to Koorana's activities.
- Staff and volunteers are obliged to treat everyone they encounter through their work, including clients and staff, with dignity and respect for diversity and differences. Discrimination, victimisation or harassment based on a person's race, colour, creed, religion, national origin, citizenship, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, union membership, mental or physical disability, or any other classification protected by law will not be tolerated. Bullying towards others will not be tolerated.
- Staff and volunteers must be aware of, and comply with, all relevant child protection Legislation, Koorana's Child Protection and Behaviour Support policies.
- Staff and volunteers must ensure that they maintain professional boundaries with clients at all times. Koorana's expectations of staff and volunteers in maintaining professional boundaries include complying with this Code of Conduct and complying with Koorana's Professional Boundaries Policy.
- Under no circumstances are staff and volunteers permitted to develop personal or sexual relationships with clients, either during work times or after hours.
- Where an established personal relationship (such as family relationship or friendship) exists with a client, staff and volunteers must ensure that their professional behaviour does not compromise the client or themselves, and must report the potential conflict of interest to their Manager, and it must be fully and appropriately managed. This may necessitate that the staff member is not involved in any decision making or service delivery which relates to the family.
- Staff and volunteers must not engage in sexual misconduct in relation to anyone they encounter through their work, including clients and fellow staff members. Sexual misconduct describes a range of behaviours, or a pattern of behaviour, aimed at the involvement of others in sexual acts.

- Whilst on duty and/or when responsible for clients, staff and volunteers must not consume or be under the influence of alcohol, or use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs, or be under the influence of prescription drugs to the extent that the prescription drugs impede performance or behaviour. This requirement includes excursions, camps, social events and other such activities arranged by or associated with Koorana.
- Accepting gifts or benefits can result in conflicts of interest or perceptions of bias – generally staff and volunteers must not accept gifts or benefits from a client or from an organisation Koorana works with. However, it is recognised this may not always be possible, such as circumstances where declining a gift may cause offence. Each case should be considered based on the circumstances in which a gift or benefit is offered. In any case where a gift or benefit is accepted staff must inform their manager. Under no circumstances are staff permitted to accept a gift of cash from anyone – instead staff may suggest that the client make a donation to Koorana. A gift is an item of value (e.g. food, entertainment, hospitality, travel, property, jewellery or alcohol) and a benefit is a non-tangible item of value (e.g. preferential treatment). If staff are uncertain about any issues relating to being offered a gift or benefit they should consult their manager.
- Staff and volunteers must use Koorana's computer, network, email and internet facilities and services in a manner that maintains and enhances Koorana's professional reputation, and staff must not use these facilities and services in a manner that could bring Koorana into disrepute, including: any illegal activity; accessing, storing, disseminating or publishing any material which contravenes the law or which may be offensive or obscene; transmitting or causing to be transmitted communications which may be construed as harassment or disparagement of others; transmitting any communication which is insulting, abusive or uses words or images which could reflect adversely on Koorana; invading the privacy of another individual; or conducting a private business.

This includes *Social Media and Social Networking* using social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter etc. Koorana is bound by confidentiality legislation that does not permit staff or families to divulge information pertaining to the operation of, care of, or enrolment of children and families in Koorana services.

Social media is a public forum that can allow unauthorized persons to obtain information about a staff member, families or child attending Koorana services.

Koorana has determined that it is not appropriate for staff to be "friends" with families, including parents or siblings of children that are enrolled in Koorana services.

Parents are to be aware that they are not permitted to ask a staff member to be their "friend" on Facebook, or to become a follower or be followed on Twitter. Where staff have a pre-existing relationship with a family, they need to consider whether or not it is appropriate to remain "friends" on social media whilst the family is a Koorana client.

Staff are permitted to be “friends” with other staff employed by Koorana; however, staff must give consideration to the following confidentiality and professional standards:

- Staff are not to discuss individual children, or groups of children, even if given an alias, that are enrolled or have been enrolled in Koorana services.
- Staff are not to discuss other staff that are employed by Koorana.
- Staff are not to discuss any activity that has occurred at Koorana.
- Staff are not to upload any photos of children, staff or families, or samples of activities undertaken as part of the delivery of Koorana services.
- Staff are not to divulge any personal information or confidential information that is privilege to Koorana.

- Many professional agencies are now communicating using Social Media. Where staff chose to be associated with professional agencies, State or Federal Ministers or follow them on Twitter and partake in forums they are to:

- Give due consideration to the reason for engaging in conversations with other professionals ensuring that this is for professional gain only, and not gossip or defamatory to Koorana or other parties.
- Remain professional in all interactions upholding the reputation and dignity of Koorana.
- Views that are put forward on forum boards are not to identify Koorana, staff or families in line with confidentiality requirements.

- This determination is in line with protecting the rights and privacy of families, children and staff and is intended to provide a secure environment for the effective operation of the Preschools.

- If staff require any guidance on this code of conduct, or how it relates to specific situations, then they should seek advice from their Manager.
- If a staff member is concerned about another staff member’s behaviour or intended behaviour, or their performance of work, they should confidentially report their concerns directly to their direct Supervisor or Manager as soon as possible.
- Any breach of the above expectations may lead to disciplinary action, up to termination of employment. Breaches will be managed under the relevant policy, procedure or constitutional provision as they apply to employees, contractors, volunteers, board members, and students on placement.

Provision of a Supportive Environment

Children are vulnerable trusting beings that depend on adults to provide a safe and nurturing environment. Interactions between staff and children should be warm, friendly and convey respect having regard to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child. All interactions are to be conducted in such a manner that a child feels supported and secure and free from the risk of harm and provide the children with opportunities to express themselves and their opinions.

Within a child focused environment there are many opportunities for staff to interact directly and indirectly with the children.

Staff are imperative in providing an interactive environment for children. As such staff are required to respond to children in a warm, respectful, friendly and supportive manner, thereby allowing children to develop as individuals.

Acceptable Physical Contact

Children are affectionate beings and will seek physical contact with adults to gain reassurance and love. It is the role of staff to reciprocate this contact to assist children to develop socially and emotionally.

However, staff must be aware of what is considered appropriate contact given the age and stage of development of each child.

At Preschool or SIBs Club a staff member must ensure that they are always in view of or hearing of other staff when working with children. This is for the protection and safety of both the child and the staff member.

At Playgroup a staff member must ensure that they are always in view of or hearing of other staff or families when working with children.

Staff must consider and take responsibility for their personal interactions with children when determining if they are appropriate.

Contact with a child that is considered socially acceptable is encouraged to assist in building positive and supportive relationships.

With this in mind, it is therefore considered appropriate to initiate and/or to hug a child who approaches staff for a cuddle, allow a child to sit on your lap, e.g. whilst you read a story, and provide comfort to a child who is injured or distressed.

Other than in unforeseen emergencies, any physical restraint – for example to keep a child from danger, or from hurting other children – will be part of a planned intervention. This intervention will be planned

in collaboration with the child's parents or guardians and will comply with Koorana's Behaviour Support Policy.

Staff must not, under any circumstances, use any form of discipline which involves physical violence or any threat of force, or engage in any behaviour which could cause physical, psychological or emotional harm to children or young people.

Supervision [Preschool, SIBs Club, Playgroup]

Whilst supervision is an integral part of providing a safe environment, children should remain free to move and interact with their environment and others without the overpowering presence of an adult. Direct supervision is where staff are directly involved with providing assistance for children to interact with others and their environment.

Indirect supervision is where staff create the environment and support the children's interactions within it.

Staff must not neglect children and young people in their care. Neglect of a child or young person is a notifiable incident under regulations. Neglect occurs where a child is harmed by the failure of a person whose job includes care responsibilities to provide the basic physical and emotional supports.

Interactions with children

Children respond to situations and experiences differently. Staff must be aware of the individual child's behaviour patterns and be able to adequately handle any situations that may arise in an appropriate manner.

Staff are to ensure that behaviour support strategies are followed as per Koorana's Behaviour Support policy.

Staff must ensure that the dignity and rights of each child is maintained at all times.

Staff must also be aware of the power of their voices when interacting with children. Whilst a strong confident voice is required to direct or guide a group of children it must not be used to intimidate a child or a group of children or to restrict the children's ability to interact freely with their environment.

Appropriate Language

Staff must be aware of the language they use whilst working with children. Words that are considered to be swearing words, or words that could offend, are not appropriate to use around children. In addition, words or phrases that invoke prejudice, bias or racial slang are also not appropriate within the workplace.



Children's Feedback

Children are actively encouraged to provide feedback on their interactions with staff. At Preschool, SIBs Club and Playgroup staff and children will have discussion around the topic of what appropriate interactions between children and staff are. Children are also able to provide feedback verbally to staff. Children are also encouraged to inform their parents or guardians of any inappropriate staff behaviour.

Communicating the Code of Conduct to staff

Each new staff member (employee, contractor for service delivery, volunteer, board member and student) will receive a copy of this Code of Conduct

Their Manager is responsible for ensuring that they sign and date their copy of the Code of Conduct Agreement below.

The original signed version of this document must be kept on the staff member's personnel file. A copy will be given to the new staff member for their reference.

A copy of the Koorana Code of Conduct will be available for viewing at each Koorana premises.

I have read, fully understand, and agree to abide by this Koorana Code of Conduct

Name

Signature

Date