



CHILD & YOUTH SAFE POLICY

Version – 5.0

Effective: August 2023

1. Youth Insearch commitment to child and youth safety

All children and young people have a right to feel safe, and to be safe at all times. Youth Insearch will not tolerate any abuse or neglect of children or young people involved with our program.

We are committed to creating environments which are child and youth safe. We take a preventative and proactive approach to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, that everyone understands and where everyone feels confident to have a say and raise any concerns.

We respect and value the rights of all children and young people and support them to reach their full potential. We recognise that particular consideration needs to be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. We also acknowledge the particular needs of children and young people arising from their cultural and linguistic background, sexuality, gender diversity, disability, or as a result of domestic and family violence or other trauma.

Youth Insearch will:

1. Drive a culture of child and youth safety at all levels of the organisation.
2. Take all allegations or disclosures of abuse or neglect seriously, respond appropriately, and report concerns to the relevant authorities. No Youth Insearch person will obstruct any investigation or collude to protect any person or organisation.
3. Empower children, young people, families, and communities to participate in decisions which affect their lives.
4. Value diversity and promote inclusive practices.
5. Employ and engage only people who are suitable to work with children and young people and provide high quality supervision and support.
6. Ensure children and young people who feel unsafe or wish to raise a concern know who to talk with and feel comfortable to do so.
7. Ensure staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe.
8. Maintain the safety, suitability, and security of our physical and online environments which children and young people access.
9. Embed Child Safe principles within our quality assurance practices.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. Outline the Youth Insearch commitment to maintaining child and youth safe environments across our organisation.
2. Document the key components and underlying principles of the Youth Insearch approach to promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, in accordance with principles and standards of best practice, and our legal and regulatory responsibilities
3. Ensure that our commitment to children and young people's safety and wellbeing is embedded within our organisational culture.
4. Prevent any and all forms of child abuse within Youth Insearch.
5. Ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
6. Provide guidance to employees/volunteers/contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
7. Provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

3. Scope

- 3.1. This Policy applies to all Youth Insearch staff as defined under Work Health and Safety laws. All "staff" in this definition includes employees (including Youth Insearch Executive), contractors, subcontractors, apprentices, and trainees, including Board members and Board Committee members, who perform work for, or on behalf of, Youth Insearch. In addition, this Policy also applies to volunteers who perform work with Youth Insearch, including Youth Leaders, Support Adults, and work experience students.
- 3.2. As this is an organisational wide policy, references to 'we' or 'our' refer to all Youth Insearch staff and volunteers as stated above.

4. Policy

4.1. Governance and culture

- 4.1.1. Youth Insearch strives at all times to promote the safety, protection and wellbeing of children and young people.
- 4.1.2. Our staff and volunteers must demonstrate the practices, behaviour, and relationships consistent with our organisational values, Youth Insearch's Code of Conduct, Leader and Volunteer Code of Conduct, Working with Children and Young People Policy and Human Resources policies and procedures in all their interactions with children and young people who access our program. These documents must be read, understood, and signed by staff when they commence employment or engagement with Youth Insearch and followed at all times during their employment or engagement.
- 4.1.3. Staff and Volunteers must actively discourage and immediately report to management any behaviour, which may be considered to be a breach of Youth Insearch's Working with Children and Young People Policy, Code of Conduct, organisational policies and procedures or values.
- 4.1.4. We must comply with our obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, national, state and territory child protection legislation and other relevant laws, regulations, standards and quality frameworks, accreditation, licensing, and contractual obligations when working with children and young people, as they apply to our programs.

4.2. Children and young people's participation and empowerment

- 4.2.1 We promote a child and youth safe culture that is inclusive and prioritises the empowerment and participation of all children and young people, especially those with particular needs and vulnerabilities.
- 4.2.2 Staff and volunteers must ensure that all children and young people who access our programs are aware of and understand their rights and responsibilities and are supported to exercise these rights and responsibilities.

- 4.2.3 We value the voices of Lived (and living) Experience and commit to embedding the voices of young people via our State and National Program Councils into all aspects of program design and delivery, and to ensure that the rights and responsibilities of children and young people participating in our program are supported and upheld.
- 4.2.4 Children and young people must be informed when they access our program about how their personal information will be managed and how their privacy rights will be respected. This includes informing the young person about our legal obligations to share information lawfully with other organisations, if their safety and wellbeing are at risk.
- 4.2.5 Where social media is identified as an appropriate medium to facilitate participation and communication with young people, staff and volunteers must comply with the *Youth Insearch Social Media Policy* to ensure it is safely and appropriately used.

4.3. Family and community involvement

- 4.3.1 Staff and volunteers are to make this policy available and readily accessible to any young person, parent, carer, or other stakeholder to ensure a clear understanding of commitment to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who access our program.
- 4.3.2 Families and stakeholders will be consulted and invited to provide feedback on all policies and processes related to child safety and wellbeing at Youth Insearch.
- 4.3.3 Families are encouraged to participate in decisions affecting their children, where it does not compromise safety or wellbeing of the young person.
- 4.3.4 Staff and volunteers are to engage with families and local communities, listen to their views regarding child and youth safe practices. The information shared will help to inform our practices and procedures.

4.4. Equality and diversity

- 4.4.1 Staff and volunteers use inclusive and empowering language, taking into account language and literacy levels as well as cultural differences.
- 4.4.2 We value diversity and will not tolerate any discriminatory practices. We identify and address any barriers for young people that may limit their participation in our program.
- 4.4.3 We implement strategies that support us to engage young people with high or complex needs, and those who are at risk of coming into the child protection system.
- 4.4.4 Our child and youth safe policies and practices are culturally safe and promote the active participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families as well as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse children, young people and families
- 4.4.5 Our child and youth safe policies and practices recognise the nuances of intersecting identities such as, but not limited to disability, gender identity, religion, class, race and ethnicity and we proactively seek to identify and remove barriers to engagement and participation at Youth Insearch.

4.5. Staff and volunteer recruitment

- 4.5.1 Youth Insearch apply a rigorous recruitment, screening, and selection process in accordance with the Fair Work Act. We ensure that all staff are appropriately qualified, skilled, and experienced to competently and safely deliver the highest quality of service to young people.
- 4.5.2 Employment and volunteering positions at Youth Insearch clearly state our commitment as an organisation to child and youth safety and wellbeing.
- 4.5.3 We uphold a focus on the safety of children and young people throughout the recruitment, suitability, and screening process, throughout the identify and qualification verification process.

- 4.5.4 All prospective Youth Insearch employees and volunteers are subject to a formal background check. When applying for any position at Youth Insearch, volunteers must hold a valid Working with Childrens' Check (volunteer minimum) in their state of service delivery, and employees a valid Working With Children Check (for employment purposes). WWCC & Blue Card checks are verified by Youth Insearch for the state they work in and include a National Criminal History Check.
- 4.5.5 All staff and volunteers must have a verified Working With Children's Check prior to commencing work with Youth Insearch. No card – start. Queensland Blue Card (Working With Children's Check) must be linked with the Youth Insearch Blue Card account.
- 4.5.6 When working with young people in NSW or VIC whilst residing in another state, the check holder must abide by state regulations, which allows interstate card holders to work with young people for up to 30 days in a calendar year.

4.6. Complaints and feedback

- 4.6.1 Staff must provide information about the feedback and complaints process in an accessible format to young people when they access Youth Insearch.
- 4.6.2 All complaints must be taken seriously and responded to promptly with procedural fairness.
- 4.6.3 Where necessary, changes will be made to policy, procedure, or practice as a result of a complaint.
- 4.6.4 Young people who access our program must be provided with information about other agencies or people that they can raise concerns with and who are able to support them or advocate on their behalf.

4.7. Staff support and development

- 4.7.1 We build the capacity of our staff through professional development, supervision and support to promote and maintain a child and youth safe organisation.
- 4.7.2 New employees and volunteers participate in an intensive induction and orientation process to child and youth safe policies and practices. Team Leaders and Regional Managers will ensure that all new employees and volunteers complete all the relevant mandatory training in child safe practices in accordance with organisational requirements.
- 4.7.3 Youth Insearch are committed to the provision of high-quality supervision practices for all staff including regular reviews of workplace performance, opportunities to share problems and observations and explore child and youth safe practices.
- 4.7.4 Staff participate in bi-annual Striving for Excellence Plans, in addition to fortnightly supervision (or FTE equivalent) where managers are able to formally review staff contributions to organisational values, including the provision and promotion of child and youth safe practices.

4.8. Safe physical and online environments

- 4.8.1 Staff and volunteers are responsible for embedding a culture of risk management across the organisation.
- 4.8.2 Staff and volunteers must abide by program or activity-specific guidance outlined in risk management plans when undertaking specific practices involving young people within a local context.
- 4.8.3 Risk assessments for employee and volunteer positions, activities and events at our sites and other locations must be conducted in accordance with Youth Insearch Incident Management policies and procedures and Youth Insearch WHS Policies and Procedures.

- 4.8.4 Staff and volunteers must complete induction and ongoing training on managing risks and creating safe environments to ensure the safety, suitability, and security of physical environments for young people in our program.
- 4.8.5 Staff are to be trained about expectations of online behaviour and how to identify and mitigate risks in the online environment. The online environment will be used in accordance with the *Youth Insearch Social Media Policy* and *Youth Insearch Code of Conduct*.
- 4.8.6 Staff and volunteers must adhere to the *Youth Insearch Transportation Policy* when transporting a young person.
- 4.8.7 Staff and volunteers must ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people working or volunteering at Youth Insearch and young people accompanying an adult to a Youth Insearch workplace event.

4.9. Continuous Improvement

- 4.9.1 Youth Insearch is committed to embedding and maintaining an organisation wide child and youth safe culture through a process of ongoing continuous improvement.
- 4.9.2 Youth Insearch commits to the implementation of an ongoing and regular cycle of assessment, including an annual review of policies and practices to ensure child and youth safe policies and practices are understood and embedded at all levels of the organisation. This includes mandatory annual re-training for all staff and volunteers.
- 4.9.3 Incidents and complaints are to be critically reviewed to manage risks, identify patterns and systemic issues and to improve our child and youth safe policies and practices.

4.10. Identifying, responding to, and reporting harm and risk of harm

- 4.10.1 Any staff or volunteer who has grounds to suspect harm or risk of harm to a child or young person must immediately consult their manager or a Youth Insearch staff member (for a volunteer) or their line manager. If a decision is made to inform an authority (such as Child Safety and/or the Police) the Manager is responsible for ensuring that the process is carried out according to the relevant Statutory requirements. (see Appendix 1).
- 4.10.2 Staff and volunteers must ensure the best interests of children and young people are paramount when responding to, and reporting concerns about their safety and wellbeing.
- 4.10.3 In situations where the supervisor or manager is suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the next highest level of Management.
- 4.10.4 Supervisors and managers must report complaints of suspected harm or misconduct to the Executive Team and to any external regulatory body such as the police.

5. Responsibilities

5.1. The Board of Youth Insearch

- 5.1.1 The Board has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal policies and practices are in place to prevent risk of harm to children and young people and to promote a culture of child and youth safety.

5.2. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Youth Insearch

- 5.3.1 The CEO is responsible for ensuring that all staff and volunteers are aware of the relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures and the Organisations Code of Conduct.
- 5.3.2 The CEO is responsible for providing support for staff, volunteers and contractors in matters relating to child and youth safety.

5.3 The Executive Team

- 5.3.1 It is the responsibility of the Executive Team to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all staff and volunteers at Youth Insearch.
- 5.3.2 The Executive Team are responsible for monitoring changes in legislation; inclusive of relevant Government inquiries and recommendations, and National and State based standards in Child and Youth Safety.
- 5.3.3 The Executive Team are responsible for ensuring that all Child and Youth Safety policies and practices are aligned with the most up to date and relevant National and State requirements.
- 5.3.4 The Executive Team are responsible for ensuring that all Child and Youth Safety policies and practices are reviewed annually.

5.4 Line Managers

- 5.4.1 All managers must ensure that they promote child and youth safety at all times, through regular supervision and support with their staff.
- 5.4.2 Managers are responsible for ensuring that their staff have attended mandatory child safety training as required by Youth Insearch.
- 5.4.3 Managers are responsible for ensuring that concerns regarding current or suspected risk of harm to a child or young person are documented in accordance with Youth Insearch policies and practices, and that all legally mandated procedures are followed according to the relevant State Legislation.

5.5 Volunteers/Contractors

- 5.5.1 All volunteers and contractors share the responsibility for child and youth safety and must familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, Code of Conduct, Youth Insearch policy and practices in relation to child and youth safety.
- 5.5.2 Volunteers and contractors must immediately inform a Youth Insearch staff member if they have any concerns relating to current or suspected risk of harm of a child or young person engaged with Youth Insearch.

6. Appendices

6.1. Appendix 1: State Mandatory Reporting Requirements (Decision Trees)

6.2. Appendix 2: Youth Insearch Child and Youth Safety Reporting Procedures

6.2.1. Weekend Workshops

6.2.2. Support Groups

6.2.3. Individual support and network meetings

6.3. Appendix 3: Resources

6.3.1. Recent inquiries and recommendations

6.3.2. Affiliated Youth Insearch Policies

7. Document Change Log

Version	Change Description	Reviewed By	Approved By	Date
1.0	New policy	General Manager	Chief Executive Officer	09/2017
2.0	Review for currency	General Manager	Chief Executive Officer	11/2018
3.0	Review for currency	Leadership Team	Chief Executive Officer	01/2020
4.0	Review for currency	Program Operations Manager	Chief Executive Officer	02/2021
5.0	Wholesale changes	General Manager, Clinical Governance & Performance	Chief Executive Officer	08/2023