

# Keeping schools and children's services safe environments for all

The Protective practices describe safe and respectful behaviour boundaries for staff and volunteers in their relationships with children and young people.

As a parent you are encouraged to be aware of the Protective practices and to support the staff and volunteers of your child's school or service in ensuring they are followed.

## Protective practices

Behaviour guidelines for staff and volunteers working with children and young people

Information for parents and caregivers

Access the full guidelines from your school or children's service or from the DECD website:  
[www.decd.sa.gov.au](http://www.decd.sa.gov.au)

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Government  
of South Australia  
Department for Education  
and Child Development



A I S S A



ASSOCIATION of  
INDEPENDENT  
SCHOOLS of SA

## Why is it important for me to know about the Protective practices?

Everyone in an education or children's services community should be made aware of the standards of behaviour that are needed to maintain a safe and respectful environment. Children are taught to recognise unsafe behaviour as part of the child protection curriculum and to talk with adults about their concerns. Staff members and volunteers receive training on the Protective practices and are required to report inappropriate adult behaviour to their principal or director. If you decide to volunteer in the future you will be expected to follow these practices.

As a parent you can help to support these expectations by taking action if you see or hear about adult behaviours that you think are not in keeping with the Protective practices. You may be the only adult to observe or hear about inappropriate behaviour so you have an important role in alerting the principal or director as soon as possible, as outlined below.

## What should I do if I have concerns about an adult's behaviour?

Talk to the principal or director of the school or children's service. Raising your concern will allow the principal or director to explore the matter properly and ensure the right response is made. If you feel uncomfortable to have this conversation on your own, ask a trusted friend or member of staff to accompany you. It is very important that the principal or director hears the concern directly so it can be acted on quickly.

## What if my concern is about the principal or director?

You should raise your concern through the following:

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**Government sector:** Education Complaint Unit  
T 1800 677 435

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**Catholic Education sector:** T (08) 8301 6193

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**Independent School sector:** Chair of Governing Authority

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## What happens to the adult when a concern is raised?

Depending on what is reported and investigated it may mean the adult is given a formal documented instruction about expected conduct, or it may result in an employee being dismissed or a volunteer's service being discontinued. Criminal matters are investigated by police and when this is the case all education sectors follow the guidelines Managing Allegations of Sexual Misconduct which can be found at your school or service or from the DECD website [www.decd.sa.gov.au](http://www.decd.sa.gov.au)

## What if I'm unhappy with the way the school or service has dealt with my concern?

Contact the following:

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**Government sector:** Education Complaint Unit  
T 1800 677 435

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**Catholic Education sector:** T (08) 8301 6193

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**Independent School sector:** Use the grievance procedure of the Independent School

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## What are Protective practices?

Protective practices are standards of behaviour that staff and volunteers are expected to meet in their interactions with children and young people. They represent a code of conduct that helps make schools and children's services safe places for everyone involved.

## Why are they needed?

Behaviour boundaries are important for everyone. In schools and children's services adults are expected to behave in ways that are always protective of children and young people. The Protective practices help remove any confusion about which adult behaviours are protective and which are considered inappropriate.

## What do they cover?

They cover appropriate physical contact and acceptable ways of communicating and interacting with children and young people. A summary follows of behaviours that are considered a violation (a crossing) of these behaviour boundaries. They are included in this brochure because it is important that parents know which adult behaviours are considered inappropriate.

The full guidelines provide advice that takes account of different age groups, needs and circumstances such as working in small/rural communities.

You can access the full guidelines at your school or children's service or they can be downloaded from the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) website [www.decd.sa.gov.au](http://www.decd.sa.gov.au)

## Who do they apply to?

They apply to all adults working or volunteering in Government, Catholic, or Independent education or children's services settings.

## How are staff and volunteers informed about the Protective practices requirements?

All adults working or volunteering in education and children's services receive compulsory child protection training or induction which includes the Protective practices requirements.

## Do the Protective practices ban adults from touching children and young people?

No they do not ban touching. They describe respectful and safe ways for adults to use touch when it is appropriate to provide care, encouragement, congratulations or protection to a child or young person.

## When were they developed?

They were first developed in 2005. The Government, Catholic and Independent education sectors update them if new issues emerge such as the impact of social network sites, or when there are changes to legislation such as discrimination laws.

Boundary	Example of violation (This list of examples is not exhaustive)	
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriate comments about a child/young person's appearance, including excessive flattering comments</li> <li>• Inappropriate conversation or enquiries of a sexual nature (eg questions about a child or young person's sexuality or his/her sexual relationship with others)</li> <li>• Disrespectful or discriminatory treatment of, or manner towards, young people based on their perceived or actual sexual orientation</li> <li>• Use of inappropriate pet names</li> <li>• Vilification or humiliation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jokes or innuendo of a sexual nature</li> <li>• Obscene gestures and language</li> <li>• Facilitating/permitting access to pornographic material</li> <li>• Facilitating/permitting access to sexually explicit material that is not part of endorsed curriculum</li> <li>• Failing to intervene in sexual harassment of children and young people</li> <li>• Correspondence of a personal nature via any medium (eg phone, text message, letters, email, internet postings) that is unrelated to the staff member's role. This does not include class cards/ bereavement cards etc</li> </ul>
<b>Personal disclosure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussing personal lifestyle details of self, other staff or children and young people unless directly relevant to the learning topic and with the individual's consent</li> </ul>	
<b>Physical contact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwarranted or unwanted touching of a child or young person personally or with objects (eg pencil or ruler)</li> <li>• Corporal punishment (physical discipline, smacking etc). Initiating, permitting or requesting inappropriate</li> </ul>	<p>or unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person (eg massage, kisses, tickling games) or facilitating situations which unnecessarily result in close physical contact with a child or young person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriate use of physical restraint</li> </ul>
<b>Place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Inviting/allowing/encouraging children and young people to attend the staff member's home</li> <li>• Allowing children and young people access to a staff member's personal internet locations (eg social networking sites)</li> <li>• *Attending children and young people's homes or their social gatherings</li> <li>• *Being alone with a child or young person outside of a staff member's responsibilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entering change rooms or toilets occupied by children or young people when supervision is not required or appropriate</li> <li>• *Transporting a child or young person unaccompanied</li> <li>• Using toilet facilities allocated to children and young people</li> <li>• Undressing using facilities set aside for children and young people, or in their presence</li> </ul> <p><i>(*without the site leader's authority)</i></p>
<b>Targeting individual children and young people</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutoring (outside education sector's directions or knowledge)</li> <li>• Giving personal gifts or special favours</li> <li>• Singling the same children and young people out for special duties or responsibilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offering overnight/weekend/holiday care of children and young people as respite to parents (unless a family day care educator, or employed by a respite organisation and with the site leader's knowledge)</li> </ul>
<b>Role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopting an ongoing welfare role that is beyond the scope of their position or that is the responsibility of another staff member (eg a counsellor) or an external professional, and that occurs without the permission of senior staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photographing, audio recording or filming children or young people via any medium when not authorised by the site leader to do so and without required parental consent</li> <li>• Using personal rather than school equipment for approved activities, unless authorised by the site leader to do so</li> </ul>
<b>Possessions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correspondence or communication (via any medium) to or from children and young people where a violation of professional boundaries is indicated and where the correspondence has not been provided to the site leader by the staff member</li> <li>• Still/moving images or audio recordings of children</li> </ul>	<p>and young people on personal equipment or kept in personal locations such as car or home that have not been authorised by the site leader</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uploading or publishing still/moving images or audio recordings of children and young people to any location, without parental and site leader's consent</li> </ul>

Adults working or volunteering with children and young people are expected to respect these boundaries wherever they are engaged – at the school or service, on a camp, at a carnival etcetera.