

# Child Safety POLICY

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**Title:** Assessing and responding to self-harm and suicide risk

**Policy No:** 605-3

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## Policy Statement:

The Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (Child Safety), will promote the safety, belonging, wellbeing and best interest of children through the implementation of effective and culturally appropriate self-harm and suicide risk management practices.

Child Safety is committed to respecting, protecting and promoting human rights. Under the *Human Rights Act 2019*, Child Safety has an obligation to act and make decisions about assessing and responding to self-harm and suicide risk in a way that is compatible with human rights and, when making a decision, to give proper consideration to human rights.

The safe care and connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with family, community, culture and country will be a key consideration when responding to self-harm and suicide risk for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and families.

## Principles:

- The safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child, both throughout childhood and the rest of the child's life, are paramount.
- Child Safety staff will act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights and obligations under the *Human Rights Act 2019*.
- The five elements of the child placement principle (prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection) outline in the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 5C, apply to all processes, decisions and actions for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child.
- Children have a right to be safe and protected from harm.
- Child Safety staff will take seriously and respond to all acts of self-harm or suicide risk, including threats and gestures.
- Safety and risk assessment are fundamental to identifying and meeting children's safety, wellbeing and belonging needs.
- Children in the custody or guardianship of the chief executive have the right to access medical and therapeutic services necessary to address their self-harming behaviour and/or risk of suicide.

**Objectives:**

This policy aims to ensure that:

- children who demonstrate or have demonstrated self-harming or suicide risk behaviours, are responded to in ways that:
  - safeguard their immediate safety to the extent possible in the circumstances
  - prevent harm from occurring or reduce the risk of harm, and
  - promote their ongoing wellbeing by addressing harmful behaviours and underlying causes.
- risk factors, warning signs and cultural considerations are taken into account when assessing and responding to self-harm or suicide risk
- Child Safety Service Centre, Child Safety After Hours Service Centre and the Regional Intake Service staff will be provided with information and procedures about assessing and responding to self-harming and suicidal behaviours
- All children subject to a self-harm alert or suicide risk alert have a corresponding self-harm or suicide risk management plan.

**Scope:**

This policy refers to children in contact with Child Safety across all child protection phases, including:

- intake – where the child is the subject of an intake enquiry or child concern report and self-harm or suicide risk is part of the presenting problem
- investigation and assessment
- ongoing intervention through a support service case, intervention with parental agreement, a child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the chief executive (including interim orders) and a child protection order granting guardianship to a suitable person.

In addition to assessing and responding to self-harm and suicide risk, this policy will be implemented in conjunction with the Critical Incident Reporting policy and procedure.

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

The roles and responsibilities of Child Safety staff in relation to assessing and responding to self-harm and suicide risk are outlined in the Child Safety Practice Manual and associated resources.

**Authority:**

*Child Protection Act 1999*, sections 5, 6, 7, 74, 97, 122, 246A-H.

**Delegations:**

Refer to instruments of delegation for delegations relevant to decisions regarding the recording of a notification and medical and therapeutic decisions for children in care.

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**Records File No.:** CHS/03376  
**Date of approval:** 06 July 2020  
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**Date to be reviewed:** 06 July 2023

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**Office:** Office of the Chief Practitioner  
**Help Contact:** Child Protection Practice

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**Links:**

**Related Legislation**

*Human Rights Act 2019*

**Procedures**

Child Safety Practice Manual  
Critical Incident Reporting  
Practice kit – Mental Health  
Practice guide – Evolve Therapeutic Services

**Related policy**

Child death case review policy and procedures (361)  
Critical Incident Reporting  
Obligations, actions and responsibilities upon the death of a child in care (421)

**Rescinded Policies**

605-2 Assessing and responding to self-harm and suicide risk

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