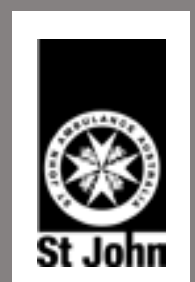


St John Ambulance Australia

Child Safety Code of Conduct

For Staff and Volunteers

Version 2.0, January 2023



Child Safety Code of Conduct

For staff and volunteers

St John Ambulance Australia (St John) is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people ('children', [page 8](#)). We recognise the importance of providing a safe environment for all children accessing St John services, activities and programs.

Our adult 'staff and volunteer members' ([page 8](#)) should always respect and foster the dignity and self-esteem of children, including our young volunteers and service users, and empower them to speak out if they feel unsafe. In turn, St John aims to foster a culture where staff and volunteers can freely raise concerns about child safety, including 'child abuse' ([page 8](#)), and receive support should safeguarding concerns arise in the course of their work.

USING THE CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

This Child Safety Code of Conduct aims to provide guidance to St John staff and volunteers about appropriate conduct when working with, or around, children. It is intended to complement legislation and St John policies and procedures. St John adult staff and volunteers must always uphold this Code of Conduct, St John's child safety policies and procedures, and laws.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct is split into actions to adopt ('do') and avoid ('don't') across several key areas of conduct: professional boundaries, physical contact, cultural safety, use of language, supervisory practices, behaviour management, sexual misconduct, reporting concerns, online environments and electronic communication, privacy and confidentiality, and use of photographs and videos. We require staff and volunteers to read the Child Safety Code of Conduct thoroughly and aim to understand it. If there are aspects that are unclear, ask your supervisor or manager for assistance. We recommend keeping a copy of this Child Safety Code of Conduct handy, such as on your personal computer or device.

A list of definitions can be found on [page 8](#).

BREACHING THE CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

All staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors of St John are required to comply with the Child Safety Code of Conduct. It applies in all situations—for example: at youth activities and events, when treating a casualty, in schools, during patient transport or when using digital technology. It can even apply to your actions outside of the organisation (such as your conduct in online environments).

If you breach this Child Safety Code of Conduct, you may face disciplinary action. For serious breaches this may even be termination of your involvement with St John and referral to the police.

St John recognises that there may be special situations where a staff or volunteer member may need to operate outside of the Child Safety Code of Conduct, such as during an emergency. Where possible, staff and volunteer members should always attempt to seek authorisation for any action that contravenes the Child Safety Code of Conduct. You must also advise St John of any action(s) taken that breach this Code of Conduct as soon as possible.

CHAMPIONS

The Australian Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will support the implementation and monitoring of this Code of Conduct. The CEO will also provide information and support to staff and volunteers to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively. All adult staff and volunteers will champion this Code of Conduct.

IF A CHILD IS AT IMMEDIATE RISK OF HARM,
CALL **TRIPLE ZERO (000)**.

APPROVAL

The Child Safety Code of Conduct was originally approved by the St John Ambulance Australia Limited Chief Executive Officer on 14 May 2019 and was last reviewed in January 2023. This document will next be reviewed in January 2025, or before if legislative or other changes require its amendment.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

DO



- Establish and maintain a child safe environment in the course of your work.
- Remember that as an adult you are in a position of authority and power, and you should always act within the confines of your role and duties.
- Communicate what your role is to children and what the role of children is.
- Always act as a positive role model to others.
- Treat children and their families with respect, fairness, professionalism, kindness and courtesy.
- Report any conduct by other adults that is questionable (e.g. that could be seen as favouritism, overly familiar, inappropriate or 'grooming', [page 8](#)).
- Recognise that as a St John adult staff or volunteer member, you are a 'person in authority' ([page 8](#)) with power over a child. This means that you have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to keep children safe from injury or harm.

DON'T



- Engage in any activity with a child that is likely to cause 'harm' ([page 8](#)), including participating behaviour that would constitute abuse, neglect, exploitation, harassment, grooming, discrimination or victimisation.
- Develop a 'special' relationship with a child in St John, including adopting an ongoing welfare role with the child (e.g. acting as their personal counsellor, tutor or coach) or seeking contact with a child outside of St John's programs, services or activities (e.g. attending private social function at a child's request).
- Participate in behaviour that may be interpreted as inappropriate, including the use of language (e.g. profane or sexualised) or discussion of topics that are adult in nature.
- Take a child, that is engaged with St John, to your home.
- Give personal gifts or special favours to a child engaged with St John. Only provide gifts where authorisation is obtained from a supervisor or manager (e.g. farewell gift from the group). Any approved gift should be presented to a child publicly (e.g. i.e. in the presence of other children, adult staff or volunteers or parents/guardians).
- Consume or supply alcohol or (illicit) drugs to children engaged with St John.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

DO



- Seek permission to touch a child (e.g. during a first aid demonstration) and avoid unnecessary touching. Preferably, ask children to demonstrate on each other. Where touch is unavoidable, use non-intrusive touch and avoid touching private areas of the body, e.g. breast, buttocks and genitals.
- Proactively address unnecessary physical contact initiated by children (i.e. with you or others), by gently reminding the child of personal boundaries. Aim to substitute boundary-crossing behaviour with appropriate behaviours (e.g. fist bumps or hi-fives).
- If a child asks you not to touch them, respect their wishes.

DON'T



- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child, including doing things for the child they can do for themselves (e.g. toileting), unless delivering a medical service where touch is necessary to assess or treat the child.

CULTURAL SAFETY

DO



- Respect the rights, dignity, diversity and worth of all children, regardless of difference.
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, culturally and linguistically diverse and migrant and refugee backgrounds, gender and sexually diverse children, and children with a disability.
- Use inclusive language.

DON'T



- Treat a child unfavourably or discriminate because of disability, age, gender identity, race, culture, class, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity.
- Express personal views on culture, race, ability, gender identity or sexuality in the presence of children.

USE OF LANGUAGE

DO



- Speak to a child in a way that is professional and respectful.
- Address any incidence of, or situation where, inappropriate, profane or negative language is being used (e.g. by a child engaged with St John, parent/guardian, or staff or volunteers). Aim to reinforce the desired behaviour.
- Ensure that all communications are safe, respectful and promote a positive image of St John.

DON'T



- Make inappropriate comments about a child's appearance, including comments that are overly flattering, complimentary or sexualised.
- Never use inappropriate, profane or sexualised language with or around children.
- Make jokes of a sexualised nature.
- Seek information of an intimate nature about a child (e.g. enquiring about their past sexual activity or sexual or gender identity).
- Discuss your own sexual history or sexual preferences, or other details about your personal life that may be considered inappropriate, with a child.

SUPERVISORY PRACTICES

DO



- Uphold adult-to-child ratios specified by your State/Territory St John organisation.
- Avoid being in a one-to-one situation with a child engaged with St John.
- Report any instance where you find yourself (or another St John adult) alone with a child to an adult supervisor/manager or 'Child Safety Officer' (page 8). Where a one-to-one situation is unavoidable, keep a door open and try and stay in view of others and report it to your supervisor or Child Safety Officer immediately.

DON'T



- Allow a child engaged with St John to leave a St John event, activity or program with an unknown person (including St John personnel) without the prior authorisation of the child's parent/guardian.
- Deliberately facilitate situations that would place you in a one-to-one situation with a child.
- Transport children alone. In the unlikely event that you need to transport a child alone, direct the child to sit in the back seat of the vehicle (not the front seat) and report the situation with an adult supervisor/manager or Child Safety Officer.
- Share sleeping quarters with children. Where an adult presence is needed or unavoidable, another adult should be present and/or more than one child (at a minimum, employ the 'Rule of Three', page 8).

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

DO



- Uphold the principles of equity in working with children (e.g. making reasonable adjustments if possible).
- Adhere to the Youth Member Behaviour Management Policy (or other relevant policy), including the available responses for breaches to agreed standards of behaviour.
- Deal with unwanted behaviour proactively and promptly.
- Provide clear direction to children.
- Aim to boost a child's confidence and provide them with encouragement.

DON'T



- Single out a child to belittle them, or use negative language about them, in front of others.
- Use physical means to discipline or control a child.
- Threaten or frighten a child to achieve behavioural compliance.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

DO



- Report any suspicions, disclosures, allegations or complaints relating to the safety of children to a Child Safety Officer immediately.
- Disclose to the organisation if you are a person in a position of authority, or you become aware of another adult who is in a position of authority, who is involved in a relationship with a child.

DON'T



- Form an intimate relationship with any child over whom you have direct authority, even if they are above the age of consent.
- Engage in a sexual act with any child.
- Participate in sexual or intimate behaviour while in a St John environment, including between consenting members above the legal age of consent.
- Flirt with a child involved in the organisation.
- Use sexual innuendo or participate in sexually suggestive behaviour with a child engaged with St John.
- Undress, or expose yourself, in front of a child.
- Remove a child's clothing, unless there is a medical emergency and another person is with you (e.g. to use a defibrillator).

REPORTING CONCERNS

DO



- Listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are disclosing that they or another child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.
- Be vigilant and proactive about child safety and report all allegations, suspicions or concerns promptly.
- Understand and comply with reporting obligations under your State/Territory child safety policy and/or legislation.
- If unsure or in doubt, seek advice (e.g. from a Child Safety Officer).

DON'T



- Ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions, allegations or disclosures of child abuse or harm.
- Delay reporting. Report any concern, suspicion, allegation or disclosure immediately (or as soon as is reasonably practicable following learning about it).

ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

DO



- Use a professional and appropriate tone in all electronic or online interactions, especially with children.
- Only communicate with children electronically in relation to your St John role (e.g. to provide notification about upcoming training, activities or events). Where communicating directly with individual children is unavoidable, always employ the 'Rule of Three', such as opting to include the child's parent/guardian in the communication.*
- Tell your supervisor or a Child Safety Officer if a child communicates with you electronically outside of your role.

DON'T



- Communicate directly with a child engaged with St John through personal or private channels (e.g. by social media, email, instant messaging, chat rooms, gaming sites, texting) outside of St John's services, events or programs, your position description or without oversight.
- Request that a child keeps communication with you or another adult a secret from their parent/guardian.
- Engage with children online in a way that may be considered to be abusive or inappropriate, including the use of language or topics that are adult in nature (e.g. profane or sexualised) or behaviours that may constitute grooming.
- 'Friend' or follow a child engaged with St John, or their family members, on social media.**
- Discuss or show content of an intimate, mature or adult nature to children.

* Some staff and volunteer member roles requires them to manage social media pages and this may require the member to 'friend' a child. Here, communication must relate strictly to the staff or volunteer member's role. Contact outside of that role is prohibited. Staff and volunteers should never engage in conduct that would contravene St John policy, procedures or this Code of Conduct. Where possible, staff and volunteers should apply the 'Rule of three' (e.g. including another adult in correspondence with a child).

** St John recognises that in some circumstances, a pre-existing relationship exists between a St John adult staff or volunteer member and a child and/or their family who are engaged in a St John service, program or activity. In this circumstance, the St John member should disclose this pre-existing relationship to their line manager/supervisor.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

DO



- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of children and handle personal information in line with St John's Privacy and Information Handling Policies.
- Understand the limitations of privacy and confidentiality regarding child abuse reporting. If you believe or suspect a child is being harmed, is at risk of harm, or an allegation or disclosure has been made, this must be reported.

DON'T



- Ignore or disregard concerns, suspicions, allegations or disclosures of child abuse or harm, even if you are asked to keep something a 'secret'.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEO

DO



- Seek permission to photograph or video a child (from both from the child and their parent/guardian) prior to taking the photograph.
- Delete photos and videos from personal devices (i.e. once uploaded to St John platforms).
- Ensure any photo/video subjects are appropriately clothed. Avoid photographs/videos taken in bathrooms/change rooms or of children wearing swimming costumes/bathers.
- Only photograph/video a child engaged with St John for purposes that relate to their participation in St John.

DON'T



- Store photographs or video of a child engaged with St John for personal use. Photographs and video taken of children engaged with St John must only be used for official St John purposes.
- Upload, share or publish photos, video or audio recordings of a child engaged with St John to any platform without the consent of their parent/guardian (and ideally, the child).
- Send photo, audio or video content directly to a child engaged with St John without the consent of their parent/guardian.
- Upload photographs or video of a child engaged with St John onto personal storage devices or the cloud.

DEFINITIONS

'Child' or 'children' means any person under the age of 18 years engaged with a St John service, program or activity. A child includes a Youth Member who is under the age of 18 years.

'Child abuse' means any act or omission that causes harm, may cause harm or pose a risk to a child's physical, emotional, psychological, developmental or spiritual health or wellbeing. Examples of child abuse include physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse, witnessing of domestic and family violence, grooming, sexual exploitation, neglect, bullying or harassment. For further information about child abuse, read the publication *Safeguarding Children in St John: A Guide for Staff and Volunteers* available on [Member Connect](#).

'Child Safety Officer' is an appointed staff or volunteer member of a St John organisation who is responsible for providing leadership, guidance and support to any person making a report, complaint or seeking advice in relation to the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person. In some St John organisations, Child Safety Officers may have a different title, such as 'Child Wellbeing Officers'.

'Grooming' is the predatory behaviour designed to prepare a child for sexual abuse. Many perpetrators of sexual offences against children purposefully create relationships with children, their families and carers in order to establish the conditions necessary for them to abuse the child.

'Harm' means any action, act or activity that causes detriment to a child's physical, emotional, psychological, developmental or spiritual health or wellbeing.

'Person in authority' means any adult staff or volunteer member of St John who has power over or responsibility for (i.e. duty of care) a child (this responsibility is also known as a 'special care arrangement'). All adults in St John, regardless of their role, are considered persons in authority and have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to keep children safe from injury or harm.

'Staff and volunteer members' means any paid adult employee, volunteer, contractor or other affiliate of St John who is over the age of 18 years. In some States/Territories, a Youth Member may be a person who has reached 18 years of age and remains engaged in the Youth Program until the end of the calendar year.

'Rule of Three' is the requirement to include another adult staff or volunteer member, child or a child's parent/guardian in your communication or interactions (e.g. two adults present in all situations, or one adult and a minimum of two children). For example, if you need to send a text message to a child about a duty/event, copy their parent/guardian or another adult St John staff or volunteer member into the text. Adult staff and volunteers should not be in a one-to-one situation with a child, including in online environments or when using electronic communications.

