



# Anti-Bullying Policy

## Children

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### **Policy Statement**

ACI is committed to ensure that we provide a play space within our Services where children feel safe and secure in an environment free from bullying behaviour.

### **Considerations**

- ✓ Education and Care Services National Law 2010
- ✓ Education and Care Services National Regulation (2018 Version)
- ✓ Education and Care Services National Quality Standards (2018 Version)
- ✓ My Time Our Place
- ✓ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- ✓ Children's and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- ✓ NSW Government's Keep Them Safe: a shared approach to child wellbeing

### **Background Information/Definitions**

- ✓ Bullying is defined as ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more person. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).
  - Misusing power over individuals can refer to physical strength, access to embarrassing information, position, popularity etc., to control or harm others.
- ✓ Bullying is a deliberate behaviour.
- ✓ Online bullying (sometimes referred to as cyberbullying) refers to bullying through internet or mobile devices.
- ✓ Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.
- ✓ Single incidents, conflicts or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.
- ✓ Behaviours that do not constitute bullying include:
  - Mutual arguments and disagreements.
  - Not liking someone or a single act of social rejection.
  - One-off acts of meanness or spite.
  - Isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence.
- ✓ Children are often bullied because of a perceived difference. The difference can be related to culture, gender, ability, religion, physical appearance or even being a new child to the Service or School.
- ✓ In many cases, bullying occurs without adults being aware of it. Bullying can include physical violence (hitting, shoving), teasing or name-calling, social exclusion or intimidation over a period of time.

### **Procedures**

- ✓ Staff should be reminding children to ensure that they follow our Organisation rules of "Be Safe, Be Responsible and Be Respectful". Remind children that it is their right to have a good time while at the Service, however they have a responsibility to be kind and fair to others.
- ✓ Under child protection laws Activity Centres Inc has a duty of care to ensure a safe environment for all children. This includes protecting children from harm (both physical and psychological) from other children.
- ✓ Staff will be made aware of the warning effects and signs/indicators that a child is the victim of bullying. These can include:
  - Mood swings
  - Refusal to attend the Service
  - Marks and bruises on body
  - Losing interest in previously enjoyed activities (hobbies/sports)
  - Unhappiness or anxiousness which can lead to depression.

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- Becomes withdrawn, lacks confidence
  - Refusal to talk about what is wrong
  - Becomes aggressive themselves
  - ✓ Staff are to model appropriate behaviours towards other Staff and children, including using appropriate language when dealing with behaviour management issues and assisting children to do the same.
  - ✓ Children should be encouraged to verbalise their emotions to develop empathy and compassion.
  - ✓ Encourage children's friendships and empathy towards the feelings of others.
  - ✓ Promote positive problem solving strategies and assertiveness amongst the children. Empower them to say "No" or "I don't like it when you..." as well as knowing when to walk away and get help from a Staff member.
  - ✓ Foster children's confidence and reassure that they can approach Staff with any problems they have and that their concerns will be respected.
  - ✓ Staff are to teach children about their right to be safe, and that they need to tell an adult when they don't feel safe.
  - ✓ Staff will discuss bullying regularly with children and when necessary will remind and encourage children to report undesirable behaviour in all forms (verbal, physical, etc) to Staff.
  - ✓ Staff will document behaviour management incidents on our behaviour management reflection forms (as outlined in ACI Child Behaviour Management Policy) so we have a record and can track if it is just an isolated incident or if there is an ongoing issue that has developed into a bullying relationship.
  - ✓ Staff are to monitor/observe children's interactions throughout the daily program to identify if bullying behaviours and patterns are evident.
  - ✓ Staff should also be aware that children may express their concerns in drawings/paintings, in their play or in their conversations.
  - ✓ If staff suspect possible bullying is occurring they should:
    - Pay closer attention to the suspected victim and their interactions with other children
    - Try and have a discussion with the child; indicating that you are concerned about them and ask questions such as "Do you have any special friends at after school care or vacation care?" "Are there any kids at after school care that you don't like?"
    - Consider talking with the parents of the child to determine if they have similar concerns.
  - ✓ Children should be empowered to tell the other child that they are being a bully and to stop the behaviour. If the individual or group of children do not stop, children should inform Staff, so that Staff can address the situation.
  - ✓ If children feel that they are witnessing another child being bullied, they are to inform a trusted staff member.
  - ✓ If a child is disclosing alleged bullying Staff are to:
    - Reassure and support the victim. Empathise with the child and reassure them that it is not their fault.
    - Empower the child by asking them what they think could be done to help and what can be done to make them feel safe.
    - Tell the child what action you are planning to take, including that you will need to talk to the alleged bully.
    - Try to talk with the alleged bully and any witnesses without allowing them the opportunity to discuss what they may say, and coordinate responses.
    - Parents should be informed that their child has disclosed that they feel that they are being bullied.
  - ✓ Parents and families are to advise the Coordinator if their child has disclosed that they are being bullied at the Service. Parents and families are not to approach the alleged bully or family of alleged bully themselves.
  - ✓ Reporting ensures that intervention occurs as early as possible so prompt assistance and support can be provided.
  - ✓ Coordinators will ensure that reports are responded to quickly, reasonably and within established timelines. Relevant parties should be advised of how long it will likely take to respond to the bully report and should be kept informed of the progress.
  - ✓ Confidentiality of all parties involved should be maintained. Details of the matter should only be known to those directly concerned.

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- ✓ The family of the alleged bully will be informed that the allegation has been made against their child and the behaviours that their child is accused of doing.
  - ✓ The child who is alleged to have been engaging in bullying behaviour should be treated fairly. They must be provided with the opportunity to address the allegations that have been brought against them.
  - ✓ Support for all should be made available to all parties involved.
  - ✓ Written records should be kept by management throughout the process and should document who made the report, when the report was made, who the report was made to, the details, what action had been taken and what further action needs to be taken, and follow up dates.
  - ✓ The records should also be made of all conversations, meetings and interviews detailing who was present and outcomes of the meetings.
  - ✓ Staff should first establish if it is bullying behaviour or if it is just a one off incident of unacceptable behaviour or an ongoing mutual disagreement between the children.
  - ✓ An isolated incident of unacceptable behaviour does not constitute bullying, so this can be addressed with the children involved. Isolated incidents of unacceptable behaviour that is not dealt with appropriately can develop into a pattern of repeated bullying behaviour.
  - ✓ Staff should follow the steps outlined in ACI Child Behaviour Management Policy to deal with isolated incidents and mutual disagreements.
  - ✓ If a case of bullying is identified at the Service then the Coordinator should inform Management so that they can provide additional support and assist in the development of strategies to manage the behaviour.
  - ✓ When dealing with bullying between children Staff should:
    - Make it clear to the child displaying bullying behaviour, that this is not acceptable.
    - Don't force a meeting between the bully and the victim. Forced apologies are not constructive.
    - Encourage the child who is being bullied to report any further occurrences to the Staff.
    - Encourage and support the child who is being bullied to develop other friendships.
    - Ask the child who is bullying for possible reasons for the bullying. Address any issues raised as appropriate.
  - ✓ It is essential that both the child being bullied and the child displaying bullying behaviours receive support and attention to ensure that their individual needs are being met.
  - ✓ It is important that the needs of the child who bullies does not overshadow the needs of the child being bullied.
  - ✓ We will work with families and the school community to ensure that consistency between the strategies used within the school environment and at the Service.
  - ✓ We will work with parents/families throughout the entire process, for both parties, to ensure:
    - Adequate support is available
    - Early intervention of unacceptable behaviour should be followed up with the parent.
    - Parents/families have been notified and given the opportunity to discuss the child's behaviour.
    - Parents/families have been referred to other agencies, where necessary.
    - Coordinator has given careful consideration to the issue, with consideration to the needs of both parties involved and the welfare of others at the Service.
    - Clear procedures have been established for the continuing care at the Service.
  - ✓ If child/ren have been found to display bullying behaviour then they and their parents/family will be required to attend a meeting to discuss the unacceptable behaviour and what the expectations for behaviour are for future behaviour while at the Service are.
    - These will be agreed by parents/family, child and Staff, and signed off on a written behaviour contract.
    - Possible sanctions will be dependent on each individual case, and severity, but may include a warning, temporary exclusion from the environment (e.g: child is not to play with the circle of friends if it is determined that these friends encourage/participate in the bullying), Suspension or exclusion.



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- Due to the seriousness and long term effects bullying can have on individuals, Activity Centres Inc views bullying as serious unacceptable behaviour where an individual deliberately attempts to inflict harm to another child. As a result, failure to adhere to the contract/individual agreement will lead to termination of care.
  - ✓ If at any point throughout the process the family of the child who is a bully refuses to work with the Service to rectify consistent inappropriate behaviour ACI Management have the right to terminate the child's place without having to work through any of the outlined steps in this Policy. We will work with and support families, but cannot address matters of behaviour on our own without the cooperation and partnership of families.

### **Checklist for staff**

- Bullying is defined as repeated undesirable behaviour towards an individual or group of individuals and can have long term health and safety implications on children.
- Bullying should be reported to Coordinator/Management as soon as possible and can be reported by all Staff, children or families, including witnesses to undesirable behaviour.
- Coordinator will investigate the allegations, ensuring confidentiality is maintained and all parties involved are treated fairly and have the opportunity and access to support.
- All parties involved will be provided with the outcome and conclusions of the investigation and the action being taken.
- Depending on the nature of the undesirable behaviour and the risk to the health and safety of children, behaviour management contract/plan will be developed. Consequences can vary.
- If bullying behaviour resumes, child's place will be terminated.
- We will work with families and school community to ensure consistency of strategies.

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Policy is only endorsed if initialled by 2 members of the management committee

**Endorsed by the Management Committee on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

**Anti-Bullying Policy - Children is to be reviewed by the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021**