

Safe Community Policy

A New Way Services INC

Version 1.1 - 2026

1. Our Commitment

A New Way Services INC (ANW) is committed to creating a community where every person is treated with dignity, respect and care.

We want our programs, activities, events, services and relationships to be safe, welcoming and inclusive. We recognise that some people we work alongside may experience increased vulnerability because of their age, disability, personal circumstances, trauma, social isolation, financial hardship or other factors.

ANW does not tolerate abuse, exploitation, harassment, bullying, discrimination, grooming, neglect or other behaviour that places a person at risk of harm.

Safety is everyone's responsibility.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide a framework for creating safe environments across ANW;
- protect children, young people and adults from abuse, harm, exploitation and inappropriate conduct;
- establish clear expectations for staff, volunteers, Board members and others representing ANW;
- promote appropriate professional and personal boundaries;
- ensure concerns and complaints are taken seriously and responded to appropriately;
- identify and manage risks within ANW programs and activities; and
- support ANW to meet its legal, regulatory and ethical responsibilities.

This policy provides ANW's overarching approach to creating a safe community. More detailed requirements may be contained in ANW's other policies and procedures.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all Board members;
- all employees;
- all volunteers;
- contractors and people engaged to provide services on behalf of ANW;
- people undertaking placements or work experience with ANW;
- people participating in or attending ANW programs, activities and events, where relevant; and
- ANW activities conducted at ANW premises, partner locations, community locations, online or elsewhere.

Everyone representing ANW is expected to contribute to a safe community and comply with the policies and procedures relevant to their role.

4. Our Approach to Safety

ANW will seek to create environments where:

- people are treated with dignity and respect;
- children and vulnerable people are protected from harm;
- people feel able to raise concerns without fear of punishment or unfair treatment;
- concerns are listened to and taken seriously;
- appropriate boundaries are maintained;
- risks are identified and managed;
- diversity and individual circumstances are respected;
- people are encouraged to participate in decisions that affect them;
- privacy and confidentiality are respected; and
- safety concerns are acted upon promptly.

The safety and wellbeing of a person at risk of harm will take priority over protecting ANW's reputation or the reputation of any individual associated with ANW.

5. Children and Young People

ANW recognises that children and young people have the right to feel safe, protected, heard and included.

ANW will implement the NSW Child Safe Standards and maintain appropriate child-safe policies, procedures and practices.

When working with children and young people, ANW will:

- listen to and take seriously what children and young people say;
- encourage them to raise concerns and provide feedback;
- consider their views when making decisions that affect them;
- provide clear information about who they can speak to if they feel unsafe;
- consider the individual needs and circumstances of each child or young person;
- maintain appropriate supervision and boundaries;
- ensure people engaged in child-related work hold the required Working with Children Check;
- appropriately screen, induct and train relevant staff and volunteers; and
- respond to and report concerns about child abuse, neglect, grooming or other harm in accordance with ANW's Child Safe Reporting Procedure.

Detailed requirements relating to children and young people are contained in ANW's Child Safe Policy and associated child-safe documents.

6. Adults Experiencing Vulnerability

ANW works with people from a wide range of circumstances. This may include people experiencing homelessness, social or financial hardship, disability, isolation, trauma, family difficulties, involvement with the justice system or other circumstances that may increase vulnerability.

Vulnerability does not remove a person's independence, dignity or right to make their own decisions.

Staff and volunteers must not use a person's circumstances to exercise inappropriate control, influence or authority over them.

ANW will seek to:

- treat people as individuals rather than defining them by their circumstances;
- respect personal autonomy and choices;
- maintain appropriate boundaries;
- avoid creating unnecessary dependence on individual workers or volunteers;
- protect people from exploitation, abuse and manipulation;
- respond appropriately when someone appears to be at risk of serious harm; and
- connect people with appropriate professional or specialist services where needs fall outside ANW's role or expertise.

7. Responsibilities

The Board

The Board is responsible for overseeing ANW's approach to safety and ensuring appropriate policies, systems and accountability are in place.

The Board will:

- promote a culture of safety;
- approve and periodically review relevant policies;
- ensure significant safety concerns are appropriately addressed;
- ensure ANW has appropriate risk-management processes; and
- ensure ANW responds appropriately to serious allegations or systemic safety concerns.

Director and Program Leaders

The Director and people responsible for ANW programs will:

- implement this policy;
- identify and manage risks;
- ensure staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities;
- respond appropriately to concerns and incidents;
- ensure required screening, checks and training are completed; and
- escalate serious matters to the Board or external authorities where required.

Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- contributing to a safe and respectful environment;
- complying with ANW's Code of Conduct;
- maintaining appropriate boundaries;
- completing required screening, induction and training;
- identifying and reporting safety concerns;
- following reasonable safety directions;
- respecting privacy and confidentiality; and
- speaking up when they observe behaviour that may place someone at risk.

8. Recruitment, Screening and Training

ANW will take reasonable steps to ensure people appointed to positions of trust are suitable for their roles.

Depending on the role, this may include:

- an application or expression of interest;
- interviews;
- reference checks;
- identity checks;
- Working with Children Checks;

- police checks where appropriate;
- consideration of relevant qualifications or experience;
- induction;
- agreement to ANW's Code of Conduct; and
- ongoing training & supervision.

The level of screening will reflect the responsibilities and risks associated with the position. ANW may refuse, restrict or end a person's involvement where there are reasonable safety concerns or where they do not meet the requirements of their role.

9. Standards of Behaviour

All staff, volunteers and representatives of ANW must behave in a way that promotes safety, dignity and respect.

They must not:

- abuse, exploit, harass, bully or intimidate another person;
- engage in sexual misconduct or grooming;
- discriminate unlawfully against another person;
- use threatening, degrading or humiliating behaviour;
- use their position to manipulate or take advantage of another person;
- develop inappropriate relationships with people receiving ANW's services;
- use confidential information for personal advantage;
- engage in inappropriate physical contact;
- provide alcohol, illegal drugs or other inappropriate substances to children or vulnerable people;
- deliberately expose children or vulnerable people to inappropriate sexual, violent or otherwise harmful material; or
- ignore or conceal a serious safety concern.

ANW's Code of Conduct provides further expectations regarding behaviour.

10. Boundaries and One-to-One Support

ANW recognises that meaningful community work often involves conversations, mentoring, practical support and relationships.

These relationships must remain safe and appropriate.

Where possible:

- sensitive conversations should occur in visible, open or appropriate environments;
- staff and volunteers should avoid unnecessarily isolated situations with children or vulnerable people;
- another appropriate person should know when significant one-to-one support is occurring;
- personal relationships must not be used to bypass ANW's safety requirements; and
- staff and volunteers should seek guidance where they are uncertain about appropriate boundaries.

Additional requirements apply when working with children and are contained in ANW's Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct.

11. Physical Contact

Physical contact must always be appropriate to the circumstances and respectful of the other person's wishes and boundaries.

Staff and volunteers must never use physical contact that is sexual, coercive, threatening, unnecessarily intrusive or otherwise inappropriate.

Particular care must be taken when interacting with children and people whose circumstances may make it difficult for them to communicate or enforce personal boundaries.

12. Transport

Where ANW arranges transport as part of a program or activity, reasonable steps must be taken to ensure the arrangement is safe.

When transporting children, ANW's child-safe requirements must be followed, including obtaining appropriate parent or carer consent and avoiding unnecessary situations where one adult is alone with one child.

Drivers must be appropriately licensed and vehicles must be registered, roadworthy and appropriately insured.

13. Online Communication and Social Media

ANW expects the same standards of behaviour online as it does in person.

Staff and volunteers must:

- communicate respectfully;
- maintain appropriate boundaries;
- use approved communication methods where required;
- protect confidential and personal information;
- avoid inappropriate private communication with children;
- not send sexual, discriminatory, threatening or otherwise inappropriate material; and
- report concerning online behaviour connected with ANW activities.
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Communication with children must comply with ANW's Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct.

14. Photography, Video and Personal Information

Photos, videos and personal stories must be collected and used respectfully.

Where consent is required, ANW will obtain appropriate consent before publishing identifiable images, videos or personal information.

Additional consent and privacy requirements apply to children and vulnerable people. Staff and volunteers must not use images, stories or personal circumstances in a way that exploits, humiliates or unnecessarily identifies a vulnerable person.

15. Safe Physical Environments

ANW will take reasonable steps to ensure that locations used for its programs and activities are safe and appropriate.

This includes:

- complying with applicable work health and safety requirements;
- identifying hazards;
- providing appropriate supervision;
- considering accessibility;
- maintaining appropriate emergency procedures;
- providing appropriate first aid arrangements where required; and
- considering whether the physical environment creates opportunities for abuse, isolation or other harm.

Safety requirements apply whether an activity occurs at ANW premises or at a location operated by another organisation.

16. Risk Management

ANW will identify and manage risks associated with its programs, activities and events. Risk assessments should be proportionate to the nature of the activity and the people involved.

Risk assessments may consider:

- physical hazards;
- child safety;
- vulnerable participants;
- supervision;
- transport;
- off-site activities;
- online activities;
- environmental conditions;
- behaviour or conflict;
- privacy;
- first aid and emergencies; and
- any other reasonably foreseeable risk.

Regular programs should be reviewed when circumstances significantly change and as part of ANW's normal risk-management processes.

17. Concerns About a Person

ANW may take additional precautions where information or behaviour gives rise to a reasonable concern that a person could pose a risk to others.

Depending on the circumstances, ANW may:

- conduct a risk assessment;
- establish behavioural or participation conditions;
- increase supervision;
- restrict access to particular programs or people;
- temporarily suspend involvement while concerns are assessed;
- seek professional or legal advice;
- notify relevant authorities where required; or
- exclude a person from ANW activities.
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Decisions will prioritise safety while also considering procedural fairness, privacy and the circumstances of the individuals involved.

18. Complaints, Disclosures and Safety Concerns

ANW encourages people to raise concerns about behaviour, safety or the conduct of ANW staff, volunteers or participants.

Concerns will be taken seriously and handled as promptly, fairly and sensitively as possible. A person will not be disadvantaged simply because they make a genuine complaint or raise a safety concern.

Where a matter involves suspected abuse, criminal conduct, child protection concerns, reportable conduct or another matter requiring external notification, ANW will make reports to the appropriate authorities as required by law.

Child-related concerns must be managed in accordance with ANW's Child Safe Reporting Procedure.

Other complaints and feedback will be managed in accordance with ANW's Complaints & Feedback Policy.

Immediate danger should be reported to emergency services.

19. Responding to Disclosures

If a person tells an ANW staff member or volunteer that they have experienced abuse or harm, the person receiving the disclosure should:

- listen calmly;
- take the person seriously;
- avoid interrogating or conducting their own investigation;
- not promise absolute confidentiality;
- explain that information may need to be shared with people who can help keep them or others safe;
- make an accurate record of what was disclosed as soon as practicable; and
- report the matter through the appropriate ANW procedure.

The immediate safety and wellbeing of the person should be considered first.

20. Privacy, Confidentiality and Records

Information about complaints, disclosures and safety concerns will be handled sensitively and shared only where there is a legitimate reason to do so.

ANW will securely maintain appropriate records relating to matters such as:

- staff and volunteer screening;
- Working with Children Checks;
- training;
- incidents and injuries;
- complaints and disclosures;
- child protection concerns;
- risk assessments; and
- significant decisions made in response to safety concerns.

Records involving child safety or allegations of abuse will be retained in accordance with applicable legal requirements and ANW's record-keeping requirements. Privacy or confidentiality must never be used as a reason to prevent a report that ANW is legally required to make.

21. Partner Organisations and Third Parties

ANW regularly works alongside other organisations and may conduct programs at locations operated by partner organisations.

Where another organisation has responsibility for a location, program or participant group, ANW will seek to understand the respective responsibilities of each organisation.

Where appropriate, ANW may require partner organisations or third parties to demonstrate that they have suitable safety, child-protection or risk-management arrangements.

ANW staff and volunteers remain responsible for complying with ANW policies while representing ANW at a partner organisation or external location.

22. Breaches of this Policy

A breach of this policy or the ANW Code of Conduct may result in action including:

- additional guidance or training;
- increased supervision;
- a formal warning;
- removal from particular duties;
- suspension;
- termination of employment or volunteer involvement;
- exclusion from ANW programs or premises; or
- referral to Police, the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian or another relevant authority.

The response will depend on the seriousness and circumstances of the conduct.

23. Related ANW Documents

This policy should be read alongside ANW's:

- Code of Conduct;
- Reporting Procedure;
- Complaints & Feedback Policy;
- Recruitment, Induction and Training Policy;
- Relevant program risk assessments and procedures.

Where another ANW policy contains more specific requirements, those requirements must also be followed.

24. Definitions

Child: A person under 18 years of age.

Young person: For ANW's broader programs and organisational purposes, a person aged 12 to 30. A young person under 18 is also a child for the purposes of child-protection requirements.

Abuse: Behaviour that causes, or creates a serious risk of, physical, sexual, emotional or psychological harm. It may also include neglect, exploitation and grooming.

Grooming: Behaviour intended to establish trust, access or influence over a child or vulnerable person, or people around them, for the purpose of facilitating abuse or exploitation.

Vulnerable person: A person who, because of age, disability, illness, trauma, disadvantage, social or financial hardship, dependence or other circumstances, may experience an increased risk of abuse, exploitation or harm.

Staff: Any person employed by ANW.

Volunteer: A person who performs duties or provides assistance for ANW without being employed to perform those duties.

ANW representative: A Board member, employee, volunteer, contractor or other person authorised to act on behalf of ANW.

25. Review

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years, and earlier where:

- legislation or regulatory requirements change;
- a significant incident identifies a gap in the policy;
- ANW's programs or operations materially change; or
- the Board otherwise determines that a review is required.

Feedback from staff, volunteers, children, young people, participants and the wider ANW community may be considered as part of the review.

Any significant amendments must be approved by the Board of A New Way Services INC.