



Child Safe Child Friendly Policy

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Introduction

Tamworth City Dance Academy (TCDA) is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at TCDA is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

Legislative Framework

This policy operates within and complies with the following legislative framework:

- Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)^[1], which is the legislative basis for the Child Safe Standards in NSW
- Reportable Conduct Scheme under the Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)^[2], which outlines mandatory reporting obligations
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)^[3]
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011^[4]
- Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)^[5]
- Other relevant Commonwealth and State legislation and regulations as applicable

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy and related procedures, the following definitions apply:

- **Child:** A person who is under the age of 18 years (consistent with NSW legislation including the Children's Guardian Act 2019 and Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012). Note: For certain sections of this policy, we distinguish between younger children (under 16 years) and young people (aged 16-17 years) to reflect developmental differences in participation and safeguarding approaches.
- **Young Person:** A person who is aged 16 years or above, but who is under the age of 18 years
- **Child Abuse:** Includes physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual abuse, exposure to family violence, neglect or negligent treatment
- **Significant Harm:** Refers to circumstances where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of serious physical, sexual, or emotional harm requiring intervention
- **Grooming:** The process by which an adult manipulates a child over time to gain their trust and confidence in preparation for sexual activity
- **Mandatory Reporter:** People who deliver services to children as part of their paid or professional work and are legally required to report suspected risk of significant harm

Purpose

This policy and procedures outline the legislative and policy and action requirements for TCDA in ensuring children who interact with TCDA are protected and their safety is prioritised in all activities.

The purpose of this policy is:

1. To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within TCDA.
2. To work towards an organisational culture of child safety.
3. To prevent child abuse within TCDA.
4. To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
5. To provide guidance to staff/volunteers/contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
6. To provide a clear statement to staff/volunteers/contractors forbidding any such abuse.
7. To provide assurance that all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

Background

NSW organisations that interact with children are required by legislation to meet Child Safety Standards.^[6] These standards include:

- Standard 1: Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
- Standard 2: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture.
- Standard 3: Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
- Standard 4: Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- Standard 5: Equity is upheld, and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
- Standard 6: People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- Standard 7: Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
- Standard 8: Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
- Standard 9: Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- Standard 10: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
- Standard 11: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

Application of each standard must reflect these key principles:

- Promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- Promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Promoting the safety of children with a disability

Organisations engaging with children must:

1. Ensure we have policies that address each of the Child Safety Standards.
2. Ensure we publish a Policy Statement or Commitment to Child Safety Statement at locations where we interact with children to alert visitors to your policies/procedures and how they can gain access to them.

Policy Statement

TCDA is committed to promoting and protecting the best interests of children involved with our organisation. We believe that all children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse. Our Child Safe Child Friendly Policy guides staff, volunteers and students on how to behave with children at TCDA. This policy focuses on how we can promote kids' participation in our organisation and make it safer for them.

Supporting Kids' Participation

TCDA supports the active participation of children in our organisation. We empower children by listening to their views, respect what they say and involve them when we make decisions, especially about matters that will directly affect them.

Our primary means to achieve this end is by encouraging dialogue and feedback from our students. This is met by a number of means including using teaching assistants and junior teachers who are closer to the students' age to engage directly with students in groups and individually.

The availability of teaching assistant and junior teacher positions at TCDA further empowers young people as does our policy of raising teachers primarily from our own ranks means that young people know that their mentors were once students here and that advancement is achievable.

TCDA is committed to creating a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal children and young people. We acknowledge the unique cultural identities and experiences of Aboriginal students and seek to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives in our dance programs where appropriate. We welcome feedback from Aboriginal families on how we can better support their children's participation and cultural connection.

Recruitment

TCDA will maintain a rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening and selection process that aims to protect the safety of all children under the care of our organisation and prevent persons from working at TCDA if they pose a risk to children.

All staff will be screened via the Working With Children Check (WWCC) in accordance with the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)^[3]. Staff will be assessed based upon technical proficiency as well as aptitude and other factors contributing to their suitability for the position utilising references, interviews, prohibited employment declarations and other evidence.

Supporting Staff, Volunteers and Students

1. We promote respect, fairness and consideration for all staff, volunteers and students.
2. All staff, volunteers and students have a more senior person assigned to support and supervise their work. Staff, volunteers and students are made aware of the organisational structure of TCDA.
3. All staff and volunteers are presented with an induction package with our code of conduct and complaints management strategy and return a signed agreement attesting to their understanding. Our code of conduct and Child Safe, Child Friendly Policy is displayed within our premises.

Staff Training and Professional Development

TCDA is committed to ensuring all staff and volunteers have the skills and knowledge to create a child safe environment:

- All staff and volunteers must complete initial child safety training as part of their induction
- Annual refresher training on child safety is mandatory for all staff
- Training includes recognizing signs of abuse, reporting procedures, and creating child safe environments
- Additional specialized training may be required for different roles within the organization
- Completion of training is documented in each staff member's Employee folder
- The Child Safety Officer is responsible for monitoring and recording training completion

Communication

Our Child Safe Child Friendly Policy is published on our website and available as a hard copy at our Tamworth studio and can be found in our Policies and Procedures Folder.

Our Policy is included in induction packages for all new staff.

Online Safety and Electronic Communications

TCDA recognizes the importance of maintaining child safety in digital environments:

- TCDA prohibits the use of recording devices in classes and at performances unless specifically authorized
- Staff communications with children must be transparent and related to dance activities
- Staff must not connect with students on personal social media accounts
- Any online classes must be conducted with the same safeguards as in-person classes
- Photos and videos of children will only be used with appropriate parental consent as obtained on enrollment forms
- Digital imagery of children will be stored securely and access restricted to authorized personnel
- Use of all electronic devices and communications is governed by the TCDA Code of Conduct

Staff should be vigilant for cyberbullying between students and report any concerns according to our reporting procedures.

The Working With Children Check

Since June 2013 people seeking to work or volunteer with children under 18 years in NSW have been required to have a Working With Children Check (WWCC).^[^3] The WWCC provides a unique number to a person who has been cleared to work with children. The WWCC application process involves a national police check and a review of findings of workplace misconduct. The result is a clearance to work with children for 5 years or a bar. Barred applicants cannot work or volunteer with children. All new applicants for paid child related work (direct face-to-face contact with children) must provide a WWCC number to their employers.

Who does NOT need a WWCC?

- The legislation in NSW allows parents and other close relatives such as a sibling, grandparent, step parent, uncle, etc) to volunteer in activities that involve their own children without needing a WWCC number. This includes volunteering with a class, program, or other activity in which their child usually participates.
- Individuals that do not have direct face to face contact with children do not need a WWCC number.
- Parents who volunteer at performances or rehearsals that include their own children (for example help with setting up, makeup, costumes, etc), or are spectators at events do not require a WWCC number.
- Persons who teach adult classes do not require a WWCC number as the participants are not children.

Reportable Conduct Scheme

TCDA complies with NSW's Reportable Conduct Scheme, which requires us to notify the Office of the Children's Guardian of allegations of reportable conduct against employees, volunteers, or contractors.

Reportable conduct includes:

- Sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- Sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- Ill-treatment of a child
- Neglect of a child
- Assault against a child
- Behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child

The Director, as Head of Entity, is responsible for:

- Notifying the Office of the Children's Guardian within 7 business days of becoming aware of an allegation
- Managing investigations in accordance with the scheme's requirements
- Providing investigation findings to the Children's Guardian within 30 days of completing the investigation
- Ensuring natural justice and procedural fairness throughout the process

Staff members must report any allegations of reportable conduct to the Director immediately. The reportable conduct scheme operates alongside, not instead of, our mandatory reporting obligations to the Child Protection Helpline.

Code Of Conduct

TCDA teachers abide by the TCDA Code of Conduct that is explained and signed during induction. Section 11 of the TCDA teachers induction handbook addresses child protection concerns and risk reduction as listed below.

Child Protection

Children have a fundamental right to be safe from any form of abuse while involved in dance. This is a legal as well as a moral obligation. To this end please ensure that you:

- Always work in an open environment
- Avoid spending time alone with children away from others except in essential one on one situations such as private classes.
- Encourage open communication with no secrets
- Treat all children equally and with respect and dignity
- Put the welfare of the child first

- Notify the Principal and / or Studio Manager of any concerns that you may have about the safety, wellbeing or welfare of children and young people in your classes
- Are aware that you have a mandatory obligation to report suspected risks of significant harm

You are obligated to report the following to the Principal or Studio Manager:

- If you accidentally hurt a child
- If a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done
- If a child is unusually distressed and you have any suspicions or concerns about potential abuse

Risk Management

TCDA maintains a comprehensive Risk Management Plan that addresses child safety risks across all activities and environments. This document:

- Identifies potential risks to children in various settings including classes, performances, events, and online environments
- Evaluates risk levels and implements appropriate control measures
- Is reviewed annually as part of our continuous improvement process
- Includes specific considerations for high-risk activities, including performances, overnight events, and specialized dance forms such as aerial and acrobatic classes

The TCDA Risk Management Plan should be read in conjunction with this Child Safe Child Friendly Policy. The current version is available in the TCDA Studio Office.

Reporting Procedures

TCDA follows strict protocols for reporting suspected child abuse or concerns about a child's welfare:

1. Immediate Response: Staff must respond immediately to any disclosure or reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect by: a. Providing appropriate support to the child b. Notifying the Child Safety Officer (Principal or Studio Manager) as soon as practicable, but no later than the end of the working day
2. Mandatory Reporting: Reports must be made to the Child Protection Helpline (132 111) when there are reasonable grounds to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm. Reports should be made within 24 hours of becoming aware of the risk.
3. Documentation: All concerns and actions taken must be documented promptly and accurately using the incident report forms located adjacent to the first aid cabinet.
4. Confidentiality: All reports are treated confidentially and information is shared only with those who need to know to ensure the child's safety.
5. Support: TCDA will provide support to both the child and the staff member throughout the reporting process.

Flowchart for Reporting Child Safety Concerns:

1. Identify concern → 2. Ensure child's immediate safety → 3. Report to Child Safety Officer → 4. Document concern → 5. Report to authorities if required → 6. Follow-up and support

Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who has grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify the appropriate child protection service or the police and also advise their supervisor about their concern.

In situations where the supervisor is suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the next highest level of supervision.

Supervisors must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the Director and also to any external regulatory body such as the police.

If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to investigate a report, all employees, contractors or volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation. Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the Director will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the Director may decide to conduct such an investigation.

Any such investigation will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice. The Director will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of staff may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the Director shall coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and/or law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process, as deemed appropriate.

Child-Friendly Complaint Procedures

TCDA is committed to ensuring children know their rights and feel comfortable raising concerns:

- Age-appropriate posters are displayed throughout the studio encouraging children to speak up if they feel unsafe
- These posters include photographs of the Principal and Head Teacher to help children identify who they can approach
- Different poster styles are used to target distinct age groups, ensuring accessibility for all children
- Staff are trained to respond supportively to children who disclose concerns
- Children are regularly reminded that their voice matters and that they have the right to be safe
- Staff will help children articulate their concerns and will take all disclosures seriously

When a child raises a concern, staff will:

1. Listen carefully and reassure the child they've done the right thing by speaking up
2. Not promise to keep secrets, but explain confidentiality in age-appropriate terms
3. Document the disclosure promptly and accurately
4. Follow the reporting procedures outlined in this policy

Responding

If it is alleged that a member of staff, contractor or a volunteer may have committed an offence or have breached the organisation's policies or its Code of Conduct the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted.

If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of the organisation's policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.

Privacy and Record Keeping

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. TCDA will have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how the personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.

TCDA maintains secure and confidential records related to child safety:

- All records relating to child safety concerns, incidents, and complaints are stored securely
- Physical records are kept off-site in a locked cabinet accessible only to authorized personnel
- Digital records are stored in password-protected folders with restricted access
- Records are maintained in accordance with relevant privacy legislation and record retention requirements
- Information is shared only on a "need to know" basis to protect children's privacy
- Records include dates, times, factual observations, and actions taken
- Documentation is clear, comprehensive and avoids subjective judgments or opinions

These records may be required for future investigations or legal proceedings and therefore must be complete, accurate and objectively written.

The results of the WWCC are stored by TCDA within the Employees folder off-site and within our procedures manual.

Policy Review and Updates

TCDA is committed to the continuous improvement of our child safety practices:

- This Child Safe Child Friendly Policy will be formally reviewed every 12 months
- The TCDA Director, Paul Singh, is responsible for leading the review process
- The review will consider feedback from staff, students, and parents as well as any relevant legislative changes or best practice developments
- Any incidents or concerns that arise during the year may trigger an immediate review of relevant policy sections
- The most recent version of this policy will always be available on our website on the policies page
- Staff will be notified of policy updates through staff meetings and written communication
- Parents will be informed of significant policy changes through newsletters and email communications

Related Documents

This policy must be read in conjunction with:

- The law of the Commonwealth or of the relevant state or territory;
- The organisation's Code of Conduct;

Information and Resources

Frequently asked questions, fact sheets and resources, and online tutorials about the WWCC, Child Safe Organisations and Children's Employment are available at the Office of the Children's Guardian at www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au and the Advocate for Children and Young People at www.acyp.nsw.gov.au

Questions

If you have any questions or concerns about this policy or child safety in general, please contact the Child Safety Officer by phone 0438 621 440 or by email, paul@tamworthcitydance.com.au

References

[^1]: Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW) <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2019-025> [^2]: Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW) <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1998-157> [^3]: Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW) <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2012-051> [^4]: Work Health and Safety Act 2011 <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2011-010> [^5]: Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth) <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2021C00139> [^6]: NSW Child Safe Standards, as mandated under the Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)