



Child Safe Code of Conduct

March 2024

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1 Purpose

This Code of Conduct clearly outlines the standards and behavioural expectations of AEPL staff and volunteers when interacting with children and young people.

2 Scope

The Code of Conduct:

- Applies to Officers, Study Centre Managers, Leaders, Helpers, contractors, and sub-contractors engaged by AEPL to deliver services to children.
- Extends to all aspects of educational activities and programs of AEPL, including those delivered in the physical and online environments.

All persons engaged in a child-related position at AEPL are required to read and sign this Code of Conduct prior to work with children begins.

3 Terms and Definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct:

Term	Meaning
AEPL	Association for Educational Projects Limited.
Centre	Refers to a study centre established by AEPL in which its educational activities are conducted.
Child	A person under the age of 18 years, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.
Child abuse	Refers to acts or omissions (neglect) that result in, or have the likelihood to result in, harm to a child. The forms of child abuse are sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, physical abuse, and exposure to family violence.
Child-related position	Refers to a position within AEPL that involves supervision, care, or responsibility for children.
Child Safety Officer (CSO)	Refers to the individual appointed by AEPL who is responsible for matters relating to child safety, including the management of child safety complaints.
Helper	A person less than 18 years old invited to help from time to time in a particular activity at a Centre.
Leader	An adult who has an ongoing role in the provision of services in a Centre.
Officer	Has the same meaning given by the <i>Corporations Act 2001</i> (Cth) and includes a director or secretary of AEPL.
Staff	Refers to an individual at AEPL in a paid position. This may include Study Centre Managers.
Study Centre Manager	A person appointed by AEPL to direct activities at a Centre.
Volunteer	Refers to an unpaid employee of AEPL. This includes AEPL Officers, Leaders and Helpers, and may include Study Centre Managers. It also includes other individuals engaged by AEPL on a voluntary basis.

4 Reporting a Breach of the Code of Conduct

Staff, volunteers, children and families are encouraged to speak up if they have concerns about the safety of children. Complaints about a breach of this Code of Conduct **required to** be reported to the CSO, an Officer or Study Centre Manager.

Refer to AEPL's *Child Safe Complaints Handling Procedure* for guidance on reporting obligations in the event of a breach of this Code of Conduct.

5 Child Safeguarding Responsibilities

Staff and volunteers are required to:

- ✓ Comply with AEPL's *Child Safe Policy* and supporting procedures
- ✓ Report any concerns, allegations, or disclosures of abuse in accordance with AEPL's *Child Safe Complaints Handling Procedure*
- ✓ Comply with the child safe legal obligations as relevant to the Centre's State or Territory of operation
- ✓ Report any breaches of the *Child Safe Policy* or this Code of Conduct
- ✓ Treat children with equal respect and consideration, without favouritism, and ensure of their safety and welfare
- ✓ Avoid taking risks with the safety of children, and avoid any situations that could lead to misinterpretations, difficulties or accusations of abuse.

6 Professional Boundaries

Staff and volunteers are required to:

- ✓ Provide children equal attention and opportunities regardless of gender, culture, race, or disability
- ✓ Interact with children in a way that would be considered appropriate by a reasonable observer as maintaining professional boundaries
- ✓ Conduct 1:1 peer mentoring sessions in an open area, that is accessible and visible to another supervising AEPL staff member/volunteer at all times
- ✓ Ensure all interactions with children are conducted within the scope of their role and responsibilities.

AEPL recognises that staff and volunteers form part of a close-knit and small community. They form close and trusting relationships with parents, whose children attend activities at the Study Centres. These children often attend PARED¹ schools, which may employ staff that reside at the Study Centres. There may also be parents from PARED schools who volunteer at the Study Centres.

In these circumstances, it may be appropriate for staff to socialise with parents and families of children who attend the Study Centres, including visiting their homes. Outside of these limited circumstances, staff and volunteers are prohibited from:

- ✗ Spending time alone with a child
- ✗ Developing close personal relationships with a child outside of AEPL programs

¹ PARED Schools include Harkaway Hills College, Montgrove College, Redfield College, Retaval Belfield, Tangara School for Girls, Wollemi College.

- ✘ Encouraging a child to keep secrets, such as to not tell their parent/guardian when the staff member/volunteer has communicated with them
- ✘ Allowing bullying to occur among children
- ✘ Accepting invitations to attend private social functions of children and/or their families
- ✘ Buying gifts or other items for children without approval from a Study Centre Manager and knowledge of the child's parents/guardians
- ✘ Providing children with alcohol, drugs, tobacco, or pornography
- ✘ Being under the influence of any alcohol, illicit drugs, medication, or fatigue that may affect their capacity to perform their role
- ✘ Showing special attention to a child or isolating them from peers to engage in inappropriate behaviour.

In addition, you must not:

- ✘ Invite minors to your home
- ✘ Visit minors at their home; or
- ✘ Attend parties or socialise with minors, unless you have express written permission of the Study Centre Manager and the child's parents or guardian.

In all circumstances, when you have contact with children outside of normal study centre activities, you should exercise common sense and caution, and follow the requirements of AEPL's Child Safe Policy. Staff should remember that they are always in a professional relationship with children at all times. If you are ever in doubt about appropriate professional boundaries, please consult with the Study Centre Manager.

7 Communication

Staff and volunteers are required to:

- ✓ Use clear, direct, and age-appropriate language
- ✓ Listen to and respect what children have to say
- ✓ Interact with children in a professional and supportive manner
- ✓ Use positive and inclusive language that supports a safe environment for all children
- ✓ Promote positive friendships and encourage children to support their peers
- ✓ Address situations where negative language or tone is being used by a child, parent/guardian or other person and emphasise that it is not appropriate
- ✓ Communicate with children and their parents only through authorised AEPL channels. For example, by work email or telephone. Staff/volunteers may communicate via a WhatsApp group if:
 - The group chat is authorised by the Study Centre Manager
 - Parent/guardian consent is provided; and
 - A min. of 2 AEPL staff/volunteers are members in the group chat.

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from:

- ✘ Singling out a child in a humiliating manner
- ✘ Using abusive, derogatory, offensive, threatening or sexual language when communicating with a child
- ✘ Discussing inappropriate adult themes in the presence of children

- ✗ Engaging in unauthorised contact with a child online
- ✗ Using a computer, mobile phone, camera, or other device to exploit or harass a child
- ✗ Communicating with children or their families through personal social media platforms.

8 Supervision

Staff and volunteers are required to:

- ✓ Ensure a minimum of 2 AEPL staff members/volunteers are present to supervise Centre activities
- ✓ Adopt appropriate supervision ratios based on the age and gender of the children and size of the group. A risk assessment must be completed for each AEPL activity/program to determine appropriate ratios. As a minimum there should always be 2 suitable AEPL staff/volunteers present.
- ✓ Remain easily accessible and within sight of other AEPL staff/volunteers when interacting with children
- ✓ Ensure all child-related activities are conducted in areas that have clear visibility
- ✓ Ensure children are always supervised when using shared spaces / common areas in a Centre
- ✓ Be vigilant in supervising/monitoring students when using mobile phones. Children are not permitted to use mobile phones:
 - During AEPL supervised activities
 - In the toilets, change rooms or swimming pool areas
 - To photograph or film their peers or AEPL staff/volunteers without the individual's consent
 - To bully, harass or distribute inappropriate material to their peers.

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from:

- ✗ Being alone with children in a direct, unsupervised capacity
- ✗ Taking a child or groups of children into areas where they cannot be seen by supervising AEPL staff/volunteers, or taken into rooms that can be locked
- ✗ Allowing a child to go with another parent/guardian without the written consent of the authorised parent/guardian
- ✗ Providing unauthorised transportation to a child
- ✗ Travelling alone with a child except in emergency situations. In such cases, consent should be obtained from the Study Centre Manager and the child's parent/guardian
- ✗ Leaving children unsupervised.

9 Physical Contact

Staff and volunteers are required to:

- ✓ Use verbal instructions rather than physical touch
- ✓ Only use physical contact if it is required for the activity and if necessary (e.g. if it is required for the child's safety)
- ✓ Obtain consent from a child prior to using physical contact (if the contact is necessary)
- ✓ Explain to the child why the physical contact is required

- ✓ Respect and respond to signs that a child is uncomfortable with touch
- ✓ Use non-intrusive touch, such as a handshake or pat on the back/upper arm, to comfort a distressed child, or to encourage a child to participate.

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from:

- ✗ Performing acts that are of a personal nature with a child, if the child is capable of doing so independently, such as changing clothes and going to the bathroom
- ✗ Touching a child in areas of a sexual nature such as the breasts, buttocks or genitals
- ✗ Using intrusive forms of discipline such as smacking, hitting, slapping or kicking
- ✗ Allowing a child to smack or hit another child
- ✗ Initiating, allowing or requesting unacceptable physical contact with a child, such as hugging, massages or kisses
- ✗ Facilitating situations that result in unnecessarily close physical contact with a child, such as tickling
- ✗ Threatening to hurt a child through words or gestures.

10 Use of Bathrooms / Change Rooms

Staff and volunteers are required to:

- ✓ Respect the child's right to privacy
- ✓ Use the correct gender marked bathrooms at all times
- ✓ Knock and announce themselves before entering toilets or change rooms for the purpose of supervision. For example, when children use public bathrooms at off-site AEPL activities, overnight camps, or overseas camps.

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from:

- ✗ Entering the bathrooms of the opposite gender
- ✗ Using bathrooms or changing areas that have been allocated to children
- ✗ Using the bathrooms or changing areas when children are present
- ✗ Using photographic or videos devices in toilets or changing areas.

11 Overnight Stays

Staff and volunteers are required to:

- ✓ Adhere to the risk management assessment and checklist completed for the specific overnight activity/program (including supervision requirements)
- ✓ Obtain parental consent prior to a child's participation in an overnight stay
- ✓ Inform parents/guardians of sleeping arrangements prior to the commencement of any overnight activity or program
- ✓ Allow children to contact their parents/guardians if they feel unsafe, uncomfortable or have any concerns
- ✓ Ensure sleeping arrangements prioritise the safety of children. For example, children should not share a bed with other children, or with another adult
- ✓ Ensure that for overnight activities/programs which involve a mix of over 18's and under 18's (e.g. university students and senior high school students) that they are allocated separate sleeping areas and different times to use toilet / changing facilities.

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from:

- ✘ Being accommodated in the same room as a child
- ✘ Leaving children unsupervised with unauthorised persons such as accommodation staff
- ✘ Entering the sleeping / accommodation, shower, toilet or changing facilities that have been designated to children
- ✘ Exposing children to movies, television programs, computer games, print media, music or language that promotes violence, intolerance or harm of a person in a sexual, physical or emotional nature.

12 Use of Photographic and Video devices

Staff and volunteers are required to:

- ✓ Obtain informed consent from the child's parent/guardian before taking photographs and videos of children
- ✓ Clearly explain to parents/guardians how AEPL intends to use authorised photographs and videos
- ✓ Obtain consent from the child and their parent/guardian before posting a photograph or video online
- ✓ Ensure photographs or videos taken do not include other children (who have not provided consent), particularly when the individual can be identified
- ✓ Report inappropriate photography/videeing to the Study Centre Manager.

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from:

- ✘ Taking photos or videos of children for personal use
- ✘ Using a computer, mobile phone, camera, or other device in manner inconsistent with AEPL's *Child Safe Policy* and related procedures
- ✘ Sharing personal information, including photographs of children without the informed consent of the parent/guardian
- ✘ Tagging a child in a photograph or video on social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram
- ✘ Possessing or creating child abuse material.

13 Revision History

Version.	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Change Details
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14 Breach of this Code of Conduct

Staff or volunteers found to be in breach of this Code of Conduct will be subject to disciplinary action. AEPL will promptly address all breaches of this policy in a fair, unbiased, and supportive manner. For further information refer to AEPL's *Child Safe Policy* at *Section 16: Breaches of this Policy and Supporting Procedures*.

15 Signed Acknowledgement

I have read and understand my responsibilities in accordance with this Code of Conduct.
I understand that I will be subject to disciplinary action if I breach this Code of Conduct.

Signed

Date