



## **RIGHTS INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY CENTRE (RIAC)**

### **CODE OF CONDUCT (incorporating child safety and disability service worker requirements)**

**All staff, volunteers and board members of RIAC are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, young people and adults and abide by this Code of Conduct which incorporates the Disability Services Worker Code of Conduct.**

**The RIAC CEO** is the dedicated Child Protection Officer.

#### **Managers will:**

1. Be responsible for the overall welfare and wellbeing of staff and volunteers; and
2. Be accountable for managing and maintaining a duty of care towards staff and volunteers.

**ALL personnel of RIAC are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children, young people and adults, including people with disabilities by:**

1. Working towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of the organisation;
2. Adhering to all RIAC policies, including the RIAC child safe policy at all times;
3. Being responsible for relevant administration of programs and activities in their area;
4. Maintaining a duty of care towards others involved in all RIAC programs and activities;
5. Establishing and maintaining a child-safe environment in the course of their work;
6. Being fair, considerate and honest with others;
7. Treating everyone with respect and valuing their ideas and opinions;
8. Acting as positive role models in their conduct with children and young people;
9. Being professional in their actions;
10. Maintaining strict impartiality;
11. Complying with specific organisational guidelines on physical contact with children;
12. Respecting the privacy of all clients, their families and carers, and only disclose information to people who have a need to know;
13. Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse;
14. Listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another;

15. Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal child's self-identification);
16. Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination);
17. Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities);
18. Ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child;
19. Reporting any allegations of child abuse to RIAC's Child Safety Officer/CEO and ensure any allegation to reported to the police or child protection;
20. Reporting any child safety concerns to the Manager or RIAC CEO;
21. If an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe;
22. Providing services without engaging in abuse, exploitation, harassment or neglect of people with disabilities;

**As a worker you must:**

- treat people with a disability with dignity and respect, and uphold their human rights;
- never abuse, exploit, harass or neglect a person with a disability;
- always take action to ensure a person with a disability you have reason to believe may have been abused, exploited, harassed or neglected receives appropriate support (for example, medical support, counselling and support to report abuse to the police);
- actively listen to people with a disability and their families, carers and advocates to deliver support with their interests and needs in mind;
- support people with a disability to meaningfully engage with their local community and society; and
- exercise professional and ethical judgement when providing services.

23. Reporting any form of abuse of suspected abuse of people with disabilities;

**As a worker you must:**

- take all allegations of abuse seriously;
- report any abuse or suspected abuse to your supervisor or manager and, if necessary, other relevant authorities in line with your organisation's reporting policy and procedures. This includes reporting incidents that raise concerns about the support provided by another worker;
- if you think your employer has not acted on your first report and people with a disability are at risk, report the abuse or suspected abuse to other authorities such as the Disability Services Commissioner;
- facilitate access to independent support, such as an advocacy service or the Office of the Public Advocate, where a person's rights are not being upheld; and

- participate in training, information sessions and supervision provided by your employer that assists you to understand:
    - what abuse is and its various forms
    - the application of this code of conduct.
24. Not engaging in sexual abuse or misconduct and reporting any such conduct by other workers, people with a disability, family members, carers or community members;

**As a worker you must:**

- always report sexual misconduct and abuse;
  - recognise the power imbalance between you and a person receiving your support and how this affects the kinds of behaviour that are appropriate;
  - never engage in any sexual conduct with a person who you support, including actions committed by force, intimidation, coercion or manipulation; and
  - never engage in any form of sexual activity or behaviour with a person who you support. This includes sexual advances and sexual, personal or erotic comments.
25. Showing respect for cultural differences when providing services;

**As a worker you must:**

- be aware of and actively listen to the expressed needs, values and beliefs of people from cultural, religious and ethnic groups that are different from yours, about culturally relevant needs that affect the delivery of support services. This includes people with a disability, their families, carers and advocates
  - consult with families, carers, advocates and other supports to clarify cultural expectations when these are unclear or not currently being met
  - respect religious or spiritual beliefs and practices that are different to your own
  - ensure cultures that are different from your own are acknowledged and respected.
26. Acting ethically, with integrity, honesty and transparency;

**As a worker you must:**

- respect the privacy of people with a disability and their families, carers and advocates
- display professionalism while providing support services
- communicate in a language, form, manner and tone that enables people with a disability to understand the information provided and to make their preferences known
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries, and act at all times to protect the boundaries of the professional relationship
- always recommend and provide supports that serve the needs and interests of people with a disability

- never use the power you have over people with a disability you support for personal gain; and
27. Encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

**No person shall:**

1. Exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps);
2. Put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors);
3. Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes;
4. Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities);
5. Express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children;
6. Unlawfully discriminate against anyone, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability;
7. Have contact with a child or their family outside of our organisation without our CEO's knowledge and/or consent (for example, no babysitting). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate);
8. Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse;
9. Shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade anyone;
10. Engage in any activity with a child, young person or any other client that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them;
11. Be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily and for more than a very short time;
12. Develop a 'special' relationship with a specific child or young person for their own needs;
13. Arrange contact, including online contact, with children or young people outside of the organisation's programs and activities;
14. Photograph or video a child or young person without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians;
15. Use inappropriate language in the presence of children; or
16. Do anything in contravention of the organisation's policies, procedures or this Code of Conduct.

**What happens if you breach this Code of Conduct**

If RIAC staff or volunteers breach this Code of Conduct they will face disciplinary action in accordance with RIAC Policies and Procedures.

By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to the RIAC CEO.

I agree to adhere to this Code of Conduct:

Name: .....

Signature: .....

Date: .....

*This document is based on the Child Safety Toolkit created by Moores Legal Pty Ltd and published by Our Community and the Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services Child Safety Toolkit and the Victoria State Government Department of Health and Human Services Code of Conduct for disability service workers.*