

Everyone who works for us at Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) is expected to behave in ways that keep children and young people (aged 25 and under) safe.

This Code of Conduct explains what our staff, volunteers and students will and won't do, when working with children and families.

## At all times, RAV staff, volunteers and students will:

- ✓ Treat all children and young people with respect, equity, and dignity.
- ✓ Provide spaces which children can easily access and where they feel safe and welcome.
- ✓ Focus on the rights and best interests of children when making decisions.
- ✓ Be a positive role model by:
  - ✓ helping children to know when they feel unsafe
  - ✓ encouraging children to speak up if they are worried about their safety or wellbeing
  - ✓ teaching children about their rights
  - ✓ supporting children to 'have a say' on issues that directly affect them.
- ✓ Behave in a professional way with children, young people and families.
- ✓ Tell a supervisor or manager if they have an existing relationship with a child, young person or adult who is using RAV's services.
- ✓ Support the diverse needs of children and young people.
- ✓ Respect and support:
  - ✓ the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
  - ✓ children from multicultural families and those who use languages other than English
  - ✓ LGBTIQ+ children and children from rainbow families
  - ✓ children with disability and those who need extra help to communicate.
- ✓ Promote inclusion, take actions to stand up against all types of racism and discrimination and report it if they see it happen.
- ✓ Ask for help and take time off work if unwell or too stressed.
- ✓ Be aware of possible risks of child abuse and take steps to protect children.
- ✓ Complete training on keeping children safe.
- ✓ Follow workplace rules and policies which reduce risk and help to keep children safe.
- ✓ Only use 'safe touches' (touches that children are comfortable with, and which keep them safe) if:
  - ✓ this is appropriate or needed for safety, hygiene or if a child is distressed
  - ✓ children are too young to do something by themselves (for example, handwashing)
  - ✓ it is culturally sensitive
  - ✓ a child/young person initiates it (for example, asking for a hug)
  - ✓ a child/young person gives their consent (understands, feels comfortable and says it is okay).
- ✓ Staff will pay attention to the child or young person's cues and what they are comfortable with. They will always ask for consent first, unless this is not possible or age appropriate. If the child says 'no', they will not proceed unless there is risk to the child. They will call a supervisor or another staff member for assistance.
- ✓ Listen to and take children seriously if they talk about safety or abuse.
- ✓ Make a report to the police if they believe that children are at risk of sexual abuse. It is now a crime for anyone in the community to fail to report child abuse to police if they believe it may have occurred.
- ✓ Make a report to child protection, and inform others at risk if they become aware a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse.
- ✓ Prioritise the interests of the child or young person who is being abused. Everyone else's interests come second.
- ✓ Report any other staff who don't follow the Code of Conduct to a supervisor or manager.

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## RAV staff, volunteers and students will not:

- ✗ Ignore or dismiss anyone who says that they suspect or know child abuse is happening.
- ✗ Put a child at risk of abuse or harm by either failing to take proper care (negligence) or not taking actions to protect children.
- ✗ Speak to a child in an angry, intimidating, or threatening way.
- ✗ Use language around children which is inappropriate, discriminatory, harassing, abusive, sexually explicit, demeaning or culturally insensitive.
- ✗ Talk about adult topics that may be harmful to children, when children are there.
- ✗ Talk to other adults about a child, in a way that may be harmful, when children are there.
- ✗ Talk about or support illegal behaviours when children are there.
- ✗ Behave in ways which may be harmful for a child to see or experience.
- ✗ Smoke, take illegal drugs, or be affected by alcohol or other substances when working.
- ✗ Do personal tasks if it is reasonable to assume that the child can do these things themselves. For example, helping with toileting or changing clothes.
- ✗ 'Play favourites' or treat one child better than other children, for example by offering them gifts or special treatment.
- ✗ Treat a child unfairly (discriminate against them) because of their age, gender, race, culture, religion, disability, vulnerability, sexuality or another personal characteristic. This includes talking about personal views on these things when children are around.
- ✗ Have a relationship with a child and/or their family outside of work.
- ✗ Suggest or agree to provide private services to children and/or their families outside of work. For example, babysitting, counselling, private lessons or home visits which have not been approved by RAV.
- ✗ Share personal contact details with children, young people and families who they work with. For example, a private phone number, home or email address, or social media details.
- ✗ Have online contact with children, young people or families; met through work at RAV; through social media or other online platforms or websites.
- ✗ Take, use or publish images of children without approval from RAV and written consent from children and their parents.
- ✗ Take photos or videos of children on personal phones or devices.