



**ESSENTIAL  
PHYSIOTHERAPY**

**Child Safe Policy  
For  
Physiotherapy Practices**

## Child-Safe Policy for a Physiotherapy Practice

# Essential Physiotherapy Child Safe Policy

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## 1. Purpose

This policy was written to demonstrate the strong commitment by Essential Physiotherapy and its employees to child safety and establishing and maintaining child safe and child friendly environments.

## 2. Context

This policy reflects our commitment to provide a safe environment where every person has the right to be treated with respect and is safe and protected from abuse.

It complies with our obligations under the *Children's Protection Act 1993*, including:

- Section 8B – 8D – Child Safe Environments and criminal history assessments for people working with children; and
- Section 11 – Mandatory reporting.

It also complies with the *Child Safe Environments: Principles of Good Practice and Standards* for dealing with information obtained about the criminal history of employees who work with children issued by the Chief Executive of the Department for Families and Communities.

## 3. Scope

This policy, from the date of endorsement, applies to all employees, children, parents, carers and other individuals involved in Essential Physiotherapy.

## 4. Commitment to Child Safety

All children who come to Essential Physiotherapy have a right to feel and be safe.

We are committed to the safety and well-being of all children and young people accessing our services and the welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority.

We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where all children are valued and feel safe.

## 5. Children's participation

Employees of Essential Physiotherapy encourage children who use our services to 'have a say' about those things that are important to them. We value diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices.

We value and respect the views of children and young people who access our services. We listen to and act on any concerns children, their parents or carers, raise with us.

## 6. Recruitment practices

Essential Physiotherapy takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children.

We interview and conduct referee checks on all employees.

We conduct criminal history assessment, at the expense of Essential Physiotherapy, for people working with children in prescribed positions as set out in section 8B of the *Children's Protection Act 1993*.

We ensure that criminal history information is dealt with in accordance with the standards developed by the Chief Executive of the Department for Families and Communities.

In the event that an employee, volunteer or applicant is not willing to consent to a criminal history assessment, or does not have a valid assessment of their criminal history report or other acceptable evidence, Essential Physiotherapy will preclude the individual from working with children in a prescribed position

Our procedure for conducting criminal history assessments is provided in Appendix 1 [\*Child Safe Environments: Standards for dealing with information obtained about criminal history of employees and volunteers who work with children.\*](#)]

## 7. Code of Conduct

All employees at Essential Physiotherapy will:

- Treat everyone with respect and honesty (this includes staff, volunteers, students, children, young people, parents and caregivers).
- Remember to be a positive role model to children and young people in all your conduct with them.
- Set clear boundaries about appropriate behaviour between yourself and the children or young people present or being treated in the Practice.
- Ensure children and young people understand their rights and explain to the child or young person in age-appropriate language what they can expect during the consultation, particularly where treatment involves physical contact.
- Ensure that where diagnosis or treatment requires an image of a child or young person to be taken, the child, young person and their parents or carers (where applicable) clearly understand the way the image will be used. Permission must be obtained before any images are taken.
- Follow the Practice Child-Safe policy and guidelines for the safety of children and young people.
- Raise any concerns, problems or issues with management as soon as possible.
- Record and act quickly, fairly and transparently on complaints of abuse or other serious complaints made by a child, a child, young person or their parent/guardian.

- Notify the **Child Abuse Report Line on 13 14 78** as soon as practicable if staff have a reasonable suspicion that a child or young person has been or is being abused or neglected.
- All employees will not:
  - Take part in any unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person
  - Discriminate against any child or young person because of age, gender, cultural background, religion, vulnerability or sexuality.
  - Develop any 'special' relationships with children or young people outside of the professional relationship

## 8. Support for employees and volunteers

Essential Physiotherapy seeks to attract and retain the best employees.

We provide support and supervision so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated.

We ensure that employees who work with children have ongoing supervision, support and training so that their performance is developed and enhanced to promote the establishment and maintenance of a child safe environment.

All physiotherapists need to comply with mandatory professional development as outlined by the Physiotherapy Board of Australia

## 9. Reporting and response to suspected child abuse and neglect

Essential Physiotherapy will not tolerate incidents of child abuse.

All employees and volunteers understand their obligation to notify the Child Abuse Report Line on 13 14 78 as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is being, abused or neglected by a member of their family.

From time to time we provide opportunities for staff to attend information sessions about these mandatory reporting obligations. We also ensure that staff have access to relevant information resources available from the Department for Families and Communities, including:

- Guidelines for Mandated Notifiers (available to view or download from [www.families.sa.gov.au/childsafes](http://www.families.sa.gov.au/childsafes))
- Department for Families and Communities' reporting child abuse website: <http://www.dfc.sa.gov.au/pub/default.aspx?tabid=485>.

Child Protection is everyone's responsibility. This Practice recognises that even where a report is made, we may still have a role in supporting the child or young person. We ensure that support is also available for the staff member making the report, particularly where an ongoing service is provided to the child, young person and their family.

Employees must also report to management any reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is being, abused or neglected by another employee. Staff of this Practice have a duty of care to report any concerns about the behaviour of a staff member to management even if they are not mandated notifiers under the *Children's Protection Act 1993*.

## 10.Strategies to Minimise Risk

Essential Physiotherapy provides physiotherapy services to approximately 25 of children and young people on average per month. Children are always accompanied by the parent or carers therefore the likelihood of any risk event is low.

We have some of children who are intellectually disabled and have carers present.

We treat some teenagers one on one without parents or carers present – risk is medium.

We have three physiotherapists who regularly treat children and young people.

We have one admin staff who does not have regular contact with children nor provide any physiotherapy services to them, but do have access to children's records.

Essential Physiotherapy has a reception area where children often play whilst waiting for parents who are in treatment room. This area is within sight of admin staff and risk is low.

This practice takes steps to minimize the risks to children or young people due to the actions or omissions of staff, contractors, or other people within our practice. We review our risks regularly to address any new or emerging risks in order to maintain a safe environment for children and young people.

Strategies we have implemented to minimize and control risks to children and young people include:

- High risk situations which are referred to in our code of conduct (see Paragraph 6 of this policy)
- All staff are required to abide by this practice's child safe policy
- Staff must consider whether a parent or chaperone is required to be present when treating a child or young person
- Staff are made aware of and are responsive to the particular needs and vulnerabilities of children and young people (such as age, language barriers, developmental capabilities, disability, mental health, trauma or abuse)
- Staff provide clear age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate explanations to children and young people about the consultation and allow for questions prior to examination.
- Staff ensure that where diagnosis or treatment requires an image of a child or young person to be taken, the child, young person and their parents or carers clearly understand the way the image will be used. Permission is obtained before any images are taken.
- This practice responds to any concerns that children, or their families or carers raise, quickly and fairly.

- This practice ensures that patient records, including images of children and young people, are securely managed and stored in accordance with practice policy and relevant legislative requirements.
- In some cases, children with a history of significant abuse or neglect may display signs of developmental trauma as a consequence of the previous abuse and/or neglect. Staff are aware that in these cases, additional care may be required to explain and ‘walk’ the child and their parent or carer through normal treatment procedures which may include the need for practitioners to request the child to -
  - Remove articles of clothing to enable assessment and treatment
  - Allow close physical contact as part of the examination and/or treatment
  - Participate in the taking of images intended to assist with diagnosis and treatment.

Evaluation of these strategies and the development of additional strategies to minimize and control risks to children and young people occurs as part of our ongoing risk management process.

## 11. Harassment/bullying

Essential Physiotherapy opposes all forms of harassment, discrimination and bullying. We take this issue seriously and encourage anyone who believes that they, or another person, has been harassed, discriminated against or bullied to raise this issue with Jamie Sibbick or Nadine Schultz, practice partners.

## 12. Communication

Essential Physiotherapy will ensure that everyone to whom this policy applies is aware of and has had an opportunity to read the policy.

We also ask employees, locums and volunteers (where appropriate) to sign a written statement indicating that they have read and will abide by our child-safe policy. We retain a copy of all signed statements.

## 13. Related policies and procedures

- Statement to be signed by employees indicating they have read and will abide by this policy (Appendix 2). Signed statements will be kept for future reference in the Essential Physiotherapy Policy Manual, located centrally at the Birdwood consulting rooms.

Approved by	Date	Review date
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## Conducting criminal history assessments

### Assessments required for prescribed positions

All staff of this practice who occupy a prescribed position (as set out under section 8B (8) of the *Children's Protection Act 1993*) are required to undergo a criminal history assessment once every three years.

Criminal history assessments are also required prior to the appointment of new staff members to prescribed positions. This includes all staff who regularly work with or around children in an unsupervised capacity or have access to children's medical records.

### Procedure for conducting criminal history assessments

A satisfactory criminal history assessment is a precondition of working in a prescribed position at this practice.

Prior to the appointment of a new employee and then at three yearly intervals, this Practice will direct the applicant/employee to obtain a National Police Certificate (NPC) from South Australia Police. The cost of obtaining a NPC will be covered by Essential Physiotherapy.

South Australia Police require the explicit written consent of the applicant prior to the release of criminal history information. The NPC application form is available from [http://www.police.sa.gov.au/sapol/services/information\\_requests/national\\_police\\_certificate.jsp](http://www.police.sa.gov.au/sapol/services/information_requests/national_police_certificate.jsp).

Where a person has no disclosable criminal history, the assessment is successfully completed and no further action in respect to an assessment is required.

Where an individual does have a criminal history, this practice assesses this information in accordance with Standard 5 of the *Standards for dealing with information obtained about the criminal history of employees and volunteers who work with children*.

Each assessment is conducted on its individual merits and with consideration to the inherent requirements of the position. Principles of procedural fairness and natural justice are applied throughout the decision-making process and the individual is provided an opportunity to confirm or dispute the information contained within the report and to provide contextual information for consideration during the assessment process.

Criminal history information will not be retained once a decision has been made regarding the person's suitability to work with children. No criminal history information will be retained beyond three months.

In accordance with its legal requirements, this Practice will retain the following information regarding its decision:

- That a criminal history report was obtained
- How the criminal history information affected decision making processes
- Statutory declarations (where applicable)



The Practice may obtain a further criminal history assessment for an employee at any time that the Practice believes it necessary or desirable for the purpose of maintaining a child safe environment.

### **Other evidence**

Where appropriate, this Practice may utilise a number of forms of evidence (obtained within the last three years) to assess a person's suitability to work with children. This includes:

- A National Police Certificate that does not expressly state that it cannot be used as a clearance to work with children
- A letter of clearance to work with children from the Department for Families and Communities Screening Unit)
- A valid and current interstate working with children check.

Acceptance of other forms of evidence is at the discretion of this Practice and is subject to the person completing a 100-point check to confirm the true identity of the applicant.<sup>1</sup>

This Practice may also at its discretion seek a statutory declaration for any *employee(s)* or *volunteer(s)* who have been citizens or permanent residents of another country other than Australia since turning 18 years of age.

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<sup>1</sup> A 100-point check should include one primary document such as a Birth Certificate or International Travel Document (e.g. Current Passport) or Citizenship Certificate and must include one secondary document such as a Driver's Licence, employee identification card, Centrelink card or student identification card.

**Statement to be signed by employees indicating they have read and will abide by this policy.**

**Employee Memorandum of Understanding (Child Safe Policy)**

I \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

have read and understand Essential Physiotherapy’s Child Safe Policy for Physiotherapy Practice.

I am fully aware of my responsibilities to implement this policy. I am also aware of where to locate Essential Physiotherapy’s Policy Manual.

Signed by	Name (print)	Date
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Approved by	Name (print)	Date
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**National Police Check (NPC)**

Employee	NPC Date	Review Date
Sighted by	Name (print)	Date