

Youth Safety Risk Management Framework

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Framework for Raise Foundation's commitment to being a Youth Safe, Youth Friendly organisation

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Message from the CEO

I am extremely proud of the compassionate and professional care we provide at Raise Foundation in our youth mentoring programs. However, I have personally spoken with people who have experienced abuse or neglect as young people, and the stories are painful to retell and painful to hear. I know firsthand that victims do not forget what happened to them and neither should others. We must do everything in our power to make sure that what these young people went through cannot happen again.

We all have a part to play in achieving this. There are individuals who want to harm young people in our community, and these people will look for opportunities to do so. They seek out organisations that aren't vigilant, where background checks are not properly done, where professionalism is not a priority, where boundaries are unclear, where people are not held accountable and where culture is blame focused and closed.

We want to make sure that Raise Foundation is NOT one of these organisations. Rather, I want us to be an organisation that prioritises professionalism, respects all of our mentees, lives our values, and supports our people in making decisions in the interests of the most vulnerable.

When it comes to young people in contact with our programs, I want us to embrace the notion of individual and collective responsibility. This term means that we individually and collectively take responsibility for the safety and nurturing of any young person who is in contact with us. All of us can lead by example and provide good role modelling, to take personal responsibility for what we see, and what we do, and remind ourselves that further investigation might be needed if something doesn't "feel" right. I want us to always act to protect the young people in contact with our programs, to give each other permission to be open, discuss risks, report concerns, and take action.

There needs to be a balance between youth safe and youth friendly practice, including supporting the natural inclinations of young people to be trusting and affectionate. Certainly, we want to have a working environment that is not based on mistrust and fear. Openness and professionalism will see this balance achieved. I want us to make sure that potential abusers see Raise Foundation as an organisation where it would be hard for them to find opportunities to offend, where they would be likely to be detected if they did, and where any abuse would be dealt with swiftly and with the full force of the law.

While this framework has been prompted by some of the work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Young Person Sexual Abuse, I want to stress that this will be an ongoing priority for Raise Foundation. Continued vigilance is critical to maintaining a Youth Safe, Youth Friendly organisation. We are committed to ongoing training and professional development so we operate as a best practice organisation at all times.

We implement this framework across all functions at Raise Foundation, from the Board and Leadership Team at the heart of our organisation, and outwards to everyone involved in our work. We all have a role in creating a Youth Safe, Youth Friendly organisation. We will continue to monitor the work of the Royal Commission and its recommendations and findings, and will amend this framework accordingly. We will be proactive and responsive.

The interests of any young person being harmed or at risk of harm are to be placed above the interests of any other individual or the organisation.

I commend this Youth Safety Risk Management Framework to everyone who is involved with our organisation and require that they make it an essential part of their daily thinking and practice to ensure that Raise Foundation is a Youth Safe, Youth Friendly organisation.



Vicki Condon
Chief Executive Officer

Framework

Youth Safe, Youth Friendly Risk Management Framework (the “Framework”) is a Board endorsed document. This framework sets out:

- The overall policy guiding the safety of young people in contact with Raise Foundation and how we aim to provide youth friendly services in this context
- How we will assess risk across our organisation to determine which Youth Safe, Youth Friendly (“YSYF”) actions are relevant to each role/service
- The YSYF actions or implementation across Raise Foundation according to risk, which underpin our policy, procedure and practice
- Resources for use in implementation across our organisation including education and communication resources

In reading this Framework, you should be familiar with the appendices and resources, and refer to them as you read it. This Framework, along with the Policies and Procedures, meets requirements of the Working with Young people (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 which outlines the need to have a risk management strategy for regulated businesses.

Our contact with young people

Raise Foundation works with young people in our mentoring programs. For our purposes, a young person is any person under the age of 18 years.

Raise Foundation provides face-to-face services directly to young people. Youth-related services include: mentoring programs (which may include an element of young person care) and psychoeducational workshops.

Raise Foundation staff and volunteers provide services to young people. Contractors, third party providers and students on placement may also come into contact with young people. Young people who are clients can also be in direct contact with other youth clients of similar or different ages. Young people can be employees or volunteers or students on placement in our organisation.

These varying levels of contact with young people affect how this Framework will be implemented across the organisation. Staff and volunteers will receive information and training relevant to their contact with young people. Relevant staff members will take responsibility for ensuring that appropriate Risk Assessments are undertaken to address the nature of risk.

This Framework will apply where a young person is currently participating in one of Raise Foundation’s Programs, where a young person is in our care or where they volunteer or connect in another capacity with our organisation, or the person against whom an allegation is made is still employed, a volunteer or otherwise associated with Raise Foundation.

This Framework applies to Board members, all staff and all volunteers across all of Raise Foundation.

RAISE FOUNDATION VALUES

Raise Foundation values as applied to our interactions with young people

RAISE FOUNDATION YOUTH SAFETY RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Board approved foundation document that captures Raise statements of commitment to youth safety, overarching group wide policy, actions for best practice and resources for common usage across programs. Directors accountable for implementing this framework in programs, policy and procedure according to risk.

RAISE FOUNDATION YOUTH SAFE, YOUTH FRIENDLY

ACTIONS

- Risk Assessment and implementation
- Communication, including empowering young people
- Recruitment, selection and screening process
- Code of Conduct commitment
- Training and supervision for good decision making
- Risk mitigation
- Recognising grooming and abuse
- Clear requirements and processes for reporting concerns and taking action
- Reporting to the Board and annual review processes

Youth Safe, Youth Friendly actions set best practice for programs to incorporate into policy and procedure

RAISE FOUNDATION YOUTH SAFE, YOUTH FRIENDLY

POLICY

Conduct risk assessment for every Program. Policy and Procedure developed based on assessed risk. Staff and volunteers guided by this level of Policy and Procedure.

Implementation

Specific Policies and Procedures

Annual review of Framework and related Policies, Procedures and Resources to identify amendments and improvements

RAISE FOUNDATION YOUTH SAFE, YOUTH FRIENDLY

RESOURCES

- Communication resources
- Guidance on risk assessment and risk assessment template
- Guidance on grooming and the signs of abuse and neglect
- Guidance for recruitment to child related positions
- Form for recording reports

Resources for programs to use in implementation

Risk assessment

Why do we choose a risk assessment approach?

The depth of Programs offered by Raise Foundation means that a blanket approach in Youth Safe, Youth Friendly practice is not appropriate. Programs range from those where there are detailed conversations with young people, through to those where there is brief contact with young people. Some risk may be specific to a location, activity or Program. As such, an initial Risk Assessment (see Resource 3 template) will be conducted for each of our Programs by the Program Counsellor for that Program.

Once this Risk Assessment is undertaken, an implementation plan will be developed by the Program Area Manager in consultation with the Program Director which will be presented to the Youth Safety Committee for endorsement. The implementation plan will identify which of the YSYF actions will be implemented for each Program, and the timeframe.

This Framework focuses on the safety of young people in our care or in contact with our organisation. However, as the title suggests, having a youth friendly organisation is important too. We want to ensure that the safety of young people impacts as little as possible on our ability to interact with young people in a natural and supportive way. This is relevant to all interactions as young people have natural tendencies to be trusting and we want our people to engage with young people in productive ways.

It is especially relevant to key areas of our organisation which require us to deliberately develop trusting relationships with young people to provide the best care possible. Our work often requires us to seek out time with young people to assist them to address difficulties in their lives and to help them to develop healthy relationships with themselves and others. It may require us to have difficult and personal conversations with young people or to help them address challenging behaviours. These areas of our organisation are also the highest risk areas for vulnerable young people to be harmed. Thus we will always be aiming to strike the balance between youth safe and youth friendly care.

What are the risks?

Risks vary across our Programs. This Framework deals with services where young people are the client, through to those services where the presence of young people might be incidental to the provision of services to others. Risk assessment and mitigation must be appropriate to the Programs being provided and the role of an individual. For example, it may be entirely appropriate for a Program Counsellor to be alone with a young person during a mentoring session. However it may not be appropriate for that person to be alone with the young person in a room with the door closed. Risk assessment and mitigation is addressed further in section 3.

Continuous Improvement

In response to an incident and at least annually, the Risk Assessment for each Program will be reviewed by the Program Counsellor in consultation with the Program Manager and Program Director and any changes will be presented to the Youth Safety Committee for endorsement.

Youth Safety Friendly Policy

YSYF Policy statement

Raise Foundation is committed to being a Youth Safe, Youth Friendly organisation and will, for all young people who come into contact with its services:

- provide welcoming, safe and nurturing Programs
- do everything within its power to prevent young person abuse and neglect within its Programs
- appropriately and immediately address young person abuse and neglect if it does occur

The interests of any young person being harmed, or at risk of harm, are to be placed above the interests of any other individual or the organisation.

Our Values and Personality

Raise Foundation is a values-based organisation and our values are applied to the care and protection of young people. It is expected that all staff and volunteers will uphold the values of Raise Foundation and will care for and protect the wellbeing of young people who they come into contact with through Raise Foundation through demonstration of these values and personality traits:

Be Courageous – we are imaginative, driven, progressive, confident

Show Heart – we are kind, passionate, sincere, empathetic

Give Respect – we believe in acceptance, equity, inclusivity

Apply Integrity – we operate with authenticity, accountability, transparency

Bring Vitality – we are positive, fun, energetic, inspiring

Deliver Excellence – we are evidence-based, responsive, consistent, experts in our industry

Along with the above, we note the importance of these values:

- Understanding the vulnerabilities of young people
- Respecting the boundaries of professional relationships and the rights of every person to feel safe in our programs
- Seeking justice for those who have been harmed
- Working together to create a culture of individual and collective responsibility for the safety of young people
- Creating friendly, welcoming spaces for young people
- Leading by undertaking a continuous improvement approach to the protection of young people

These values are integral to the Raise Foundation Code of Conduct which is addressed further in section 3 and is included in Appendix 1.

Commitment

Our commitment to being a Youth Safe, Youth Friendly organisation

1. Our organisational culture

- We are committed to YSYF practice
- We promote a culture of individual and collective responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of young people in contact with our organisation
- We uphold our organisational values articulated in our Code of Conduct
- We acknowledge and mitigate risks which are inherent in our Programs
- In making decisions about young people under this Framework we place the interests of young people above the interests of any other individual or the organisation
- We empower young people, families, staff and volunteers to report suspicions, allegations and disclosures of harm to young people, or risks of harm to young people

We will do this by:

- embedding in our ongoing organisational dialogue, from the CEO outwards, our focus on and commitment to youth safety and youth friendliness making youth safety and youth friendliness a responsibility of each and every one of our staff members and volunteers as outlined in their engagement contract, orientation and training and during performance reviews
- undertaking regular and robust Risk Assessment and mitigation appropriate to our Programs
- establishing a youth safety network with representatives from across the organisation to form a practice network and network of champions
- keeping youth safety on our agenda and providing information to help people recognise harm or risk of harm and make it easy to report such concerns.

2. Our people

- Our people know the standards to which we hold them for their interactions with young people and the consequences of any breaches of the Framework, Code of Conduct and related documents
- Our people are committed to upholding our values and YSYF practice
- We have sound practices in place to ensure that our people are suitable for working with young people
- Our people are supported to make good decisions

We will achieve this by:

- having an organisation wide Code of Conduct which is made known to our people and revisited regularly
- requiring staff and volunteers to commit to YSYF practice both contractually and in practise
- having sound recruitment and screening processes to ensure that people who are not suitable to work with young people are not employed by Raise Foundation, and to ensure that people engaged to work with young people are committed to their well being
- providing staff and volunteers with regular training and ongoing development of YSYF practice

3. Our settings

- We will create spaces that are welcoming and safe for young people and will support staff and volunteers to provide YSYF services and environments
- We will proactively identify and manage risk across all Programs, physical environments, practice and relationships
- We will cultivate a learning and sharing environment in keeping up with best practice prevention activities
- We will ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of the complexities, indicators and risks of young person abuse and neglect

We will do this by:

- Routinely assessing risk to young people through our Risk Assessment process
- implementing risk mitigation procedures
- regularly reviewing high risk services/activities
- establishing work practices where people are encouraged to share experiences and information and learn from each other
- ensuring our people have contemporary, evidence-based knowledge of what constitutes grooming, abuse and neglect, and the signs to be aware of

4. Our response

- We will not tolerate harm to young people
- We will take prompt action regarding any suspicions, allegations or disclosures of harm or risk of harm to young people
- We will immediately take steps to prevent known risk to any young person
- We will immediately report suspicions, allegations and disclosures of harm to police, Youth safety and other relevant authorities
- We will deal promptly with breaches of the Framework, Code of Conduct, legislation and Policy and Procedure
- We will meet the needs of those who have been harmed with compassion, respect and justice
- We will take a continuous improvement approach to youth safety

We will do this by:

- ensuring that there is a clear, widely known and consistently applied process for reporting and responding to suspicions, allegations and disclosure of harm or risk of harm
- supporting those who are committed to youth friendly practice
- supporting those who make a report in good faith
- communicating information to staff, volunteers, mentees and others affected by the report, in conjunction with the appropriate authorities
- methodically and appropriately addressing breaches of policy including through increased training, and disciplinary action if required
- having a clear process for responding to those who have been harmed or potentially harmed in our services
- reviewing relevant policies, procedures and practices annually and implementing identified improvements
- Providing review findings and improvements implemented to our Board
- reflecting on our practice following incidents of young person abuse and neglect

Actions

1. Our organisational culture

1.1 Individual and collective responsibility

- 1.1.1 All Programs and individuals to whom this Framework applies shall adopt an individual and collective responsibility approach to the safety of young people. People must take responsibility for their own behaviour as well as supporting others to feel comfortable and safe raising concerns about behaviour they observe or become aware of. Staff and volunteers are expected to act and make decisions in the interests of protecting any young person who has been harmed, is being harmed or is at risk of being harmed. While this framework establishes organisational requirements and processes for the safety of young people, this does not obviate the need for individuals to act to address harm or risk of harm to young people.
- 1.1.2 Individuals are made aware of their personal obligations which are outlined in their engagement contract and are reinforced in their orientation and training, during performance reviews as part of the ongoing organisational dialogue.

Rationale

- 1.1.3 A culture of individual and collective responsibility is critical in preventing and addressing harm or potential harm to a young person. Such a culture is a deterrent for would-be offenders and sends a clear message that “abuse of young people will not be tolerated at Raise Foundation”.

1.2 Raise Foundation Youth Safety Committee

- 1.2.1 A Youth Safety Committee operates across the organisation. The role of the Youth Safety Committee is to:
- provide updates on implementation of the Framework across Programs
 - discuss and generate possible resolution for implementation issues
 - discuss systemic issues arising from examination of specific incidents or youth safety concerns
 - contribute to annual reviews of this Framework and related Policies and Procedures
 - represent Program interests in information being presented to the Board as appropriate
 - provide input to the development of submissions or other contributions on youth safety related matters
- 1.2.2 The Youth Safety Committee includes representatives from our Programs, meets quarterly and is managed by the Youth Safety Officer.
- 1.2.3 Our Volunteer Engagement Director is our Youth Safety Officer. A nominated State Manager may act as an alternate and/or support to the Volunteer Engagement Director in this function as required. This person will provide a central point of contact for issues relating to Youth safety across the organisation and a direct conduit to and support for the CEO on youth safety matters.

Rationale

- 1.2.4 An organisation-wide approach ensures the issue remains high on the agenda, practice learnings can be shared, and an environment of continuous improvement supported.

1.3 Keeping youth safety on our agenda

1.3.1 Raise Foundation ensures that youth safety remains an ongoing high priority across the organisation. We implement a range of communication activities to ensure this happens. We:

- empower young people and young people to know what their rights are and what to do if a young person does not feel safe in interactions with Raise Foundation by developing easy-to-use reference resources and displaying information about our approach to youth safety in areas where young people and young people in contact with our services will see it
- ensure widespread awareness in implementing this Framework, with all staff and volunteers to be made aware of the requirements and principles of the Framework as implemented in Policy and procedure
- take opportunities to celebrate young people
- ensure staff and volunteers have easy-to-use resources to support youth safe practice and decision making under this Framework and displaying information about our approach to youth safety in areas where staff and volunteers will regularly see it

Rationale

1.3.2 Wide dissemination of our YSYF approach that is simple to understand and easily accessible further embeds the culture we aim to create and ensures young people and families are empowered to know what to expect and to report any concerns.

2. Our people

2.1 Recruitment and selection

2.1.1 Recruitment processes reflect Raise Foundation's commitment to youth safety in all young person related job advertisements and calls for volunteers, and in all position description documents. The following wording is included in all position descriptions and the commitment reflected in job advertisements for young person-related roles.

Raise Foundation is committed to being a Youth Safe, Youth Friendly organisation and will, for all young people who come into contact with its programs:

- *provide welcoming, safe and nurturing services for young people*
- *do everything within its power to prevent young person abuse and neglect within our services*
- *appropriately and immediately address young person abuse and neglect if it does occur*

Rationale

2.1.2 This statement demonstrates to all prospective staff and volunteers that Raise Foundation takes the safety of young people seriously and as a high priority.

2.1.3 Where recruitment is for a young person-related role, service group selection and screening processes must include scrutiny of complete work history, criminal history checks, reference checks and explore a person's motivation and suitability for working with young people. Policies and Procedures includes processes to ensure that staff who are responsible for recruitment and selection into young person related roles are appropriately skilled. Guidance on a rigorous process is set out at Resource 1.

2.1.4 Screening must include:

- Working with Young people Check (“WWCC”) within State legislation requirements, which MUST be verified to Raise Foundation
- National Criminal History Checks (“NCC”) (including overseas checks) as necessary
- Hold qualifications in psychology, counselling, social or youth work if managing Raise Foundation Programs
- Complete the Raise Foundation Youth Mentor Training Course and regular refreshers
- Submit personal and professional references to our hiring Manager in a related field
- For persons who have worked overseas in a young person-related role, the applicant must be asked to sign a statutory declaration that they have not been involved in activity overseas that would, if committed in Australia, disqualify them from applying for a WWCC or NCC.

2.1.5 If any concerns arise during the recruitment and screening process about a person’s suitability to work with young people, there should be discussions with relevant line Managers and Directors. If there are validated and reasonable concerns about a person’s suitability to work with young people, they must not be engaged to work with young people within Raise Foundation.

Rationale

2.1.6 Exploring a person’s work history and motivation for working with young people helps to identify a prospective employee’s values and approach to the safety of young people, which may highlight inconsistencies with the organisation’s values or any issues of concern. It also ensures that the organisation is diligent in ensuring the safety of young people which acts as a deterrent to potential abusers.

2.2 Screening

2.2.1 A Working with Children Check and a National Criminal History Check will be conducted in accordance with legislative, accreditation and funding requirements.

2.2.2 Raise Foundation maintains a central register of all young person-related positions with a copy of their WWC and NCC and other young person-related screening checks.

2.2.3 A Working with Children Check only takes into account matters on a criminal history that are relevant to the care of young people. Therefore, it should not be seen as a substitute for a broader criminal history check where other criminal matters may be relevant to the position.

2.2.4 Through Risk Assessment processes, consideration needs to be given to the need to screen contractors, third party providers, students, researchers and anyone else who may come into contact with young people in our services and risk mitigation strategies need to be put in place accordingly.

2.2.5 Holding a Working With Children Clearance is only one measure of screening the suitability for people to work with young people and there have been many examples of people who have undergone Working with Children Checks who then go on to offend. It is not of itself, any guarantee of ongoing suitability and must be coupled with ongoing young person safe practice.

2.2.6 Our Volunteer Engagement Team maintains a register which includes details about each person who is required to have a valid Working with Children Check in their State and other young person-related screening checks. The register includes whether an application has been made and if a positive notice has been issued, and the date of expiry of the notice.

- 2.2.7 Our Volunteer Engagement Team audits the register annually and results are reported in the annual reporting process set out at section 4.10.
- 2.2.8 Our Volunteer Engagement Team is familiar with legislative requirements and implements procedures regarding: notification of change in policy information; who may commence duties pending the outcome of a Working with Children Check; transferring from another organisation; ceasing employment; and any other legislative obligations.

Rationale

- 2.2.9 Legislative requirements must be met so that persons can have their suitability for working with young people assessed. Ensuring that information is up to date and regularly monitored gives the organisation oversight on its legislative compliance and the ability to respond appropriately and quickly where there is a change in a person's information.

2.3 Code of Conduct

- 2.3.1 Raise Foundation Code of Conduct applies across the whole organisation.
- 2.3.2 In accordance with identified risk:
- staff and volunteers receive an orientation on commencement or within two weeks of commencement with Raise Foundation, including familiarisation with this Framework, the Code of Conduct and familiarisation with Policies and Procedures and practices related to working with young people
 - staff and volunteers agree in writing to uphold the commitments and actions in this framework as a condition of commencing and continuing engagement with Raise Foundation
 - refresher training on the Code of Conduct for Interactions with young people to be undertaken at least annually
- 2.3.3 The organisation is required by legislation to have a Code of Conduct. This action ensures that every person engaged by the organisation understands and acknowledges what types of behaviour are acceptable or unacceptable.
- 2.3.4 Staff and volunteers are aware from the outset of the importance of youth safety at Raise Foundation.

2.4 Good decision making – training and supervision

- 2.4.1 All staff and volunteers in young person-related roles are provided with training in youth safety annually.
- 2.4.2 As well as highlighting our commitment to youth safety, training and supervision needs to take into account different Program contexts and roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers. As people are promoted or roles evolve and people take on new tasks, training and supervision needs to take into account increased levels of responsibility and contact with young people, the need for deeper understanding of policy, procedure and practice, and the need to lead by example in upholding values and demonstrating Youth Safe, Youth Friendly practice.
- 2.4.3 Raise Foundation maintains registers of training.

Rationale

- 2.4.4 Annual training ensures that the issue of youth safety remains a high priority for the organisation and that all staff and volunteers are reminded regularly about the need to take an individual and collective responsibility approach to young people in contact with our organisation.
- 2.4.5 Training needs increase and become more specific as people in young person-related positions deal with risks specific to their Programs so these training needs will be individually tailored to the Programs to address risk.

3. Our settings

3.1 Risk assessment and mitigation

- 3.1.1 For all our Programs, a Risk Assessment is conducted regarding contact with and potential risk to young people:
- on implementation of this Framework
 - on the commencement of a new Program or service
 - on the undertaking of a new activity within the Program or service
 - on undertaking an unusual or irregular activity within the Program or service
 - following an incident reported under this Framework within a Program or service
 - at least annually
- 3.1.2 Each Program includes youth safety risks on its Risk Register
- 3.1.3 Risk Assessment and mitigation must take into account the specific circumstances of contact with young people and the goal of Program delivery. In working with young people in any circumstance we aim to ensure that safe, honest and trusting relationships are formed that model appropriate behaviour, informed by each individual young person's developmental level.
- 3.1.4 Risk mitigation will take into account:
- the specific context of the program
 - physical environments
 - the nature of interactions between young people and adults
 - the vulnerability of young people in each setting.
- 3.1.5 Guidance and templates for Risk Assessment are provided at Resource 3.

Rationale

- 3.1.6 Reducing the opportunity for those looking to harm young people and creating an environment where it is difficult to find opportunities for abuse, are key components of keeping young people safe.

3.2 Recognising grooming and abuse

- 3.2.1 Our staff and volunteer training include awareness of behaviour that may indicate grooming, the signs of abuse and neglect, and understanding the complexity of abuse.

3.2.2 Training addresses the barriers to disclosure for young people.

Rationale

3.2.3 Understanding behaviours that may cause concern, signs of abuse and the complexity of abuse is critical in providing a youth safe environment. In a culture of individual and collective responsibility being aware of behaviours that may cause concern and reporting these appropriately reduces the risk of continued or escalated harm.

4. Our response

4.1 Principles underpinning our response

4.1.1 The principles underpinning our response to disclosures, allegations, suspicions or incidents of harm or risk of harm include:

- a young person making a disclosure is to be believed
- the safety and wellbeing of any young person being harmed or at risk of harm is paramount
- Raise Foundation will immediately report any disclosures, suspicions, allegations or incidents of harm to police, youth safety or other authorities
- if there is any doubt about whether a matter should be reported, it should be reported
- information shall be treated confidentially to protect the privacy of the young person and the forensic integrity of any information
- despite the above, Raise Foundation aims to be transparent and communicate openly with those impacted by a report of harm
- Raise Foundation will cooperate with police, youth safety and other authorities
- Raise Foundation staff will interact with authorities according to their level of delegation and legislative requirements
- Raise Foundation will work with family and significant others where appropriate to support a young person who has been harmed
- the identity of the person making the report must be kept confidential except as required under law or for the organisation to assess the circumstances surrounding the report
- persons making reports in good faith are to be supported and protected from recrimination

4.2 What must be reported?

4.2.1 Raise Foundation implements Policy and Procedures to establish processes for reporting and responding to suspicions, allegations and disclosures of abuse and neglect in accordance with this framework and any mandatory reporting obligations.

4.2.2 A staff member or volunteer must report the following:

- a disclosure of harm or risk of harm made by a young person or another person where the harm or risk of harm is related to behaviour by a Raise Foundation staff member, volunteer, another mentee or any other person associated with Raise Foundation
- a suspicion or allegation that a young person is being harmed by or is at risk of harm from a Raise Foundation staff member, volunteer, another mentee or any other person associated with Raise Foundation

- a suspicion or allegation that a Raise Foundation staff member, volunteer, another mentee or any other person associated with Raise Foundation is engaging in behaviour that could cause concern ('grooming')
- any suspected or actual breach of this Framework, associated provisions of any Code of Conduct/Statement of Commitment, service group policy, procedure or practice related to the protection of young people or youth safety risk mitigation strategy

4.2.3 Proof that abuse is occurring is not required.

4.2.4 Staff members and volunteers are encouraged to report to their Manager within Raise Foundation in the first instance to support internal and external responses, information flow and client and staff member and volunteer confidentiality. If there is any doubt over whether a matter should be reported, the staff member or volunteer should discuss the matter with their Manager or another Manager if appropriate. If there is any doubt remaining, the matter should be reported.

4.2.5 Disclosures of abuse or neglect that occurred prior to the young person's engagement with Raise Foundation must also be reported, unless the disclosed abuse or neglect is known to have already been reported to police and/or youth safety officers.

4.2.7 Reporting all disclosures, suspicions or allegations ensures that each report is fully considered and the appropriate action is taken in response to each report.

4.3 Dealing with disclosures

4.3.1 Training on dealing with disclosures that is based on contemporary best practice is provided to staff members and volunteers. The general principles are:

- disclosures are to be believed
- young people may make disclosures in a variety of ways and adults who care for them should be alert to what young people are saying
- young people are to be made safe
- young people may exhibit behaviour that demonstrates they have possibly been harmed
- young people may be afraid to disclose
- adults receiving disclosures must ensure they have listened and understood correctly
- adults receiving disclosures must act in accordance with legislation and Policy and Procedures to report appropriately internally and to authorities that have responsibility for investigation and action (police and youth safety).
- staff members, volunteers and carers associated with Raise Foundation are not authorised to investigate
- the disclosure must be documented using the words of the young person where possible, as soon as possible following the disclosure

Rationale

4.3.2 If the complexities of disclosures are not understood and the disclosure not handled sensitively, the young person can experience further trauma and the abuse might continue or escalate.

4.4 Who to report to?

4.4.1 The Youth Safety Officer is responsible for ensuring that reports are handled appropriately, according to this Framework.

4.4.2 The Youth Safety Officer must appoint an appropriately skilled delegate or delegates who is authorised to receive and action reports under this Framework.

4.4.3 Reports may be made by anyone to:

- Program Counsellor
- Program Area Manager
- Volunteer and Operations Director
- State Manager
- Program Director
- CEO

4.4.4 The Youth Safety Officer and Program Director must be made aware of the following as soon as possible and within 24 hours of an initial report:

- reports of harm or risk of harm, or suspicions thereof, to a young person which implicate any staff member, volunteer, mentee, or another mentee
- incidents of harm or risk of harm to a young person resulting in urgent intervention by emergency services;
- indications of systemic failings in Raise Foundation's management of incidents of harm or risk of harm, or suspicions thereof, to a young person

4.5 How must reports be made?

4.5.1 Any concern raised, either formally or informally, written or oral, must be actioned under this framework. No matter should be treated as being raised 'informally' and therefore not actioned.

4.5.2 The report must be documented in the required form (as amended from time to time) as soon as practicable and follow Policy and Procedures for escalation through management structures described in this section.

4.5.3 All reports must be kept in a confidential central repository by the Youth Safety Officer and Policy and Procedures must ensure that the process can identify patterns of behaviour relating to any individual. This may include repeated breaches of Policy and Procedures or engagement in low level behaviours of concern which could be indicative of grooming. Identified patterns of behaviour must also be actioned.

4.6 Reporting to the CEO

4.6.1 All matters reported to the Program Director and/or Volunteer Engagement Director must be notified in writing to the CEO within 24 hours of them becoming aware.

4.6.2 The Youth Safety Officer is responsible for reporting the outcomes of the response to the report to the CEO.

4.6.3 The Youth Safety Officer must provide the CEO with a quarterly report summarising the response to and outcome of all reports occurring under this framework.

4.7 Responding to reports

4.7.1 The Youth Safety Officer does not investigate the matter but must work with the relevant Program Counsellor, Program Area Manager, State Manager, Program Director or CEO to make a decision about what action to take following a report, in accordance with mandatory reporting obligations, the nature of the information and any possible risk to young people. Where reports to police are required, they must be made immediately. This decision-making process is set out in the reporting flow chart on the next page. If there is any doubt about whether to notify police and/or youth safety, the matter should be notified to police and/or youth safety.

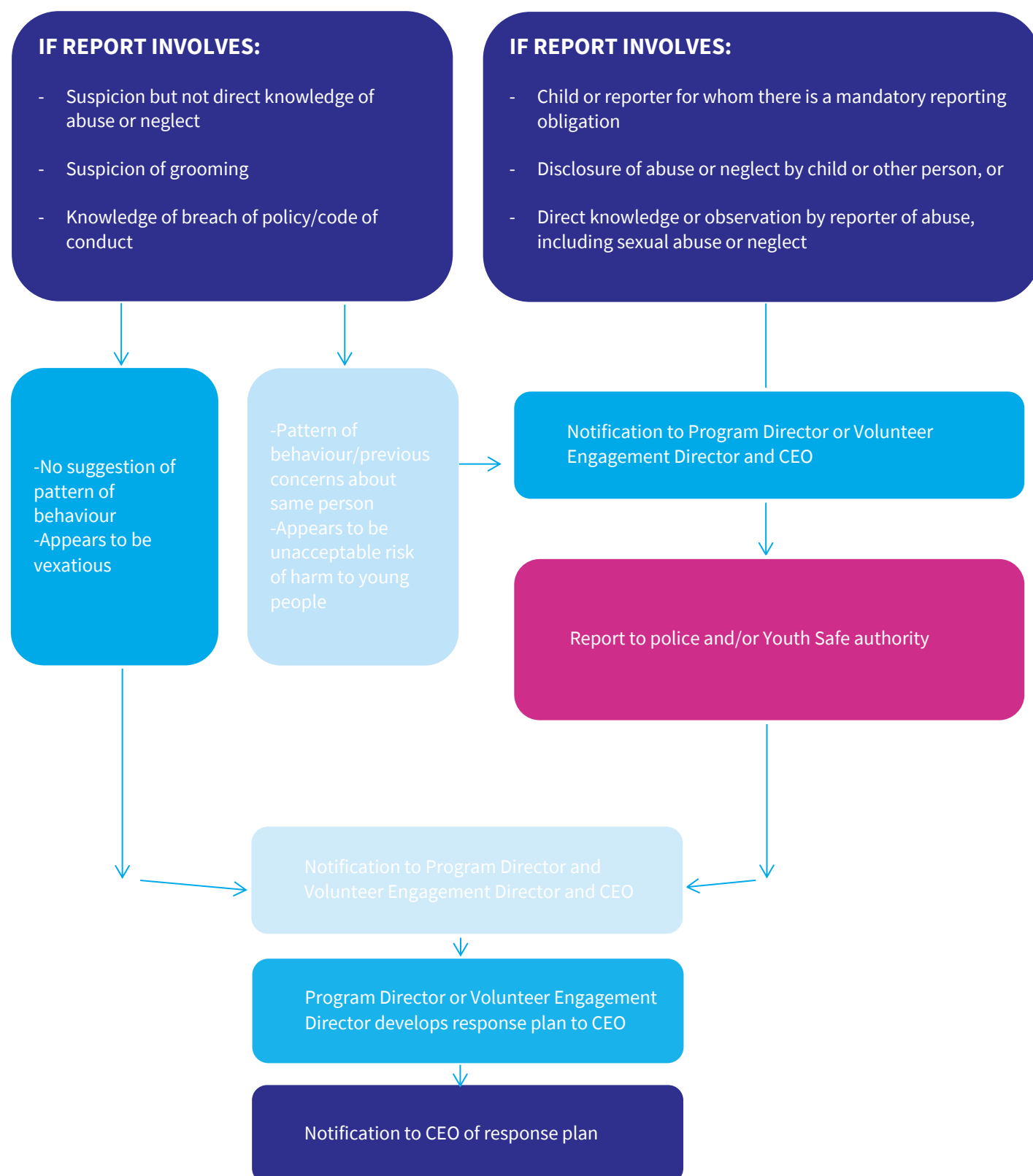
4.7.2 The Youth Safety Officer must also coordinate the development a response plan to each report. It may be appropriate to seek further information, including but not limited to:

- further information from the person making the report
- information from others in the work environment
- human resource files
- information about the young person, especially to determine whether the young person has a parent willing and able to care for them
- where the person whose behaviour is the subject of a report, is a young client, information about that them
- advice from police and/or youth safety
- any other relevant information

4.7.3 In responding to the report, the Youth Safety Officer must ensure that proper consideration is given to:

- determining appropriate action
- documenting all decision making related to a specific report, including action taken and decision not to report
- conducting an internal review commensurate with the significance of the report to identify systemic, practice, policy, and/or procedural issue for improvement
- providing feedback to the reporter

Reporting Process Flow Chart



4.8 Information

4.8.1 All matters are to be notified to the CEO.

4.8.2 Policy and Procedures must include processes for reporting to parents or guardians in circumstances where parents or guardians have acted protectively (e.g. abuse was perpetrated by a staff member or volunteer while a young person was at a program)

Gathering and keeping information

4.8.3 Measures to ensure that information is kept confidential must be taken, in order to protect the privacy of the young person and the integrity of any potential police investigation. Due to the specialist nature of interviewing young people for forensic purposes, generally, after the initial disclosure, the young person should not be interviewed unless advice is first sought from police or youth safety. However, if further information is required from the young person, open questions should be asked, answers documented and the young person's safety and wellbeing addressed during the information gathering process.

4.8.4 The person who is the subject of the concern should not generally be interviewed about the behaviour until a decision is made about how the matter will be handled and, if the matter is reported to police or youth safety, only in consultation with police or youth safety.

4.8.5 All information related to the report must be held in a central repository in the safekeeping of the Youth Safety Officer which is only accessible to persons authorised under the Policy and Procedures. All records and documents relating to a matter must be kept for 120 years from the birth date of the young person who is the subject of the concern.

Action following a report

4.8.6 The following must occur after a report has been made or pattern of behaviour identified:

- if the subject person is a staff member or volunteer, the Youth Safety Officer in consultation with the relevant line Manager and Director will determine the appropriate immediate action and ongoing management pending police or other investigation. The safety of the young person and compliance with legal obligations are paramount in determining this response. These actions are to be documented and communicated to those who are required to know in order to monitor compliance with any conditions. There must be ongoing monitoring of compliance with any conditions.

4.8.7 The immediate response in the workplace may including offering counselling by Raise or an external provider at the cost of Raise.

4.8.8 The young person and the young person's family are to be provided with support throughout the process, including offering professional counselling by Raise or an external provider at the cost of Raise

4.8.9 Raise Foundation will proactively identify other young people who may have been exposed to abuse or neglect and will communicate with young people, families and other staff, volunteers and carers, in conjunction with any advice from investigating police about the matter and its follow up.

Internal review

- 4.8.10 Policy and Procedures are in place to ensure that a timely internal review is undertaken after every report, to ascertain whether there were any systemic failings, practice issues or risk mitigation procedures which need to be addressed. This can be done simultaneously with any police or youth safety investigation provided it does not compromise the external investigation. There should be close liaison with police and youth safety on this matter.
- 4.8.11 For matters reported to the CEO, the Youth Safety Officer is responsible for reporting the outcomes of the review to the CEO.
- 4.8.12 The Youth Safety Officer will also play a coordination role to ensure that feedback is provided to persons who have reported a concern and provide appropriate information about action taken.
- 4.8.13 Where action has been taken to remove a person from young person-related employment following a report of concern, references must not be provided which indicate support for that type of employment. Any subsequent request for a reference should be referred to the Youth Safety Officer.

4.9 Reporting to the Board

- 4.9.1 In addition to annual reporting set out below, the CEO will report to the Board (or its nominated committee/s) at least quarterly, providing a summary of reports and the outcomes of any internal reviews where systemic issues are identified. The Board may determine to refer specific matters to Board committees tasked with risk management and/or service quality.
- 4.9.2 The CEO may determine that urgency warrants reporting on a specific matter to the Chair of the Board out of session.

4.10 Annual review

- 4.10.1 This Framework and all associated Policies and Procedures and practices will be reviewed annually as directed by the CEO. Consultation will be undertaken across Programs and input welcomed from persons who have been involved in the operation of the Framework. The results of the review will be reported to the Board with recommendations for improvements to the Framework.

Appendix 1: Definitions

General definitions

Allegation

A claim or assertion, without definitive proof, that a wrongdoing (i.e. abuse or grooming of a young person) has happened or is likely to happen.

Young person-related employment/positions

Includes those positions identified as young person-related in accordance with legislation governing working with young people checks, as well as any additional positions identified through Risk Assessment processes as having more than incidental contact with young people and where contact is of such frequency to allow relationships to develop.

Youth Safety Officer

This role holds the responsibility to support the Leadership Team in all matters related to youth safety. The role has knowledge or experience in young person protection, human resources or complaints handling and an understanding of the work of Raise Foundation. For this Framework, this includes:

- receiving reports on any youth safety concerns directly from any person who wishes to make a report
- supporting the CEO to develop reports to the Board or its committees regarding youth safety
- assisting programs with issues relating to implementation of this Framework
- liaising with programs in relation to specific reports made under this Framework
- assisting the CEO to undertake an annual review of this Framework

Disclosure

When someone, including a young person, tells another person about young person abuse that has happened or is likely to happen.

Grooming

Grooming is actions by an adult, adolescent or young person to develop opportunities to sexually offend against a young person.

Program

The mentoring programs and connected activities delivered at Raise Foundation.

Suspicion

In the context of young person abuse, a suspicion occurs when reasonable concerns are held regarding behaviour, material or unexplained injuries. Young person abuse may be reasonably suspected if:

- observations or reports of behaviour of another person, or material related to another person, are consistent with the definition of young person abuse; and/or
- observations of the behaviour of a particular young person, or knowledge of the young person, generally lead them to suspect that abuse may be occurring; and/or
- physical injuries are observed, which could reasonably be attributed to abuse.

Abusive action

An incident of abuse that results in harm to a young person. Abusive action includes a parent's failure to protect a young person from abuse caused by another person.

Cumulative harm

Harm to a young person caused by a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances that may have a cumulative effect on the young person's safety and wellbeing. The acts, omissions or circumstances may apply at a particular point in time or over an extended period, as well as the same acts, omissions or circumstance being repeated over time.

Emotional harm

When the young person's social, emotional, cognitive or intellectual development is impaired or at unacceptable risk of being impaired as a direct result of parental behaviour/attitude. This includes significant emotional deprivation due to persistent coldness, rejection or hostility.

The harm to the young person may have a cumulative effect and/or be observable in behaviours such as severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, indicators of inappropriate attachment or bonding, self-harming behaviour or aggressive behaviour towards others.

Harm

Any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the young person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. Harm can be caused by physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect, or sexual abuse or exploitation. Harm can be caused by a single act, omission or circumstance; or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances (Young person Protection Act 1999, section 9). For a detrimental effect to be of a significant nature it must have more than a minor impact upon a young person. It must be substantial, serious and demonstrable - that is, measurable and observable on the young person's body, in the young person's functioning or behaviour. A detrimental effect of a significant nature may also be indicated by the likelihood of the detrimental effect being long-term (more than transitory), or adversely affecting the young person's health or wellbeing to an extent which would be considered by the general public to be unacceptable.

Neglect

The young person's basic needs of life are unmet by their parent to such an extent that the young person's health and development are affected, causing harm, or likely to cause an unacceptable risk of harm to the young person.

Physical harm

A young person has suffered or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering serious physical trauma or injury of a non-accidental nature, due to the actions of their parent.

Policy and Procedures

Documented policies and procedures governing:

- the operation and management of Raise Foundation Programs;
- staff and volunteer management including recruitment, orientation and ongoing training; and
- any other obvious ones that might be relevant to youth safety

Risk Assessment

The process of analysing the youth safety aspects of a Program on an ongoing basis as outlined in this Framework and utilising the information and templates in Resource 3.

Risk of harm

Risk of harm is the probability or likelihood of a young person suffering physical, physiological or emotional harm in the future.

Risk Register

Refers to the register of youth safety risks maintained for each Program which is completed by the Program Counsellor in consultation with the Program Area Manager and Program Director and notified to the Youth Safety Committee.

Sexual abuse

Any sexual activity or behaviour that is imposed on a young person and results in physical or emotional harm. It includes the inducement or coercion of a young person to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, sexually explicit conduct or behaviour for the sexual gratification or profit of the person responsible. It also includes circumstances where there is an unacceptable risk that the young person may be sexually abused.

Working with Children Check

A detailed check of a person's national criminal history (including any charges, convictions or investigative information) and disciplinary information held on a person by certain professional organisations.

Appendix 2: Code of Conduct

Raise Foundation is a youth safe, youth friendly organisation and the wellbeing of our Mentees is paramount. Our early intervention programs for young people require an environment which is welcoming for all participants and encourages best practice mentoring outcomes. In order to maintain our high ethical standards, we require all adult participants (staff and volunteers) to adhere to this code of conduct, both during their participation in our programs, and after their completion.

DO

- Treat everyone with respect and honesty
- Bring risk of significant harm concerns for our young people to the immediate attention of a Raise team member
- Record and act on complaints and inappropriate behaviour
- Be a positive role model to young people in all your conduct with them
- Set clear boundaries between yourself and our young people so you can carry out your role well
- Sign in for a visitor's pass and wear a visitor's badge while on school premises
- Always have another adult present or in sight when you are with a young person
- Report conflicts of interest or potential conflicts so that it can be managed carefully
- Participate in the program consistently and reliably unless legitimate circumstances prevent doing so
- Ensure your activities are focussed on the young person, are relevant to them and not your own personal interest
- Follow the policies and procedures set out in our Policy Manual and Youth Safety Framework
- Adhere to the Department of Education's Code of Conduct in your State when in schools

DO NOT

- Offer to loan, give money or gifts of any nature to young people in our programs
- Instigate any form of physical contact with young people apart from a handshake
- Do things of a personal nature that a young person can do for themselves (i.e. changing clothes, going to bathroom)
- Develop a relationship with any young person that is inappropriately overinvolved
- Have a sexual relationship with a young person in our program, or use sexual innuendo or material with them
- Invite our young people to join your social networking sites or accept their invitations to join theirs
- Exchange contact details or arrange to meet our young people outside of our programs
- Transport a young person in your car without prior approval from a Raise staff member
- Provide personal information about our young people to anyone other than program staff
- Take photographs or videos of the young people in our programs without written prior consent
- Consume or have consumed drugs or alcohol, or smoke, when volunteering or working with young people
- Refer our young people to external services or professionals

Each of the above conditions has been designed to protect our Mentees and to improve positive outcomes from our program for them. They have also been designed to protect our volunteers and colleagues and to ensure that everyone understands their responsibilities and the boundaries of the mentoring relationship at Raise Foundation. Any breach will result in a discussion with a Raise staff member and ongoing breaches or a serious breach may result in Raise Foundation withdrawing you from the organisation.

This document outlines standards of behaviour for adults involved in Raise Foundation in their interactions with young people. It applies to staff and volunteers. Our Code of Conduct ensures that standards of behaviour around young people are clear and unambiguous so that Raise Foundation can operate as a Youth Safe, Youth Friendly organisation.

Underpinning values

It is expected that all staff and volunteers will uphold the values of Raise Foundation and will care for and protect the wellbeing of young people who they come into contact with through Raise Foundation.

Be Courageous – we are imaginative, driven, progressive, confident

Show Heart – we are kind, passionate, sincere, empathetic

Give Respect – we believe in acceptance, equity, inclusivity

Apply Integrity – we operate with authenticity, accountability, transparency

Bring Vitality – we are positive, fun, energetic, inspiring

Deliver Excellence – we are evidence-based, responsive, consistent, experts in our industry

Along with the above, we note the importance of the value of:

- Understanding the vulnerabilities of young people
- Respecting the boundaries of professional relationships and the rights of every person to feel safe in our programs
- Seeking justice for those who have been harmed
- Working together to create a culture of individual and collective responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of young people
- Creating friendly, welcoming spaces for young people
- Leading by undertaking a continuous improvement approach to the protection of young people

Specific behaviours

Specifically, staff and volunteers must:

- maintain respectful, professional and ethical relationships with young people
- respect young people's privacy and modesty and the privacy of their information
- familiarise themselves with and uphold the Raise Foundation Youth Safety Risk Management Framework as implemented via Policies and Procedures
- uphold legislative obligations, including mandatory reporting obligations where they exist, and fulfilling obligations regarding Working with Children Checks
- report any breaches of this Code of Conduct or the Raise Foundation Youth Safety Risk Management Framework or Policy and Procedures as soon as possible
- follow Policy and Procedures that apply specifically to their work
- always check that the mentee is genuinely interested in the activities of the Program
- respect differences and diversity of mentees, staff and volunteers
- refrain from making judgements about another person's life, experiences, beliefs
- ensure that any physical touching of a young person is only to the extent necessary to provide for the care of the young person and must be appropriate for the age, maturity, health and other needs of the young person
- use appropriate language around young people
- provide for the needs of life for young people in our care
- provide a nurturing environment for young people in our care
- utilise the scheduled Mentor Support Sessions and Staff Supervision sessions on a regular and consistent basis

Staff and volunteers must not:

- reveal personal information about their mentee, or use their name in a public situation
- engage in inappropriate discussions about topics irrelevant to the program such as religion, cultural habits, sexual orientation or political alliances
- abuse or neglect any young person
- seek to touch or use a young person in any way to meet the needs of the adult
- be inconsistent in dealing with different young people for example, they must not bestow special gifts and favours, offer money, show favouritism, encourage development of special relationships with individual young people
- maintain relationships with young people outside of the work context, including through social or electronic media or take a young person to his or her home or encourage meetings outside of the Raise Foundation working context. Where a person has a pre-existing relationship with a young person, they must advise their Program Counsellor of this
- spend time inappropriately alone with a young person
- inappropriately photograph young people
- engage in a sexual relationship or sexual interactions with a young person or expose young people, by any means whatsoever, to sexual situations for example, sexual comments, sexual jokes, sexual acts, undressing in front of young people, showing pornography to young people, sexual gestures, failing to afford young people appropriate privacy when they are undressing, showering or toileting
- be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while at work
- supply drugs or alcohol to a young person
- engage in 'grooming' behaviour
- engage in any other behaviour which the broader community would consider to be inappropriate or inconsistent with community standards for the proper treatment of young people.

Breach of the code

All staff and volunteers must comply with this Code of Conduct. Failure to comply can lead to disciplinary and other action, including termination of services. All staff and volunteers are expected to report breaches of the Code of Conduct – no matter how seemingly insignificant - in accordance with the reporting procedure in the Raise Foundation Youth Safety Risk Management Framework as implemented in Policies and Procedures.

Clarification of the code

Clarification of this Code of Conduct can be sought from a senior staff member or by contacting the Youth Safety Officer.

Review of the code

This Code of Conduct will be reviewed annually in accordance with the Raise Foundation Youth Safety Risk Management Framework.

Resource 1: Guidance for Recruitment

When interviewing a candidate for a youth-related role, a panel of more than one person should be used.

The person's motivation for working with young people should be explored and notes of the discussion documented.

The person's understanding of young person abuse in institutional settings should be explored, including their understanding of how it occurs and what can be done to prevent it.

The person's work history should be explored (positions held, responsibilities, reasons for leaving). The panel should explore any gaps in work history and explore reasons for leaving employment, especially where the person worked with young people.

The panel should pay particular attention to answers which reflect a need of the adult in working with young people, answers which suggest a lack of, or inappropriate boundaries or professionalism – for example, a person who says they “just need” to be around young people, or that their “love for young people should not have boundaries”, or that they want to be friends with all young people.

The panel must consider whether there is an unusual context for seeking employment – for example, a person with no history of working with young people or who has no interest in longer term care of, or study related to young people.

As Working with Children Checks are generally limited to Australian criminal histories, if a person has worked overseas in a youth-related role, the panel should consider the need to contact previous employers overseas, taking into account for example, the recency of the overseas employment and the circumstances of leaving employment. In addition, the person should be asked to sign a statutory declaration that they have no criminal history overseas that would, if committed in Australia, disqualify them from applying for a Working with Young people and National Crime Check.

At least two reference checks across personal and professional spheres should be undertaken and documented and the following questions asked:

- How do you know the person subject to the reference check?
- How long have you known the person?
- Do you have any concerns about the person working with young people or young people?

Resource 2: Statement of Commitment included in Employment Agreement for all Raise staff team members

Raise Foundation is committed to being a Youth Safe, Youth Friendly organisation for all young people who come into contact with our Programs. We will:

- provide welcoming, safe and nurturing services for young people
- prevent young person abuse and neglect within our services
- appropriately and immediately address young person abuse and neglect if it does occur
- place the interests of any young person suffering harm, or at risk of harm, above the interests of any other individual or the organisation

I understand the expectation that all staff and volunteers will uphold the values of Raise Foundation and will care for, nurture and protect the wellbeing of young people with whom they come into contact through Raise Foundation.

Be Courageous – we are imaginative, driven, progressive, confident

Show Heart – we are kind, passionate, sincere, empathetic

Give Respect – we believe in acceptance, equity, inclusivity

Apply Integrity – we operate with authenticity, accountability, transparency

Bring Vitality – we are positive, fun, energetic, inspiring

Deliver Excellence – we are evidence-based, responsive, consistent, experts in our industry

Along with the above, I will ensure that I:

- Understand the vulnerabilities of young people
- Respect the boundaries of professional relationships and the rights of every person to feel safe in our programs
- Seek justice for those who have been harmed
- Work together to create a culture of individual and collective responsibility for the safety of young people
- Create friendly, welcoming spaces for young people
- Lead by undertaking a continuous improvement approach to the protection of young people

I accept my obligation to:

- familiarise myself with and uphold the Raise Foundation Youth Safety Risk Management Framework as implemented at Raise Foundation
- report internally any breaches of the Raise Foundation Youth Safety Risk Management Framework as soon as possible

This Statement is included in all Employment Agreements for Raise staff team members, which is duly signed.

Resource 3: Guidance on Risk Assessment

In conducting Risk Assessment, there are some general risks that may apply across services and some that will be specific to the service. General risk factors include, but are not limited to:

- opportunities for unsupervised access to young people for example, in a residential setting, transporting young people, or in an area of a building that cannot be observed by others
- opportunities to develop a relationship of trust with a young person (or persons close to the young person) over time
- assisting young people with personal care such as toileting, bathing, etc
- where the young people have particular vulnerabilities, for example, disabilities

Where any risk of abuse to young people is identified, Policy and Procedures will incorporate the risk management strategy to be put in place.

Risk mitigation strategies may include, but are not limited to:

- considering whether people need to work in pairs or groups or in line of sight of others when around young people
- reconfiguring building/furniture layout to remove any secluded areas or ensuring that doors have glass panels and rooms have uncovered windows, as appropriate to service provision
- maintaining Policies and Procedures regarding mobile phone usage (including for games/apps/internet usage, social media usage in a way that may be bestowing special favours on a young person, inappropriate photograph taking, inappropriate telephone contact), physical contact with young people, contact with young people outside of services
- having clear boundaries that overnight stays will never occur in a Raise Foundation Program
- having rules regarding change rooms
- considering how to minimise unsupervised one-to-one time periods, for example, during transport, around the time of program commencement and closure, except as necessary to Program provision
- developing rules regarding the appropriate behaviour management of young people
- having clear rules stipulating that the use, possession or supply of drugs or alcohol is strictly prohibited
- ensuring that people providing counselling and support services to young people are properly debriefed
- ensuring regular discussion, use and working knowledge of the Raise Foundation Youth Safety Risk Management Framework, including the Code of Conduct

Resource 4: Grooming, Abuse & Neglect

In summary, grooming is actions by an adult, adolescent or young person to develop opportunities to sexually offend against a young person.

Grooming is generally subtle and is usually clearly seen in hindsight. This is why it is important that any breach of policy or generalised concern is reported – this will allow for seemingly minor matters to be linked to identify a pattern of behaviour which may lead to abuse being prevented or early detection.

There is no typical victim profile, but often vulnerable or lonely young people are targeted as the abuser may aim to establish a relationship by filling an emotional need. Sometimes an abuser will offer to be a support for a family by offering to babysit or taking a special interest in a young person.

People do not need to make a judgement about behaviour they are observing. They do not need to have proof of abuse. Grooming is by nature ambiguous and Raise Foundation aims to create a culture where it is safe for people to take action wherever they observe behaviour that is a concern.

The following list is by no means exhaustive and the matters are not necessarily indicative that grooming is occurring. However, grooming may involve a person:

- positioning themselves in an environment where there is access to young people such as sporting or community organisation
- developing relationships with a young person, their family and sometimes within the organisation to gain trust from the community and individuals
- spending time with the young person away from protective adults, for example, offering to babysit or take the young person on special outings
- engaging inappropriately with the young person on social media
- showing favouritism towards a young person by giving gifts or money, or for older young people, alcohol and drugs
- sharing secrets with the young person
- allowing the young person to break rules
- non-sexual touching of the young person such as tickling, hugging, sitting on laps, rough play
- declarations of love for the young person (to the young person or to others)

These actions establish an emotional and physical connection which then allows escalation of behaviour to increase sexual elements, such as:

- interrupting a young person while bathing or changing
- washing a young person or allowing the young person to be present while the adult is bathing or naked
- inappropriately talking about sex with the young person
- ‘accidental’ intimate touching
- taking an inappropriate interest in the young person’s sexual development or knowledge
- exposing the young person to pornography or sexual jokes
- sexual touching, sexual assault
- threats or rewards for keeping the abuse a secret – often the existence of the relationship between parents and the abuser or co-workers and the abuser means that the young person is less likely to report.

Signs of abuse or neglect

Signs that abuse is occurring could be very subtle. Understanding the nature of abuse and neglect, and the behaviours of abusers can assist in preventing or detecting abusive behaviour.

Many small signs may be observed which may appear to be insignificant or ambiguous. However, when examined together these behaviours may demonstrate a pattern of behaviour that is indicative of abuse. This is why reporting any breaches of the Youth Safe, Youth Friendly Raise Foundation Youth Safety Risk Management Framework is critical.

Signs of abuse may include:

- unusually aggressive behaviour
- inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- sudden withdrawal
- being unusually frightened or worried
- not wanting to spend time with a person where this seems outside of the young person's normal behaviour or where the young person seems fearful or anxious
- unexplained bruises or injuries
- a feeling that "something isn't right"
- disclosure of abuse, even at a very low level, may be a sign that greater abuse is occurring and the young person is 'testing' what might happen if they make a full disclosure.

Signs of neglect may include:

- frequent hunger
- lack of cleanliness that is ongoing and not consistent with the daily dirt accumulated by active young people
- unwashed clothes

A suspicion of abuse or neglect may be based on a direct observation of inappropriate behaviour or observations of minor incidents or signs of abuse which create a feeling of unease about an individual or situation. Such cases should be reported in accordance with this framework. Advice can be sought from Program Counsellors, Volunteer Engagement Director, Program Director or the CEO.

The complexity of abuse

The nature of abuse and neglect is complex and sensitive. The young person may be fearful that they will not be believed, that they, or someone they care about, will be hurt as retribution for the disclosure or that they have done something wrong. There are also complex legal and practical issues that could be involved, such as impact on the young person's accommodation or contact with siblings and parents.

Trusted adults must pay attention to what a young person says, and also what a young person does not say. For example, a young person may say that they do not want to be near a particular carer. This could be indicative of the young person feeling unsafe but the young person might not wish to provide any further detail.

A young person may indirectly disclose through drawings or play, or may make ambiguous statements to try to alert adults around them to the fact they are being abused.

If a young person makes a disclosure, recipients of the information should be mindful of the need:

- for the young person to feel safe and to be believed
- to ask open and not leading questions, for example, “What happened next?”, instead of “Did he touch your penis?”
- to document the disclosure as soon as possible, using the words of the young person where possible
- to follow reporting procedures
- to involve police and other relevant authorities as soon as possible

There are many barriers to reporting abuse, with many people disclosing childhood abuse years later. There are additional barriers for some young people, for example, young people with a disability may have trouble communicating, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people may fear retribution and shame on the victim and perpetrator and be reluctant to involve police and authorities.

Young people should be empowered by raising awareness of what abuse is and how they can get help and be supported by a culture of belief.

Resource 5: Guidance on Disclosures

Young people may make disclosures in a variety of ways and adults who care for them should be alert to what young people are saying. Disclosures can be overt or can be subtle and ambiguous – for example, a young person may say he does not want “x” to take him to soccer practice anymore.

Young people who make disclosures could be feeling scared, embarrassed, guilty, in pain, worried for the ramifications that may have been threatened by the abuser, worried about getting their abuser into trouble and worried that they will not be believed.

Young people should be believed and made to feel immediately safe.

The person to whom the disclosure is made should:

- not make promises to keep the disclosure a secret – rather tell the young person that you will help them to get help
- give the young person time and space to say what he or she needs to say
- not ask leading questions
- document the disclosure using the words of the young person where possible, as soon as possible following the disclosure
- where appropriate, arrange for the young person’s parents to collect the young person and inform them what has happened
- follow the reporting requirements under this framework, including seeking managerial advice if there is uncertainty about whether the disclosure triggers the reporting process under the framework
- encourage and support (but not pressure) a young person or parents to report to the police and/or to the relevant government young person protection department
- offer counselling or information about accessing counselling to the young person and parents

Resource 6: Sample Notification and Report Form

Notification of suspicion, allegation or disclosure of abuse
against a person associated with Raise Foundation

To be completed within 24 hours of allegation made

Name of Person making report Susan Hathaway

Position of Person making report Program Counsellor

Program involved Bump

Program Location involved Woodridge

Name of alleged victim Tracy Rowley

Details of alleged incident Saturday 17 July at 10am

How is victim involved with Raise?

☒

Mentee

☐

Mentor

☐

Staff

☐

Other

Gender of victim

☐

Male

☒

Female

☐

Other

Brief outline of alleged incident

Mentee reported to her Program Counsellor that her mentor has been trying to get her phone number and meet outside of the regular scheduled times of the program. The mentee does not feel comfortable to do this and when she said no repeatedly to the mentor, the mentor is now offering her money, expensive meals and gifts if she does meet with her outside of the program.

Name of Person under investigation Sarah Langley

Date of commencement of association with Raise Became a Raise Mentor in February 2020

Complete the details in the table below for matters concerning volunteers and staff

How is person under investigation involved with Raise?

☒

Mentor

☐

Staff

☐

Mentee

☐

Other

Type of Check	Reference No	Application Date	Expiry Date
Working with Children Check	WWC 078886	January 2020	January 2023
National Crime Check	NCC 8638e8e	January 2020	January 2023