

Child Safe Environments Policy for Rockit Performing Arts

POLICY STATEMENT

This service is committed to the protection of children, young people, and community members in maintaining child safe environments.

INTRODUCTION

Rockit Performing Arts (RPA) utilises dance, drama, and singing as tools to enhance the health and wellbeing of our local community.

PRINCIPLES

Rockit Performing Arts (RPA) is committed to preventing abuse and promoting the wellbeing of children, young people, and their families. RPA will take all reasonable steps to protect children from neglect and physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional abuse while in our care.

RPA has zero tolerance for child abuse and will address any allegations of child abuse consistently and appropriately. Violations of the Child Protection Policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination and reporting to the appropriate government or legal authorities, in accordance with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA)[1].

PURPOSE

This policy aims to provide RPA staff with guidelines to identify and respond appropriately to concerns of abuse and neglect, and to understand their role in safeguarding children and young people. It reflects RPA's values, ethics, and code of conduct for staff, carers, parents/guardians, children, young people, volunteers, and the community.

The policy has been developed to minimise risks to children and young people involved in RPA programs, in line with the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 (SA)[1].

This Policy will be reviewed annually and updated regularly to reflect operational experience and changes in legislation and associated policies, including the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA) and the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 (SA)[1].

RPA acknowledges that all staff have a crucial role in protecting students from harm, as mandated by the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA)[1].

Overall responsibility, implementation, and review of this policy rests with the Director of RPA.

The Director, Noni Vassos, is the designated person to approve and accept national police checks, Department for Child Protection (DCP) working with children checks, and to receive official complaints, in accordance with the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 (SA)[1].

SCOPE

This policy applies to all RPA staff who have direct or indirect contact with children, including paid and voluntary staff employed directly by RPA, as well as contracted professionals or invited service providers for children in RPA's care.

This policy also encompasses all students, their families/carers, and community members who participate in RPA events, classes, and performances, in alignment with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA)[1].

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy:

- RPA: Rockit Performing Arts
- Child: A person under the age of 18 years, as defined by the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA).
- Young person: A person 16 or 17 years of age, as defined by the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA).
- Adult: Any person 18 years of age or over.
- Staff: All persons employed by RPA, whether paid or voluntary, full-time or part-time.
- Student: A person enrolled in programs, activities, or events at RPA.
- Parent/Guardian: The child's legal parent or guardian.
- Abuse: Includes sexual, physical, psychological, or emotional abuse or neglect, as defined in the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA).
- Child Protection: The provision of care, protection, and services to children and young people, as outlined in the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA).
- Professionals Contracted: Contractors engaged to support or lead activities or events, including guest teachers, choreographers, speakers, designers, photographers, and film operators.

RPA RESPONSIBILITIES

RPA commits to:

1. Adopt, implement, and enforce this policy.
2. Publish, distribute, and promote this policy and the consequences of any breaches.
3. Model appropriate standards of behaviour at all times.
4. Address complaints and policy breaches appropriately.
5. Enforce penalties imposed under this policy.
6. Ensure policy accessibility to all relevant parties.
7. Provide ongoing supervision, support, and training for staff working with children to maintain a child-safe environment.
8. Report and respond to suspected abuse and neglect in accordance with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA).
9. Maintain adult-to-child ratios in compliance with South Australian licensing regulations and early childhood best practices.
10. Review this policy every 12-18 months.
11. Seek advice from and refer serious issues to appropriate state and national bodies, including the Department for Child Protection (SA) and South Australia Police.

Serious issues include unlawful behaviour that could lead to significant harm, such as criminal behaviour (e.g., physical assault, sexual assault, child abuse) and any matters requested by state or national bodies.

This policy aligns with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA), the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 (SA), and other relevant South Australian legislation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in our care.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF

TRAINING AND ACCREDITATION

- RPA staff must possess appropriate first aid training and have immediate access to a First Aid Kit, in compliance with the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA).
- All staff and volunteers must hold current national police checks and Department for Child Protection (DCP) working with children checks, as mandated by the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 (SA).
- Staff must be suitably qualified for the events/classes they conduct, adhering to relevant South Australian industry standards.
- Staff shall be thoroughly familiar with the Child and Member Protection Policy and the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA).
- Staff must be well-versed in the procedures for reporting child abuse as outlined in the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA).

SUPERVISION

- Children under 18 years of age must be supervised at all times by a staff member during scheduled classes, events, and performances, in accordance with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA).
- Staff are not responsible for transporting students to and from RPA activities, as per organisational policy and child safety guidelines.
- Students are prohibited from travelling in staff vehicles unless explicit written consent is obtained from a parent or guardian, in line with child protection best practices.
- Students must be dropped off and collected 5-10 minutes before and after class. If parents/guardians leave students unattended in the studio for more than 15 minutes, supervision fees will be invoiced to families.

COMMUNITY CARE

- Staff shall create an environment where children and young people feel safe to voice concerns, as per the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA).
- All staff members are responsible for ensuring children are protected and treated with respect, in accordance with the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 (SA).
- Staff must provide a caring, welcoming environment for students, aligning with South Australian child safety standards.
- Staff shall ensure proper and safe use of props and acrobatic equipment, complying with the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA).
- Staff are strictly prohibited from engaging in sexual relationships with individuals under their supervision or authority, as per the Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 (SA).
- Staff must not verbally or physically assault any person, in accordance with South Australian criminal law.
- Staff are obligated to report any untrue or malicious complaints, as per organisational policy and legal requirements.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS

- Parents/carers/guardians may be asked to leave the premises if they request preferential treatment for their child, in line with RPA's non-discrimination policy.
- Children aged 13 or under must not be left unsupervised in RPA facilities, as per the organisation's duty of care obligations.
- Parents/carers/guardians are responsible for ensuring their child's regular attendance, recognising the importance of consistent participation in RPA programs.

- Children under 12 must be accompanied to class by an authorised adult who must remain until class commencement. All students must be collected promptly by an authorised adult at class conclusion, in accordance with RPA's child safety protocols.
- For safety and courtesy, parents must collect children punctually. If a teacher is left alone with one child, they will wait in a prominent area such as the studio foyer. Staff may request another student and family to wait until the late parent arrives, ensuring compliance with child protection guidelines.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILMING

- In accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and the South Australian Information Privacy Principles, parents, guardians, family members, friends, and visitors are prohibited from filming or photographing students during performances, events, or class work without explicit consent.
- Pursuant to the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth) and Australian music licensing laws, parents/carers/guardians and other audience members are strictly forbidden from filming or recording any performances, events or activities that include RPA students. Such actions constitute a breach of copyright laws that RPA is obligated to uphold.
- RPA mandates that parents, families, carers, students, or other RPA members obtain written permission from a child's parent or guardian before capturing an image of a child who is not their own, in compliance with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA).

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

- In alignment with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) and the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA), parents/guardians must disclose any disabilities or behavioural concerns of their child/young person to administration upon enrolment. This information will not affect enrolment but will enable our staff to provide appropriate guidance and ensure classes can accommodate individual needs.
- For reasons of duty of care and behaviour management, as outlined in the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA), staff reserve the right to guide families into the most suitable classes. The Director's decision in this process is final.

FEE PAYMENT

- In accordance with RPA's terms of service and the Australian Consumer Law, students may not participate in any events, classes, performances, or programs unless all fees have been paid and required contact information has been provided to RPA.
- If a parent/carer/guardian enrolls a child or young person into a class deemed unsuitable by RPA staff, the Director will inform them and transfer the child/young person to a more appropriate class. This decision is made in the interest of student safety, duty of care, and wellbeing, as per the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA).

STUDENT DUTY OF CARE

BEHAVIOUR AND RESPONSIBILITY

- In compliance with the Education and Children's Services Act 2019 (SA), students are prohibited from engaging in bullying, harassment, passive aggression or intimidation of other students, teachers, staff, volunteers or families. RPA will follow a three-strike warning system, with the possibility of expulsion for continued misconduct. The Director's decision is final.

- Students are responsible for their behaviour during class or RPA events, adhering to the principles of respect for teachers, fellow students, premises, and oneself.
- Students must take care of their belongings and remove all items after class.
- In accordance with child safety regulations, students aged 13 and under must not wait unsupervised in any RPA foyer. A parent/guardian must be present when students are not in class.
- Students must adhere to the RPA dress code, wearing the correct Rockit uniform to each class. Crop tops and revealing shorts are not permitted.

SAFETY

- For safety reasons and in compliance with the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA), students must not practice or attempt acrobatic or physical skills beyond their current training level or those not taught in their weekly classes.
- Students should refrain from wearing jewellery in the classroom to prevent injury.
- Students must bring a water bottle to each class to maintain proper hydration.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILMING (STUDENTS)

- To protect privacy and prevent distraction, students are not permitted to use mobile phones during class.
- With teachers' permission, senior students may film the final run of a routine to practice at home. Students are not permitted to upload or share any footage recorded at class, performances or events on social media.
- In compliance with privacy laws and child protection regulations, students are strictly prohibited from using mobile phones, taking photographs, or recording video within any change room area during RPA events, whether on RPA premises or elsewhere.

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING CASES OF HARM OR CHILD ABUSE

- Staff will be informed of child harm reporting procedures via RPA staff contracts and the induction process, in accordance with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA).
- RPA adheres to mandatory reporting legislation, requiring suspicions of child abuse to be reported directly to a person in a management position. Their responsibilities include direct supervision of information provision to the Child Abuse Report Line (13 14 78) or other appropriate external agencies, as stipulated by the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA).
- RPA members and students can approach RPA staff for guidance on reporting cases of harm or abuse, either for themselves or fellow classmates, in line with South Australian child protection laws.

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING COMPLAINTS

In accordance with the South Australian Ombudsman Act 1972 and the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA), Rockit Performing Arts (RPA) has established the following complaint handling procedures:

- Staff will be informed of the procedure for handling complaints against staff, parents, guardians, carers, students, volunteers, or visitors during their induction and through regular training.
- RPA members and students may lodge complaints in writing to the Director, Noni Vassos, at noni.vassos@rockitperformingarts.com.au, as per the organisation's internal complaint handling process.
- All complaints will be treated confidentially and actioned within appropriate timeframes, in compliance with the South Australian Information Privacy Principles.
- To maintain duty of care obligations under the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA), staff should not be asked to leave a class to discuss complaints. All complaints should be submitted in writing to the Director.

- RPA's complaint procedure adheres to principles of procedural fairness, as outlined in the Ombudsman Act 1972 (SA). Any person may report a complaint about an individual or the organisation to the Director or Studio Manager.
- Complaints may be handled formally or informally, at the complainant's discretion, unless the Director or Studio Manager determines the complaint falls outside policy scope and requires referral to an appropriate authority, as per the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA).
- All complaints will be managed confidentially. Resolution may be achieved through agreement between involved parties or mediation, in line with the Mediation Act 1986 (SA).

The complaint handling process is as follows:

1. Contact the Studio Director or Studio Manager in writing via email to noni.vassos@rockitperformingarts.com.au if you believe there has been a breach of the Member Protection Policy.
2. The Director or Studio Manager will document the complaint confidentially and investigate the issue.
3. If necessary, relevant government authorities and/or South Australia Police will be notified in writing by the Director, in accordance with mandatory reporting requirements under the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA).
4. The Director will communicate appropriate disciplinary actions, in line with relevant South Australian legislation and RPA policies.

STAFF RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

In compliance with the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 (SA) and the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA):

- All staff are personally interviewed by RPA Director, Noni Vassos.
- Staff must possess a valid Working with Children Check (WWCC) as mandated by the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 (SA).
- Staff must hold a current First Aid Certificate, as per the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA).
- Staff must demonstrate appropriate training and experience in program and activity delivery.
- Staff must adhere to their roles and responsibilities as outlined in their employment contracts and RPA policies.
- All staff undergo a six-month probationary period, including performance reviews at three and six months, to ensure compliance with RPA values and South Australian child safety standards.

TRAINING OF STAFF

In accordance with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA) and the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA), staff participate in annual training sessions covering:

- Best classroom practices
- Managing challenging behaviours
- Inclusive practices for students with disabilities
- Identifying and reporting signs of abuse
- Safe equipment usage

SAFE WORK PRACTICES

As per the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA), staff must ensure all acrobatic equipment, props, and teaching aids are in safe working condition before use in activities.

DISCIPLINARY MEASURES

Disciplinary measures for policy breaches will be implemented in accordance with:

- Contractual and employment regulations

- Principles of procedural fairness
- Factual evidence
- Relevant South Australian legislation, including the Fair Work Act 1994 (SA) and the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA)

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS

Potential disciplinary actions for individuals who breach this policy may include:

- Written or verbal apology
- Written warning
- Mandatory counselling
- Suspension of engagement or employment
- Other appropriate actions as determined by the Director

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS FOR THE ORGANISATION

If RPA is found to have breached its own Member Protection Policy:

- Activities related to the incident may be suspended pending investigation
- Other appropriate disciplinary actions may be implemented at the Director's discretion

FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED

Disciplinary actions will be determined based on:

- The nature and severity of the breach
- The individual's awareness of policy requirements
- Potential impacts on the individual or organisation
- Prior warnings or disciplinary actions
- Enforceability of the discipline

All disciplinary measures will be implemented in compliance with relevant South Australian legislation and RPA policies.

Updated by: Noni Vassos, Director

Date: December 2024