a2z Health Group
Child Safe Policy

Version 2.0

a2z Health Group Child Safe Policy

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1. Purpose

a2z Health Group is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm.

We are understand our obligations around the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who may access our services, and ensure that children in our care will always be our first priority.

This policy affirms our commitment to child safety by explaining how a2z Health Group will always prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. This policy outlines the child safe considerations and practices that will be implemented, to ensure that we embed and promote a culture of child safety and ensure that all allegations of child abuse or harm are taken seriously and acted upon immediately.

2. Context

Victorian organisations that provide services or facilities to children, such as a2z Health Group, are required by law to implement the Victorian Child Safe Standards (The Standards) in order to protect children from harm. The Standards were established by the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act* 2005 and were part of the response to the 2013 Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations (the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry).

This policy complies with our obligations under the *the Worker Screening Act 2020* including: -

- ✓ Child Safe Environments and criminal history assessments for people working with children; and
- ✓ Mandatory reporting.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees (including full-time, part-time, casual employees, contractors, agency staff and students). This policy is applied both during work hours and outside of work hours.

4. The Victorian Child Safe Standards

The Child Safe Standards (The Standards) are a set of 11 standards that aim to create and maintain child safe environments. a2z Health Group is required to implement and comply with these Standards.

The Standards aim to:

- Promote the safety of children;
- Prevent child abuse; and
- Ensure organisations and businesses have effective processes in place to respond to and report all allegations of child abuse.

The Standards work by:

- Driving changes in organisational culture – embedding child safety in everyday thinking and practice;
- Providing a minimum standard of child safety across all organisations; and
- Highlighting that we all have a role to keep children safe from abuse.

Although all children are vulnerable, some children face additional vulnerabilities. The standards provide overarching principles that organisations must consider:

- The cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children;
- The cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- The safety of children who are LGBTIQA+; and
- The safety of children with a disability.

The organisation overseeing the implementation and compliance with the Child Safe Standards is the Commission for Children and Young People (The Commission).
The Standards are as follows:

Standard 1	Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
Standard 2	Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture.

Standard 3	Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
Standard 4	Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
Standard 5	Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
Standard 6	People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
Standard 7	Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
Standard 8	Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
Standard 9	Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
Standard 10	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
Standard 11	Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

5. The Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Reportable Conduct Scheme (established by the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*) aims to improve organisations' responses to allegations of certain types of misconduct involving children, committed by their workers and volunteers. It imposes legal obligations on heads of organisations to have systems in place to prevent child abuse, and if child abuse is alleged, to ensure allegations are brought to the attention of appropriate persons for investigation and response. The Reportable Conduct Scheme became applicable to a2z Health Group on 1 January 2018.

Reportable conduct against a child includes:

- Sexual offences
- Sexual misconduct
- Physical violence
- Significant emotional or psychological harm
- Significant neglect

The Reportable Conduct Scheme has been designed to ensure that the Commission for Children and Young People will be aware of every allegation of certain types of employee/volunteer misconduct involving children. The Commission must be informed of all allegations of child abuse involving a worker or volunteer, and independently monitors all investigations undertaken by organisations.

Any complaints about an a2z Health Group employee, or representative's behaviour or conduct towards a child or young person will be treated seriously and in accordance with the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

6. Mandatory Reporting

Mandatory reporting refers to the legal requirement of certain groups of people to report a reasonable belief of child physical or sexual abuse to authorities. There is a legal obligation under the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 of certain professionals required to make a report when a child requires protection.

7. Criminal Offences

Obligations under this policy are additional to legal requirements associated with criminal law.

- If any person in a position of authority within our organisation becomes aware of a substantial risk that a child may become the victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with the organisation (for example, an employee, contractor or volunteer), and they have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, then they must take all reasonable steps to do so. A person in authority who negligently fails to take appropriate action to address the risk may be charged with the criminal offence of 'failing to protect' and may face a term of imprisonment.

- If an adult reasonably believes a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16, they must report it to Victoria Police by calling 000 or going to their local police station. Failure to disclose the information may be a criminal offence.

8. Children's Participation and Empowerment

Children that attend a2z Health Group are encouraged to have their voice heard and participate in decisions that impact them. about the things that are important to them. a2z Health Group is committed to empowering the

children and young people who access our services , to know and understand their rightsm such as those outlined in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child*, including:

- The right to participate and be heard;
- The right to be safe and not harmed by anyone;
- The right to live and grow up healthy;
- The right to express their views and have a say about decisions that affect them, including raising their own complaints; and
- The right to information, such as information about policies and procedures that affect them.

9. Diversity and Cultural Safety

a2z Health Group is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, culturally and linguistically diverse children, gender diverse children, and to the safety of children with a disability. a2z Health Group will always aim to create enriching experiences for children and young people and want them to always to feel safe, happy, celebrated, and empowered.

a2z Health Group will ensure that an inclusive and welcoming environment is available to Aboriginal children and their families. Aboriginal children accessing our services will be actively encouraged to express and celebrate their culture, and we will ensure that our staff and representatives understand the importance of Aboriginal culture, and what our approach is in dealing with any instances of racism.

10. Families and Communities

a2z Health Group recognises the importance that the role of families play, and are committed to involving parents and carers when making significant decisions about their child. Parents, families and communities are welcome to provide feedback at any time through our contact email address and are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with us.

11. Human Resources Practices

a2z Health Group will take all reasonable steps to ensure that we are engaging with and recruiting the most suitable and appropraite people to work with children.

a2z Health Group will ensure that all recruitment and selctions processes are robust and follow all child safe legislative and best practice requirements. All potential employees who may work with children will be required to complete relevant probity checks, including Working With Child Checks (WWCC's) and National or International Criminal History Checks.

a2z Health Group understands that training and supervision are vital to ensuring that all workers understand their legal and moral obligations around the safety of children and young people. a2z Health Group will ensure that workers are equipped with knowledge and ability to recognise, respond, and report incidents, allegations and disclosures of child abuse and/or neglect. a2z Health Group will also ensure that practitioners comply with any mandatory professional development as outlined by their Professional Registration Agency such as: AHPRA, ESSA & Dietitian Australia.

12. Information Sharing and Record Management

a2z Health Group understands that it may have to share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, where it is appropriate and in their best interest. Confidential information may be required to be shared with external authorities, in order to comply with legislative requirements and best child safety practices.

All child safety complaints, concerns, incidents and near misses will be recorded in a2z Health Group's incident reporting system. Records which may assist with the investigation of a complaint or safety concern will be identified and kept as part of the record of an investigation. Records will be kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint, and we will record and keep the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints. This may include findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken.

13. Risk Management

a2z Health Group recognises the importance of identifying and managing risks of harm and abuse, in relation to the servies to children and young people that we deliver. a2z Health Group will always include child safety considerations in all of our processes and procedures, in order to ensure that risk controls are in place to keep children safe from harm and abuse. a2z Health Group will ensure that it's policies and practices relating to child safety are regularly reviewed.

14. Reporting and Responding to concerns of child abuse and harm

If there is immediate danger to a child or young person, urgently call the Police on 000 for advice.

All employees, and other representatives of a2z Health Group are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by reporting any concerns relating to harm or abuse of a child.

Child abuse is any act that causes physical or emotional harm to a child, that is carried out by someone who is in a position of responsibility, trust or power. This might be an adult or an older child. There are different types of child abuse. Most children who are abused experience more than one type of abuse. Child abuse comes in many forms including physical, sexual, emotional or psychological, grooming, neglect and family violence.

- Physical abuse is the non-accidental infliction of physical injury or harm of a child. Visible signs and examples of physical abuse may include bruises, welts, burns, fractures, multiple new and old injuries, bald patches on the head.
- Sexual abuse is when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity and does not always involve physical contact or force. Visible signs and examples of sexual abuse may include injury to the genital/rectal areas, breast, thighs, discomfort during toileting.
- Emotional or psychological harm occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats or by witnessing family violence. Visible signs and examples of emotional or psychological abuse may include language delays, stuttering, delays in emotional, mental or physical development.
- Grooming is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. Visible signs and examples of grooming may include giving gifts, special attention, close physical contact, exposure to sexual content.
- Neglect is the failure to provide for the development and wellbeing of the child. It can be an isolated incident or an ongoing pattern. Visible signs and examples of neglect may include a child being inappropriately dressed for weather, hungry, tired, listless, not having adequate shelter.
- Family violence against a child or a child's parent is child abuse, and can include physical violence or threats, verbal abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, sexual abuse and financial and social abuse.

a2z Health Group will ensure that all of their employees understand their obligations (both legal and moral) to report as soon as practicable if they form a reasonable suspicion that a child or young person has been or is being abused or harmed.

a2z Health Group believes that reporting child safety is everyone's responsibilty, and will provide support (through EAP) to any staff member who makes a report, particularly where an ongoing service may be required to be provided to the child or young person and their family. Information on EAP can be found in the Induction handbooks.
Employees of a2z Health Group must immediatley report to management any reasonable suspicion they have that a child has been, is being, harmed or abused. All employees of a2z Health Group have a duty of care to report any concerns relating to the inappropriate behaviour of a staff member to management immediately. All incidents are to then be reported by completing an internal Incident report form and submitted to management.
If any employee of a2z Health Group has reasonable belief that a child or young person allegedly has, or may have been at risk of harm, they are to follow the guidelines outlined on page 10.

When should I make a report to Child Protection?

Always call Police on 000 if you are concerned that a child is at immediate risk of harm or abuse.

A child in need of protection is a child who has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect, and their parent has not protected or is unlikely to protect the child from harm of that type.
To make a report to Child Protection a person needs to have formed a reasonable belief that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect, and that their parent has not protected or is unlikely to protect the child from harm of that type.
Information provided to Child Protection when a report is made needs to be sufficiently detailed for Child Protection to identify the child at risk of harm.
Where concerns relate to an alleged perpetrator of abuse, who may pose a risk more generally to all children, the concerns should be reported to Police.
A report to Child Protection should be made when the child's parent has not protected or is unlikely to protect the child from harm of that type in any of the following circumstances:

- **Physical abuse of, or non-accidental or unexplained injury to, a child** (mandatory reporters must report)

- **A disclosure of sexual abuse by a child or witness**, or a combination of factors suggesting the likelihood of sexual abuse – the child exhibiting concerning behaviours e.g. after the child's mother takes on a new partner or where a known or suspected perpetrator has unsupervised contact with the child (mandatory reporters must make a report to child protection)
- **Emotional abuse and ill treatment of a child** – impacting on the child's stability and healthy development
- **Significant neglect, poor care or lack of appropriate supervision** – where there is a likelihood of significant harm to the child, or the child's stability and development
- **Significant family violence or parental substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability** – where there is a likelihood of significant harm to the child, or the child's stability and development
- **Where a child's actions or behaviour may place them at risk of significant harm** and the parents are unwilling, or unable to protect the child
- **Where a child appears to have been abandoned, or where the child's parents are dead or incapacitated** and no other person is caring properly for the child.

How to report to Child Protection

You must advise the Department of Families, Fairness and by contacting the local Government Area of where the child resides by telephoning: -

Phone: North Division 1300 598 521 (8.45am – 5pm Monday to Friday)
South Division 1300 555 526 (8.45am – 5pm Monday to Friday)
East Division 1300 360 452 (8.45am – 5pm Monday to Friday)
13 12 78 (after hours)

You must state that you wish to make a Child Protection Report, and provide details of your concerns and the child, to the Child Protection Worker.

When should I make a report to Orange Door?

If you have concerns for the wellbeing of a child, but do not believe they are at risk of significant harm, and where the immediate safety of the child will not be compromised, a referral to The Orange Door may be appropriate.

https://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/

The Orange Door provides help for people experiencing family violence, or who need assistance with the care and wellbeing of children and young people.

The Orange Door network aims to be accessible, safe and welcoming, providing quick and simple access to support for:

- adults, children and young people who are experiencing family violence
- families who need support with the care and wellbeing of children and young people
- perpetrators of family violence

How to report to Orange Door

The Orange Door is a free service and operates during business hours (9am to 5pm) from Monday to Friday (closed public holidays).

If you need to report an issue or seek support from **The Orange Door**, you can contact locations directly: The Orange Door locations | vic.gov.au (www.vic.gov.au)

Services are available after hours. Visit Statewide, after-hours services for details.

15. Disclosure from a Child

An adult's response to a child or young person's disclosure of abuse can be central to a child or young person's ongoing safety and their recovery from the trauma of abuse. If an adult does not take action when there are suspicions that a child is being abused, it may place the child at serious risk of ongoing abuse and prevent the child's family from receiving the help they need. In summary, it is important to:

- Ensure the immediate safety of the child.
- Listen to and support the child or young person.
- Accept the child or young person will disclose only what is comfortable and recognise the bravery/strength of the child for talking about something that is difficult.
- Reassure the child or young person he or she did the right thing.
- Not make promises you can't keep.
- Not confront the perpetrator.
- Tell the child or young person what you plan to do next.
- Contact the appropriate authorities.

It is a requirement under the Child Safe Standards that the diversity of all children is considered at all times. All children are vulnerable, but some children need additional care and protection to ensure they are safe.

When supporting a child who has a disability, guidance and support can be accessed via:

tipsheet-safety-children-disability.pdf (ccyp.vic.gov.au)

When supporting an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, guidance and support can be accessed at:

tipsheet-cultural-safety-aboriginal-children.pdf (ccyp.vic.gov.au)

When supporting a child from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, guidance and support can be accessed at:

tipsheet-safety-children-cult-ling-diverse.pdf (ccyp.vic.gov.au)

When supporting children who are LGBTIGA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, or asexual) guidance and support can be accessed through:

Rainbow Door

16. Definitions

Terms and definitions used in this policy include:

Term	Definition
Child Abuse	Child abuse is defined in the Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005 as including: • Physical abuse • Sexual abuse • Emotional or psychological abuse • Serious neglect • Family violence • Grooming
Child Protection	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing's (DFFH) Child Protection services protect children and young people from significant harm resulting from abuse or neglect ensuring that they receive services that deal with the impact of abuse and neglect on their wellbeing and development.
Child Safe Organisation	

	A child safe organisation (in the context of the Child Safe Standards) is required to take deliberate steps to protect children and young people from abuse. This commitment must be embedded in the organisation's policies and practices that prioritise the safety of children.
Child / Young person	In Victoria, under the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005* a child or young person is a person under eighteen years of age.
Child Safety Officer	A nominated officer within an organisation who can guide you if you have any child safe concerns.
Cultural Safety	Cultural Safety is used by organisations to demonstrate their commitment to work and provide services which are welcoming and respectful of another person's culture. It is about our practice and how we promote safe services that value our children, young people and families and their cultural identity, lived experiences and wellbeing. It is about how we facilitate culturally safe approaches that empower children and families within decision-making processes.
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Child	A child or young person up to the age of 18 years who is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.
LGBTIQA+	LGBTQIA+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or sometimes questioning), intersex, asexual, and others. The "plus" represents other sexual identities, including pansexual and Two-Spirit.

Commission for Children and Young People (The Commission)	Commission for Children and Young People are an independent statutory body that promotes improvement in policies and practices affecting the safety and wellbeing of Victorian children and young people and is responsible for administering the Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
Misconduct that may involve Reportable Conduct	A behaviour that breached a professional code of conduct or workplace expectation (such as a departure from accepted standards that was deliberate or seriously negligent and where the individual was indifferent to the welfare of those affected) and involves one or more of the five types of reportable conduct.
Reasonable Belief	A reasonable belief that a child or young person needs protection, or their safety and wellbeing is at risk, is formed: If a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. It does not require proof. A 'reasonable belief' may be formed through disclosures, observations, or other information of which you have become aware.
Reportable Allegation	A reportable allegation is made where a person makes an allegation, based on a reasonable belief, that an employee or volunteer has committed reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct. This includes where a reportable allegation is made against the head of the organisation.
Employees	Includes permanent and temporary full-time and part-time employees (including temporary employees), volunteers, students, contractors, and consultants while engaged by a2z Health Group.

17. Breaches

Breaches of this Policy, including failure to report concerns about child abuse or harm of a child or young person, is a serious matter. a2z Health Group will follow disciplinary processes which may result in suspension or termination of employment / engagement, and / or referral to Victoria Police and The Commission for Children and Young People.

18. Acknowledgement

a2z Health Group ensures that everyone to whom this policy applies is aware of and has had the opportunity to read and acknowledge it.

All employees and locums sign a written statement indicating that they have read and will abide by our child safe policy. A signed copy of all statements will be retained.

If any employees of a2z Health Group has reasonable belief that a child or young person allegedly has, or may have been at risk of harm, they must follow procedure as per this policy and associated legislative requirements.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Related Legislation

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
Child Wellbeing and Safety Regulations 2017
Family Violence Protection Act 2008
Public Records Act 1973
Limitations of Actions Act 1958
The Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014

Health Records Act 2001

Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014

Worker Screening Act 2020

The Victorian Child Safe Standards

The Reportable Conduct Scheme

Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework Child Information Sharing Scheme

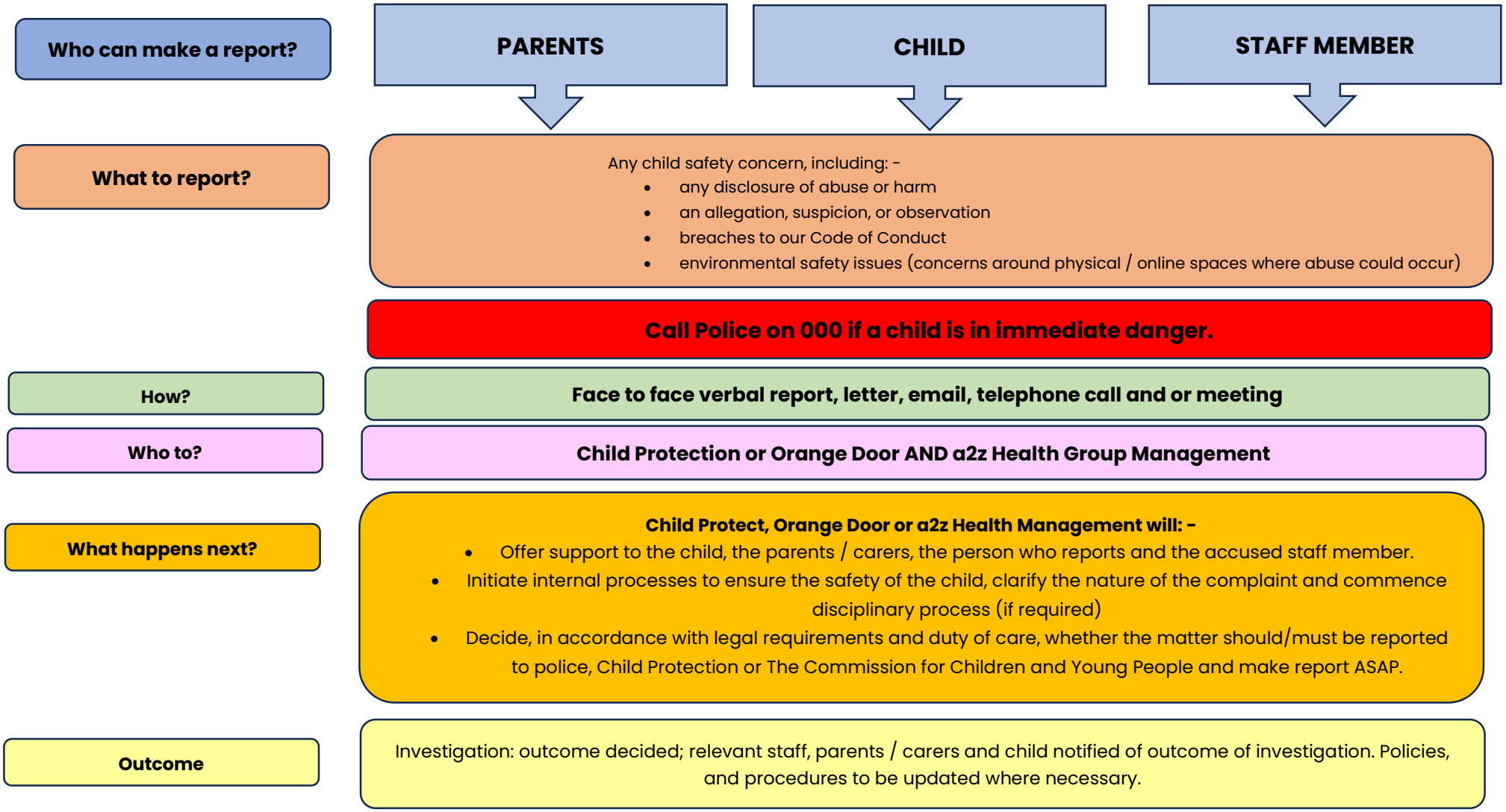
Disability Act 2006

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Quality and Safeguarding Framework (2017)

National Disability Insurance Scheme Rules 2018

Related Policies and Procedures

a2z Health Group Clinical Policies

a2z Health Group Code of Conduct

FLOWCHART – CHILD SAFETY REPORTING PROCESS