



Child Safety POLICY

Title: Supporting a child at risk of suicide and non-suicidal self-injury

Policy No: 605-4

Policy Statement:

The Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety (Child Safety), is committed to promoting the safety, belonging, wellbeing and best interests of children through the implementation of effective and culturally appropriate suicide and non-suicidal self-injury risk management strategies.

Children who have experienced abuse and neglect are at a greater risk of suicide than the general population and certain groups are known to have a higher prevalence of suicide, for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression, people living in remote areas, and people that have migrated to Australia from another country.

Children engage in non-suicidal self-injury for many reasons. This can be a way for them to cope with overwhelming negative emotions and distress, or to help to release strong emotions. Children who engage in non-suicidal self-injury are at higher risk of suicide than those who do not, although there are children who engage in non-suicidal self-injury who do not want to end their life and do not have suicidal intent.

Child Safety will work with children at risk of suicide and non-suicidal self-injury and their safety and support network to support the child's wellbeing and respond to the identified risks.

Child Safety is committed to responding, protecting and promoting human rights. Under the *Human Rights Act 2019*, Child Safety has an obligation to act and make decisions about identifying and responding to suicide and non-suicidal self-injury risk in a way that is compatible with human rights, when making a decision, to give proper consideration to human rights.

The safe care and connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with family, community, culture and country will be a key consideration when respond to suicide and non-suicidal self-injury risk for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Principles:

- The safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child, both throughout childhood and the rest of the child's life, are paramount.



- Child Safety staff will act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights and obligations under the *Human Rights Act 2019*.
- Active efforts will be made to apply the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection) outlined in section 5C of the *Child Protection Act 1999*, to all processes, decisions and actions for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child.
- Children have a right to be safe and protected from harm.
- Child Safety staff will take seriously and respond to identified suicide and non-suicidal self-injury risk.
- Safety and risk assessments are fundamental to identifying and meeting children's safety, belonging and wellbeing needs.
- Children in the custody or guardianship of the chief executive have the right to access medical and therapeutic services necessary to address their risk of suicide or non-suicidal self-injury behaviour.

Objectives:

This policy aims to ensure that:

- children who are identified at risk of suicide or non-suicidal self-injury are responded to in ways that:
 - safeguard their immediate safety to the extent possible in the circumstances
 - prevent harm from occurring or reduce the risk of harm, and
 - promote their ongoing wellbeing by addressing harmful behaviours and underlying causes.
- risk factors, warning signs and cultural considerations are taken into account when identifying and responding to suicide risk and non-suicidal self-injury.
- children subject to ongoing Child Safety involvement and to one of the following alerts will have a corresponding risk management plan:
 - suicide risk alert
 - non-suicidal self-injury risk alert
 - suicide and non-suicidal self-injury risk alert.

Scope:

This policy refers to children in contact with Child Safety across the child protection phases, including:

- at intake, when child protection concerns are received, and suicide risk or non-suicidal self-injury is part of the presenting problem
- when responding to a notification
- when a child is subject to ongoing intervention, including intervention with parental agreement or a child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the chief executive (including interim orders).

In addition to identifying and responding to suicide risk and non-suicidal self-injury, this policy will be implemented in conjunction with the Critical Incident Reporting policy and procedure.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The roles and responsibilities of Child Safety staff in relation to identifying and responding to suicide risk and non-suicidal self-injury are outlined in the Child Safety Practice Manual and associated resources.

Authority:

Child Protection Act 1999, sections 5, 6, 7, 74, 97, 122.

Delegations:

Refer to the instruments of delegation relevant to decisions relating to responses to suicide risk and non-suicidal self-injury.

Records File No.:	Not applicable
Date of approval:	29 October 2024
Date of operation:	10 April 2025
Date to be reviewed:	10 April 2027

Office:	Office of the Chief Practitioner
Help Contact:	Child Protection Practice

Links:

Related Legislation

Human Rights Act 2019

Procedures

Child Safety Practice Manual – Support a child at risk of suicide and non-suicidal self-injury
Child Safety Practice Manual – Work with Evolve to support a child
Critical Incident Reporting

Related Policies

Child death case review policy and procedures (361)
Critical Incident Reporting
Obligations, actions and responsibilities upon the death of a child in care (421)
Responding to a notification (652)

Rescinded Policies

605-3 Assessing and responding to self-harm and suicide risk

Deidre Mulkerin

Director-General