

Code of Conduct for Working with Children

Student Exchange Australia New Zealand Ltd (SEANZ) takes seriously the care and supervision of exchange students on our programs and unequivocally commits to foster their dignity, self-esteem and integrity. All staff, local coordinators, area representatives, volunteers and directors are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below. This Code of Conduct will assist you in understanding and fulfilling legal and professional responsibilities in working with children.

| SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS | |
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| DO | DON'T |
| Do comply with state and federal law. | Don't belittle, tease or abuse students. This includes avoiding sarcasm, derogatory remarks and offensive comments. |
| Do take all reasonable steps to protect students from foreseeable risk of injury or harm. | Don't use isolation as a punishment. |
| Do ensure that another trusted adult is informed should a student make sexual advances to a staff member or Local Coordinator. | Don't spend "special time" or give gifts to individual students. |
| Do seek advice from relevant school/state authorities if you suspect a student is being abused or is in harm's way. | Don't share secrets with students or email/SMS/call/social media them about anything other than professional matters. |
| Do ensure that a 1:15 ratio of staff: student supervision is in place at residential orientation camps and a 1:20 ratio of staff: student supervision is available at orientation days. | Don't touch students other than shaking hands upon introduction or when assisting them if they are injured or in harm's way or to prevent them harming another. |
| Do ensure that a qualified first aid officer is available at orientation camps. | Don't travel alone in a car with a student unless such a situation cannot be avoided and/or unless parental permission has been granted. |
| Do use mature discretion when considering whether to touch/hold/comfort a distressed student. | Do not use corporal punishment. |
| Do seek advice from your manager/supervisor should you have any doubt about appropriate behaviour. | Do not place yourself in a position where a student may claim that you have behaved inappropriately toward them, without witness/es. |

Responsibilities

The positions of Volunteer Local Coordinator and Volunteer Area Coordinator at Student Exchange Australia New Zealand are volunteer positions. This means that, if you accept one of these roles, you perform all duties on a voluntary basis and you will not receive remuneration or payment for your work, other than reasonable reimbursement of expenses as detailed in the most recent Coordinator Reimbursement document.

Neither Student Exchange Australia New Zealand or you (the Volunteer Coordinator) intend any employment or contractual relationship to be created (i.e. you are not an employee, independent contractor or consultant at Student Exchange Australia New Zealand). If this changes at any time, and there is a possibility that you might undertake paid work for the organisation, we will discuss this and document the arrangement in a formal employment contract, contract for services or other arrangement.

However, you undertake your responsibilities within the framework of the law and lawful instructions from SEANZ. You are expected to support the Mission of SEANZ and have a responsibility to meet the high standards of professional and ethical behaviour required by SEANZ, the students, their families and the wider community.

You must be mindful of the following principles as part of your daily work and in your interactions with children:

- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal child's self-identification)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability

Interactions with Students

It is expected that you will be a caring, compassionate adult who takes an interest in your students and who sets appropriate boundaries within those adult-child relationships. You must be aware that your interactions with students are based on a trusting relationship arising from the nature of the work, and that those relationships are open to scrutiny.

You must always treat students with respect. Involvement of children and young people in decisions about actions and interventions that affect them can increase their effectiveness. (ref: p 25 of NSW Education Department *Protecting and supporting children and young people procedures*). There is no place for sarcasm, derogatory remarks, offensive comments or any other inappropriate conduct that may result in emotional distress to a child.

You must always treat students in a consistent manner without inappropriate familiarity, favouritism or spending 'special time' with a student.

Social interactions between you and students outside of SEANZ related activities can be problematic and may lead to allegations or complaints against you. You are to seek guidance from the National Director/Program Manager if a personal relationship exists with the student's host or natural family.

You should, whenever possible, endeavour not to drive a student in your car unless in the company of other adult/s or if you have specific permission. In the event of an emergency, you should attempt, where possible, to report the matter to the Program Manager prior to the journey commencing.

You should avoid, as far as possible, situations where you are alone with a student. In the conduct of your duties, you may be required to work in a one-to-one situation with a student. Where possible ensure that a responsible adult is aware that you are having a one-to-one interaction with a student, leave doors open and maintain visibility into the room.

You must not, under any circumstances, engage in intimate and/or sexual relationships with a student or engage in any conduct of a sexual nature with a student. It is irrelevant whether the relationship is heterosexual or homosexual, consensual or non-consensual or condoned by parents or caregivers. Your age, and that of the student, is irrelevant.

In your pastoral care role, you must be cautious of the content and context of your discussions with students and must not discuss matters of a sexual nature relating to himself or herself.

Should any student engage, or attempt to engage, in inappropriate behaviour of a sexual nature with you, then immediate steps must be taken to discourage the student and the matter should be immediately reported to the National Director/Program Manager.

You must notify the National Director/Program Manager immediately should you suspect a situation involving any form of reportable conduct or concern of risk of harm to students. You must also be aware of individual mandatory reporting requirements under the various state/territory Acts concerning the welfare of young people. It is not your responsibility to investigate allegations or suspicions of a child protection nature. Investigating suspected concerns is the responsibility of state bodies such as community services and the police. (ref: p 11 NSW Education Department Protecting and supporting children and young people procedures).

Maintaining Professional Boundaries

The following self-assessment may assist in assessing the application of professional boundaries:

- Am I dealing in a different manner with a particular student than with others under the same circumstances?
- Would I do or say this if a colleague or parent was present?
- Is my dress/availability/language different from normal with a particular student(s)?
- Are the consequences of my actions likely to have negative outcomes?
- Are my personal feelings translating into inappropriate actions?
- Could my conduct with a student be perceived as demeaning or belittling?

You are required to immediately bring to the attention of the National Director/Program Manager any potential, perceived or actual contraventions of any of these boundaries set out in this document/policy, whether by yourself or a colleague.

Duty of Care

SEANZ owes a duty of care to its students. You are expected to take all reasonable steps to protect students from risk of harm. You will exercise with diligence, the duty of care that you owe to a student. This may require making formal notifications/reports to government agencies as well as referring matters of concern to relevant personnel within SEANZ.

You are also expected to cooperate with SEANZ to maintain a workplace environment that is positive, open and healthy for members of our community. You have a significant role to play in achieving and maintaining this objective.

Your supervisory role is aimed at ensuring students are safe and well supported and enhancing a student's educational opportunities and building self-esteem.

Supervision is an integral part of your responsibility during residential orientations. You must actively supervise your designated area, be vigilant and constantly mobile. Punctuality is an essential element of this compliance.

You should be alerted to bullying or any other form of harassment or discriminatory behaviour, act on and report incidents.

Ill or injured students should be attended to by the supervising staff member. Should additional assistance be required a first-aid officer should be contacted.

You should remain with students at afterhours activities (e.g. residential orientations).

Where you are involved in the supervision of students in overnight, residential facilities must carefully follow and implement the agreed policies and protocols dictated by the venue and SEANZ to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students.

Culturally safe environments

Student Exchange Australia New Zealand is committed to supporting students to express their cultural rights. Whether from Australia or overseas, SEANZ supports students to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights while respecting and enjoying their host community's culture. We promote the empowerment, participation and rights of children.

SEANZ is committed to helping exchange students learn about Indigenous culture and history. We act on this commitment by ensuring that our staff, volunteers, students and host families participate in inductions or orientations which contain content that is inclusive and sensitive to Indigenous culture and history. We commit to the cultural safety of our Indigenous people and work together with our participants and overseas partners to confront and eliminate racism.

By undertaking the above, we aim to promote cultural rights and safety of Indigenous children so that their unique identities and experience are respected and valued. We value all our participants and host families and, as per our Mission, we provide opportunities to enhance their future potential.

Moreover, SEANZ works to facilitate that our participants, their families, host families and our staff and volunteers are representative of the diverse nature of the societies in which we operate. We promote equity and respect diversity and strive to ensure that our policies and procedures do not exclude anyone who is otherwise eligible to participate on our programs.

Regulatory Compliance

SEANZ programs in Australia are governed by the **“National Guidelines for the Operation of Secondary Student Exchange Programs in Australia (Revised 2022)”**. These guidelines have been adopted by each state and territory and are in force from January 1st, 2022. SEANZ programs in New Zealand are governed by the New Zealand Ministry of Education’s Code of Practice. In addition, SEANZ has adopted the Victorian Child Safe Standards enacted from January 1st, 2022. Copies of regulatory guidelines are available on request. You are expected to comply with regulatory requirements at all times. Near enough is not good enough.

Any instances of non-compliance must be immediately rectified and brought to the attention of the relevant Program Manager and/or National Director. SEANZ conducts regular internal audits to verify compliance across all areas of our business. Please see Appendix 3.

Physical Contact with Students

You should be aware that corporal punishment is prohibited. Corporal punishment involves the application of physical force to punish or correct a student - unless that physical contact is reasonable and necessary for the protection of any person. When physical contact with a student is necessary you must exercise caution to ensure that the contact is appropriate and acceptable for the duty to be performed.

Physical contact with students which may be appropriate includes:

- Comforting an upset student;
- Assessing a student who has been injured
- Guiding a student in a non-threatening manner;
- Tapping a student on the shoulder to gain his/her attention after verbal requests were unsuccessful; and
- Protecting a student from imminent danger to himself/herself or to others.

The physical contact referred to above is only acceptable if the contact was reasonable for the purpose of discipline, management or care of the student. The contact must also be appropriate given the age, maturity, health or other characteristics of the student.

The use of physical intervention is restricted to occasions when the student, other students, staff, Local Coordinators or others are being harmed or are in imminent danger of being harmed. You are responsible and accountable for the manner in which you exercise that authority.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is the preservation of privileged information.

SEANZ expects you to respect the privacy of our participants (students and host families) and to maintain their personal, medical, academic and financial information as confidential. All such records must be treated as confidential. SEANZ safeguards the access, use, storage and archiving of electronic and hard copy student and host family applications, files and documents containing personal information. By necessity, personal and private information is disclosed in a professional working relationship to conduct our business between parties authorised to receive and communicate such information.

You should be aware of, respect and adhere to, the established lines of communication recommended by SEANZ's support network. This ensures that information about our students and families is not communicated to people outside of that network and ensures that our Privacy Policy is maintained.

In any matters where you are in doubt as to the requirements of confidentiality, you should seek the advice of your Program Manager or the National Director without discussing the matter with any other person.

This policy is not intended to prevent disclosure of information where disclosure is required by law.

Unacceptable Conduct

Conduct which is contrary to this document/policy may amount to a reportable conduct investigation under state/territory legislation. Unacceptable conduct may result in disciplinary action by SEANZ or, in some circumstances, referral to police or other agencies.

Mandatory Reporting

SEANZ adheres to the mandatory reporting guidelines promoted in “Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse” Resource Sheet 3, provided by the Australian Institute of Family Studies. Table 1 of the Resource Sheet lists each state and territory in Australia and provides details of:

- who is mandated to notify
- what is to be notified
- maltreatment types for which it is mandatory to report
- the relevant section(s) of Acts/Regulations.

SEANZ adheres to the New Zealand Ministry of Education Code of Practice for Secondary Exchange Organisations. This Code is available on request.

In some states/territories of Australia it is a legal requirement to report any suspicion of child abuse to the relevant authorities.

Responsibilities regarding the safety, welfare or wellbeing of children and young people do not cease once a report is made. It is the responsibility of all staff and Local Coordinators to use their professional resources and capabilities to provide support appropriate to their role and identify and respond to any concerns for the child or young person. (ref: p 24 of NSW Ed Dept *Protecting and supporting children and young people procedures*).

You are required to escalate any concerns about mandatory reporting immediately to the National Director/Program Manager who will work with you on immediate communications with police or other authorities. If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000 (in Australia) or 111 (in New Zealand).