

Child Safety Code of Conduct

We are committed to having an environment that is safe for all children, where child abuse and harm are not tolerated. Child safety is a priority for the Tourette Syndrome Association of Australia (TSAA) and the prevention and reporting of abuse is supported and encouraged. All staff, volunteers and contractors are responsible for promoting the safety, wellbeing and empowerment of children. The TSAA recognises that discrimination can harm children and we treat all children with dignity and respect.

This Code of Conduct sets our expectations for positive child safe behaviours that we ask staff, volunteers and contractors to demonstrate. It also identifies behaviours that we consider unacceptable and not permitted in the organisation. This helps children participate safely in our events and services and have fun.

Tourette Syndrome (TS) is a neurological disorder, which is characterised by rapid, repetitive and involuntary muscle movements and vocalisations called "tics". Both physical and vocal tics can sometimes appear to be aggressive and/or sexually inappropriate. Whilst acknowledging that the person with TS is doing these tics involuntarily, it is also important to acknowledge that tics can sometimes cause harm to others, both physically and emotionally. At camps and support group catch-ups these tics are usually taken with good humour and understanding amongst attendees, however it is important that all staff, volunteers and contractors take seriously any complaints or incidents or harm resulting from tics. It is important to note that assault, including sexual assault, is a criminal offence and the perpetrator may be held accountable under the law. This is regardless of the involuntary nature of perpetrator's tics or their disability if they (or their parent/guardian) fails to put mitigations in place to reduce the risk of harm.

There is no single approach for dealing with this issue. Strategies for addressing complaints and incidents regarding tics include:

- Putting distance between the person with the tic and the person being harmed,
- Briefing new attendees at camps and support group catch-ups on the types of tics they may be exposed to and what to do if they feel unsafe,
- Asking anyone with tics that might harm others to speak to the camp coordinator or support group leader about strategies that can be put in place, and
- Requiring that a person with aggressive tics be accompanied by a parent or carer, regardless of age.

If in doubt, a Camp Coordinator or Support Group Leader should speak to a member of the TSAA Committee for advice on how to handle a particular situation.

Not following standards of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is a breach of this Code of Conduct and may result in disciplinary action. Some behaviours on their own may not be a serious breach of the Code of Conduct but together may indicate a concerning pattern of behaviour that poses a risk to the safety of children. Our disciplinary procedure provides further information on processes that will be followed if breaches are identified.

All TSAA staff, volunteers and contractors must always follow these standards of behaviour, including at support group catch-ups, camps, and other face-to-face events, phone and online support services, and when engaging with TSAA members and their families at any time.

Where the person signing this Code of Conduct has Tourette Syndrome, items in the section below marked with an asterix (*) refer to behaviour outside of tics, such as coprolalia or tics that involve touching another person, as these tics are not voluntary.

I WILL:

- Take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse.
- Take disclosures of harm or abuse made by a child seriously.
- Raise concerns with the Committee if risks to child safety are identified. Report and act on any concerns or observed breaches of this Code of Conduct.
- Participate in all compulsory training and professional development including training on child safety and wellbeing.
- Treat all children and young people with respect, regardless of race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, cultural background, financial situation, disability or other characteristics.
- Consider the different needs of all children participating in TSAA services and events, support them to participate fully in programs and help them and their families feel included.
- Make Aboriginal children and families feel included and welcome at the TSAA and support Aboriginal children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights.
- Never be racist* towards anyone at the TSAA and report any instances of racism I become aware of.
- Help the TSAA be a place where people of all cultures feel safe and included.
- Listen to children and respond to them if they feel unsafe.
- Value children and young people's ideas and opinions.
- Promote friendships and encourage children and young people to support their peers.
- Involve children and young people in decisions about the activities they participate in through the TSAA and welcome the participation of parents and carers in these decisions.
- Report any conflicts of interest I have (such as an outside relationship with a child) that may affect my ability to perform my role.
- Respect the privacy of children and their families, including keeping all personal information confidential unless required by law to share it.
- Inform parents and carers if there are situations that need to be safely managed but are outside the boundaries of this Code of Conduct (such as accompanying another person's child to a support group catch-up if their parent or guardian can't attend).
- Ensure breaches of this Code are reported to the relevant Child Safety Officer or TSAA Committee immediately.
- Comply with all relevant Australian and state and territory legislation and our child safe policies and procedures.
- Uphold the rights of the child and always prioritise their needs.

I WILL NOT:

- Condone or participate in illegal, unsafe, abusive or harmful behaviour towards children in physical or online environments – this includes physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, grooming, cyber bullying, sharing inappropriate content, neglect or sexual misconduct.
- Ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse or harm.
- Exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues.
- Use hurtful or offensive behaviour or language with children.*

- Fail to report information to police if I know a child has been abused.
- Touch children in a way that is unnecessary or unsuitable* and falls outside what is reasonable to engage in the activities of the TSAA.
- Engage online with a child in a way that is unnecessary or unsuitable and falls outside what is reasonable to engage in the activities of the TSAA.
- Persistently criticise and/or denigrate a child.
- Deliberately prevent a child from forming friendships.
- Verbally assault a child or create a climate of fear*.
- Offer children and young people alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs.
- Show children pornographic images.
- Share details of sexual experiences with a child.
- Use sexual language or gestures in the presence of children.*
- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with children.*
- Do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves such as changing clothes.
- Develop 'special' relationships with specific children or show favouritism through the provision of gifts or unnecessary or unsuitable attention.
- Have unauthorised contact with children and young people online, on social media or by phone or email.
- Take photographs, screenshots or share images of children involved in activities that are not authorised by the TSAA.
- Be alone with a child when there is no professional reason for doing so.
- Engage in babysitting, mentoring and/or tutoring a child that is a member of the TSAA out of work hours (without Committee approval for this kind of secondary employment).
- Enter changing facilities without first knocking.

If I suspect that this Code of Conduct has been breached by another person in the organisation:

I WILL:

- Act to prioritise the best interests of the child or children.
- Promptly take actions to ensure the child or children are safe.
- As soon as possible report the incident or concerns using the TSAA Child Safety and Wellbeing Incidents and Complaints Procedure.
- Maintain the privacy of those involved, following TSAA record keeping, privacy and information sharing procedures.

Complaints about a breach of this Code of Conduct must be reported to the relevant TSAA Child Safety Officer, or via the complaints email: complaints@tourette.org.au. Should I feel that there is a conflict of interest in reporting to the relevant TSAA Child Safety Officer (such as a breach or conflict of interest by the Child Safety Officer), I will report it to a TSAA Committee member.

Some breaches of this Code of Conduct may need to be reported to the Police, or to the relevant state or territory authorities. Our Child Safety and Wellbeing Incidents and Complaints Procedure provides more information about our reporting obligations to external authorities as well as describing protections and confidentiality provisions for anyone making a report. The procedure can be found in the Policies section of our website.

Staff and volunteers who breach our Code of Conduct may also be subject to disciplinary action. This can include increased supervision, appointment to an alternative role, suspension or termination from the organisation.

PLEASE NOTE:

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 the police by calling 000 or going to their local police station. Failure to disclose the information may be a criminal offence.

I have read and understand this Code of Conduct and agree to abide by its terms.

Name:

Signature:

Document History

Version No.	Date	Author	Description
0.1	3/12/2022	Sandra Gleeson	First draft for Committee review
0.2	14/12/2022	Sandra Gleeson	Approved by Committee 12/12/2022, subject to changes related to tics. CM and HL to approve changes.
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1.0	14/2/2023	Sandra Gleeson	Approved by Committee at meeting 13/2/2023.