

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	
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.

Inclusive Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Purpose

Student Exchange Australia New Zealand provides a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for all children, including Aboriginal and Torres strait children, children unable to live at home, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children, LGBTIQ+ children and young people, and children with disabilities. It outlines our commitment to meeting the unique needs of these groups and ensuring their safety and wellbeing in all aspects of our service.

This policy applies to all staff, host families, local coordinators, contractors, and third parties working with Student Exchange Australia New Zealand and to all children and young people engaged with our student exchange programs and services.

Student Exchange Australia New Zealand is dedicated to fostering an environment that respects and supports the diverse backgrounds and needs of all children. We are committed to addressing and accommodating the unique requirements of Aboriginal and Torres strait children, children unable to live at home, CALD children, LGBTIQ+ children and young people, and children with disabilities.

Aboriginal and Torres strait Children

Cultural Respect and Safety

Cultural Competence:

Provide training for staff on Aboriginal and Torres strait cultures, histories, and traditions. Ensure cultural safety and respect in all interactions with Aboriginal and Torres strait children and their families

Culturally Appropriate Practices:

Support Aboriginal and Torres strait children in maintaining cultural connections through community involvement and cultural activities.

Support for Children Unable to Live at Home

Stable and Safe Environments:

Although extremely rare we will ensure that children unable to live at home are placed in stable, safe, and nurturing host families that meet their emotional and physical needs.

Tailored Support:

Student Exchange Australia New Zealand will provide individualised support for children in out-of-home care, addressing their specific needs and circumstances. Involve the child in the development of their support plan whenever possible whilst on exchange.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Children

Language and Communication

Cultural Sensitivity:

Train staff to understand and respect cultural differences and practices. Ensure that programs and services are inclusive of diverse cultural backgrounds through the Child Safe Standards Training and other training materials.

Community Engagement

Cultural Celebrations:

Recognize and celebrate cultural diversity through events, activities, and programs that reflect the backgrounds of CALD children welcoming them to attend our focus groups and other Student Exchange Australia New Zealand forums.

Family Involvement:

Engage CALD families in the development and delivery of services, ensuring that their cultural needs and preferences are considered whilst on student exchange programs.

LGBTIQ+ Children and Young People

Affirmation and Support

Inclusive Environment:

We create an inclusive environment that affirms and respects the identities of LGBTIQ+ children and young people. We display inclusive signage and materials that reflect diverse sexual orientations and gender identities in our office.

Education and Training

Staff Training:

Offer training for staff on LGBTIQ+ issues, including understanding gender diversity, sexual orientation, and the specific challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ youth.

Policy Implementation:

Ensure that anti-discrimination policies explicitly include protections for LGBTIQ+ individuals and are actively enforced.

Children with Disabilities

Accessibility and Inclusion

Physical Accessibility:

Ensure that physical environments are accessible to children with disabilities, including appropriate facilities and accommodations wherever possible on our student exchange programs.

Inclusive Programs:

We implement student exchange programs that are inclusive of children with disabilities to destinations that provide necessary supports, such as liaising with international partners natural

parents, students, schools, partners, host families and local coordinators who can provide the correct duty of care and inclusion for children with disabilities.

Individualised Support

Personalised Plans:

As each exchange program is different, we endeavour to provide individualized support plans for children with disabilities to address their specific needs whilst on exchange programs and ensure their full inclusion and participation in activities wherever possible.

Family Involvement:

Work closely with natural parents, students, partners, host families and local coordinators to understand and meet the needs of children with disabilities. Incorporate family input into support plans and service delivery.

Physical Contact with Students

Prohibition of Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment is strictly prohibited. Corporal punishment is defined as the use of physical force to discipline or correct a student. This includes any physical actions intended to punish, control, or correct behaviour through force or pain. The only exceptions to this rule are situations where physical contact is necessary to protect any person from harm. Such situations are rare and must be approached with extreme caution.

Guidelines for Necessary Physical Contact

When physical contact with a student is deemed necessary, it is crucial to ensure that such contact is both appropriate and acceptable for the task at hand. Physical contact with a student should only occur under the following conditions:

Comforting an Upset Student:

Physical contact such as a reassuring hand on the shoulder or a gentle pat may be used to comfort a student who is visibly distressed or upset. This contact should be brief, non-intrusive, and intended to provide emotional support.

Assessing an Injured Student:

If a student has been injured, physical contact may be necessary to assess the extent of the injury. This should be done carefully and with the student's consent where possible, ensuring that the contact is solely for the purpose of providing assistance or first aid.

Guiding a Student:

Physical guidance may be appropriate when directing a student to a different location or helping them navigate a space. This should be done in a non-threatening manner, using minimal contact and ensuring that the student feels secure and respected.

Gaining Attention:

In situations where verbal requests have not been successful, a gentle, non-invasive tap on the shoulder may be used to gain a student's attention. The contact should be light and brief, and the intention should be to redirect the student's focus without causing discomfort or distress.

Protecting from Imminent Danger:

Physical intervention may be necessary to prevent a student from imminent harm or danger, whether to themselves or others. This includes intervening to stop unsafe actions or behaviours. Such interventions should be proportionate, focused solely on safety, and performed with the utmost care to avoid any unnecessary force.

Criteria for Acceptable Physical Contact

Physical contact is only acceptable if it meets the following criteria:

Reasonable Purpose:

The contact must be reasonable and justified by the need for discipline, management, or care of the student. It should never be used as a form of punishment or control.

Appropriateness:

The nature and extent of the physical contact must be appropriate considering the student's age, maturity, health, and individual characteristics. For example, what is acceptable for a younger child may not be appropriate for an older student.

Use of Physical Intervention

The use of physical intervention is restricted to situations where it is necessary to ensure the safety of the student, other students, staff members, Local Coordinators, or others. Physical intervention should only be employed when:

Harm or Imminent Danger:

There is an immediate risk of harm or danger to any individual involved. The intervention must be focused solely on preventing harm.

Accountability:

You are responsible and accountable for any physical contact or intervention. This means ensuring that the action is justified, appropriate, and executed with respect for the student's dignity and safety.

Documentation and Reporting

Any instances of physical contact or intervention should be documented thoroughly. This includes detailing the context, the nature of the contact, and the outcomes. Reports should be made to a designated authority within the organization, and any concerns or incidents should be addressed in accordance with established procedures.

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).

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.

Code of Conduct for Online Behaviour for Staff, Local Coordinators and Host Families

To ensure a safe, respectful, and professional online environment for all members of our community, including staff, local coordinators and host families.

General Principles

Respect and Professionalism: All interactions should be conducted with respect and professionalism. Be mindful of language and tone.

Confidentiality: Protect sensitive information. Do not share personal or confidential details about others without consent.

Integrity: Represent yourself and Student Exchange Australia New Zealand honestly. Avoid engaging in misleading or deceptive practices.

Compliance: Follow all relevant laws, regulations, and organizational policies related to online behaviour.

Online Conduct

Appropriate Communication: Use respectful language and maintain professionalism in all online communications, including emails, social media, and messaging platforms.

Privacy and Security: Ensure that any online platforms used are secure and that privacy settings are appropriately managed. Avoid sharing personal information on public forums.

Harassment and Discrimination: Do not engage in or tolerate any form of harassment, bullying, or discrimination. Report any concerns to the appropriate authorities.

Content Sharing: Ensure that any content shared online (including posts, images, and documents) adheres to copyright laws and is appropriate for the intended audience.

Use of Technology

Authorized Access: Only use organizational technology and online accounts for their intended purposes. Do not share passwords or allow unauthorized access.

Monitoring and Reporting: Be aware that online communications may be monitored. Report any suspicious or inappropriate activity immediately.

Training and Awareness

Ongoing Training: Participate in any required training related to online conduct and safety.

Stay Informed: Keep up to date with best practices for online safety and the latest security measures.

Code of Conduct for Online Behaviour for Students

To promote a safe, respectful, and positive online environment for our inbound and outbound students whilst on exchange, ensuring responsible use of digital tools and platforms.

General Principles

Respect for Others: Treat everyone with respect and kindness online. Avoid using language or behaviour that could hurt or offend others.

Privacy: Protect your own and others' privacy, especially those within the host family. Do not share personal information without permission and be cautious when communicating online.

Honesty: Be truthful in all online interactions. Do not engage in cheating, plagiarism, or any form of dishonesty.

Online Conduct

Appropriate Behaviour: Use respectful language and behaviour in all online communications. Avoid any form of bullying, harassment, or exclusion.

Content Sharing: Share only content that is appropriate for the intended audience and does not violate any copyrights or intellectual property laws.

Reporting Issues: Report any incidents of bullying, harassment, or inappropriate behaviour to your local coordinator, school, host family or program coordinator immediately.

Use of Technology

Responsible Use: Use school-provided technology and online resources for educational purposes only. Follow all guidelines and instructions for their use.

Security: Keep your account information and passwords private. Do not share your login details with anyone.

Digital Citizenship

Awareness: Understand the impact of your digital footprint and strive to contribute positively to online communities.

Ethical Behaviour: Engage in online activities ethically and responsibly, reflecting the values of yourself, your school and the community.

Support and Resources

Seeking Help: If you encounter any problems or need assistance, reach out to your local coordinator, program coordinator or school, or call **Student Exchange Australia New Zealand on 02 9997 0700 (Australia) or 0800 440 079 (New Zealand)**

I have read, understood and agree to abide by the Student Exchange Australia New Zealand Ltd Code of Conduct and acknowledge my responsibility to report to the National Director/Program Manager any concerns I have about a child's welfare.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____