



CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON SAFETY POLICY (Abridged Version)

Policy Area:	People and Culture	Revision Date:	March 2021
Endorsed by:	Big Brothers Big Sisters BOM & CEO	Endorsement Date:	29 April 2021
Responsible Officer:	Operations Manager	Review Date:	One year from endorsement

1. Statement of Intention

Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia is a Child Safe Organisation

Big Brothers Big Sisters Limited (BBBS Aust) and its staff, volunteers and contractors have a moral duty and, in some circumstances, a legal requirement* to protect the safety and wellbeing of young people accessing its programs.

This duty:

- Includes taking all reasonable steps to prevent all forms of child abuse and to ensure any reports of abuse or harm are promptly made and managed.
- Applies to:
 - (a) incidents involving a family member or person known or unknown to young people accessing provided programs and
 - (b) incidents involving employees, volunteers or contractors of BBBS Aust. and where those employees or volunteers are responsible for the delivery of BBBS Aust. programs.

In addition to this Policy, our commitment to child safety includes:

- An understanding of child abuse and key red flags or negative indicators.
- Documented policies and procedures for employee, volunteer and contractor selection to ensure, to the greatest degree possible, that only the most suitable persons are recruited to work with young people.



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- The appointment of suitably qualified employees and ongoing staff supervision and professional development.
- Child safety/protective behaviours training aimed at safeguarding young people, identifying and reporting child abuse**
- Initial and ongoing training for volunteers.
- Ongoing relationship support and supervision including monitoring of compliance with child safety policies.
- Accreditation of all staff and volunteers including the review of employee and volunteer files.
- A duty of care to protect participants and avoid acts or omissions which could reasonably be foreseen to injure others.
- Continuous improvement in program delivery to minimise the risk of abuse to young people.

BBBS Aust. Child and Young Person Safety Policy complies with standards set by The Australian Council for Children & Youth Organisations (ACCYO).

2. Scope of Policy

This Policy applies to:

- All employees, volunteers or contractors appointed by BBBS Aust.
- All employees and volunteers appointed by BBBS Aust to its Programs.
- Young people and their parent/guardians/carer who are current or past clients of BBBS Aust. Programs.

This Policy applies to any event that is:

- Known to have occurred.
- Suspected to have occurred.
- Ongoing or likely to be ongoing..



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- Perpetrated by a person who is deceased.

Staff and volunteers are obliged to operate in accordance with BBBS Aust. organisational policies and procedures.

3. Definitions

3(a) BBBS Aust.

BBBS Aust. is the national body representing BBBS Aust. Mentoring and other Young Person Connection and Support programs operating within the territory of Australia. Its principal functions include: supporting the growth of BBBS Aust. within Australia; the establishment of minimum standards for program delivery and quality assurance through its accreditation of the delivery of programs.

3(b) Members

Members refer to those program delivery organisations delivering BBBS Aust. Programs who are members of BBBS Aust.

3(c) Young Person/People

A young person refers to any child or young person under the age of 18 years.

3(d) Employees, Consultants and Contractors

Employees refer to employees, consultants and contractors appointed to BBBS Aust. Programs. Consultants and contractors refer to those individuals who have direct contact with young people.

3(e) Volunteers

Volunteers refer to volunteers and students appointed to BBBS Aust. Programs. Students refer to individuals undertaking a student placement or work experience.

3(f) Child Protection

Child Protection refers to the statutory authority in each State responsible for the investigation of reports where there is a concern that a young person is at significant harm and the young person's parent/guardian or caregiver is unwilling or unable to protect the young person from harm. If safety cannot be ensured within the family, Child Protection may take matters before the Children's Court.



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3(g) Mandatory Reporting

Legislation which specifies who is required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse is known as mandatory reporting. Individuals mandated to report varies between states and territories.

3(h) Report

A report refers to any allegation, suspicion, disclosure or complaint of child abuse or harm made by any person in relation to a young person accessing a BBBS Aust. Program.

3(i) Harm

Harm is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a young person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused.

3(j) Child Abuse

The expression 'child abuse' means activity or deliberate or careless inactivity, which causes harm of a significant nature to a young person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. Different types of abuse can frequently concur. There are five main categories of child abuse: ²

1. Physical abuse

Physically abusive behaviour refers to any non-accidental physically aggressive act towards a young person.

- May be intentional or may be the inadvertent result of physical punishment.
- Physically abusive behaviours include: shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, and kicking.

2. Sexual abuse

- The use of a minor - female and male - for sexual gratification by an adult, adolescent or older child.
- Is most commonly perpetrated by someone known to the young person such as a parent, sibling or other family member.



- Includes a wide range of sexual activities: fondling genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal and/or anal penetration, penetration by a finger, penis or other object, voyeurism, exhibitionism and exposure, and exploitation through pornography or prostitution.

3. Neglect

- Failure (usually by a parent) to provide a level of care that meets a young person's needs.
- Physical neglectful behaviours include: failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, supervision, hygiene or medical attention.

4. Psychological (Emotional) abuse

- Commonly known as 'emotional abuse'.
- Includes acts of commission and omission.
- Refers to inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts and a failure to provide adequate non-physical nurture or emotional availability.
- Often involves a pattern of abuse and is not a single incident.
- Includes rejecting, ignoring, isolating, terrorising, corrupting, verbal abuse, belittlement, and bullying

5. Witnessing family violence

- Previously included in psychological maltreatment, however, there is growing support for it being treated as a separate type of maltreatment.
- Witnessing family violence refers to a young person being present (hearing or seeing) whilst a parent or sibling is subjected to physical abuse, sexual abuse or psychological maltreatment, or is visually exposed to the damage caused to persons or property by a family member's violent behaviour.

The common factor underlying all child abuse is the misuse of power. Misuse of power takes place when a more powerful person, either physically or psychologically, takes advantage of the authority or power they have over a vulnerable person. This includes situations between two children, a child and a young person, a child/ young person and a volunteer and a young person and an employee or other adult.



4. Guiding principles

- Young people have a right to be protected and to feel safe at all times.
- Young people and their families have a right to be heard, supported and have their concerns acted upon and resolved.
- The best interests of the young person, including their safety and protection, will remain paramount including where the rights of others conflict.
- Board members, employees and volunteers of BBBS Aust. have a responsibility to conduct themselves at all times in accordance with this Policy and, as appropriate, attend training and updates regarding the implementation of this Policy and/or child safety.
- BBBS Aust. and its staff and volunteers have a moral duty and, in some circumstances, a legal requirement to:
 - Report alleged crimes to the Police for proper investigation (**Refer to 'Reporting Procedures' in Section 8**)
 - Notify Child Protection of protective concerns regarding young people. In some circumstances, staff and volunteers will be mandated by legislation to notify Child Protection. Staff and volunteers may decide, in good faith, to notify Child Protection even if it is not mandated by law to do so.
 - Cooperate with all relevant authorities in their investigation of child abuse.
 - Comply with all relevant laws, regulations and standards of practice.
- All reports will be managed in a professional and appropriate manner sensitive to the dignity, confidentiality, respect and fairness of those involved.
- All reports will be treated with due seriousness.
- Staff and volunteers will respect the wishes of the young person and their parent/guardian subject to legal obligations and any overriding moral duty as outlined in this Policy.
- A person who makes a report in good faith will be protected from victimisation as a result of making the report.



5. Roles and Responsibilities

5(a) BBBS Aust. Education

BBBS Aust. has a responsibility to:

- Ensure this Policy, and the process for its implementation, is reviewed annually.
- Support staff and volunteers in their response to a report, in accordance with the principles and procedures outlined in this Policy.
- Promptly respond to any legislative or regulatory changes and advise staff and volunteers.

5(b) Board of Directors/Management (governing Members)

Board Members have a responsibility to:

- Upon receiving a report, take the necessary action in accordance with this Policy.
- Promptly respond to any advice received from BBBS Aust. concerning legislative or regulatory changes.

5(c) BBBS Aust. Management

BBBS Aust. Management has a responsibility to ensure:

- All employees, contractors and volunteers receive a copy of this Policy and sign a form acknowledging they have read, understood and agree to abide by this Policy.
- All employees and volunteers comply with this Policy and Code of Conduct.
- This Policy is reviewed on an annual basis.
- Volunteers, contractors and relevant employees have the opportunity to:
 - Participate in a structured induction process upon commencement of their employment or voluntary placement.



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- Receive regular supervision in accordance with BBBS Aust. Staff Supervision and Match Supervision Procedures.
 - Participate in a formal performance appraisal at least once each year. For volunteers, this is undertaken during their Annual Reviews.
 - Participate in ongoing training to improve their knowledge of child safety, abuse and reporting.
 - Attend training and updates regarding the implementation of this Policy and/or child safety.
 - Contribute to the development, evaluation and review of this Policy.
- The safety and protection of any employee or volunteer involved in making a report (i.e. protected from recriminations, discrimination etc.
 - Suspected crimes are reported to the Police and protective concerns to Child Protection
 - The appropriate management of conduct that does not require notification to Child Protection or the Police. That is, reports that do not constitute crimes or protective concerns, yet still involve inappropriate and/or undesirable behaviour towards a young person. (e.g. not providing adequate supervision or yelling/swearing at a young person). This may involve a warning, training, counselling, termination of one's employment or voluntary placement or other disciplinary action as deemed appropriate.
 - Within 24 hours, BBBS Aust. Is advised of any report against an employee or volunteer, and is provided with regular updates regarding the progress and outcome of any investigation and/or disciplinary action. A Member may elect to limit the disclosure of identifying information to BBBS Aust however, non-identifying details will be required for the purposes of risk management.
 - Adherence to any contractual requirement to inform a funding body (e.g. Department of Human Services) of any alleged incident.
 - Copies of subpoenaed records are kept on file.

6. Code of Conduct

Employees, volunteers and contractors are required to:

- Where instigated by a young person in conversation), demonstrate appropriate sensitivity and discretion when disclosing personal information of a controversial nature (e.g. personal experiences which may be perceived as condoning certain behaviour e.g. drug use). Demonstrating sensitivity requires maintaining an awareness of the young person's age, maturity, life circumstances, culture, religion, his/her parental



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beliefs/attitudes etc. Volunteers are required to inform their nominated BBS Aust. Coordinator or Manager where discussions of this kind arise or speak with their Manager prior to any personal disclosure.

- Demonstrate appropriate boundaries and sensitivity should a young person raise any issue pertaining to sex education (this may involve the young person instigating a conversation of a sexual nature). Demonstrating sensitivity requires maintaining an awareness of the young person's age, maturity, life circumstances, culture, religion, his/her parental beliefs/attitudes etc. Volunteers are required to seek advice from their BBBS Aust Coordinator or Manager where discussions of this kind arise. The BBBS Aust. Coordinator or Manager may contact the parent/guardian to inform him or her of the issues being raised by the young person.
- Maintain sole responsibility for the supervision of the young person during all outings and not release a young person to anyone other than the authorised parent/guardian or an individual authorised by the parent/guardian in writing, including relatives of the young person.
- Immediately notify management of any allegation, suspicion, disclosure or complaint of child abuse.

Employees/Volunteers/Contractors are required not to:

- Engage in inappropriate physical games with a young person.
- Hold, kiss, cuddle or touch a young person in an inappropriate and/or culturally insensitive way. Some young people may find touching or close personal contact threatening. Touching includes massages, rubs, sitting on one's lap and holding hands. Allow the young person to initiate or develop personal contact at their own pace and comfort.
- Make negative, violent or sexually suggestive comments or use inappropriate language, even as a joke.
- Discipline children/young people through the use of emotional, physical or verbal abuse, favouritism, reference to cultural/ ethnic diversity, swearing or withdrawal of basic needs (e.g. food, shelter, emotional warmth), care or attention.
- Electronically transfer inappropriate or sexually suggestive material to a young person's mobile or email address.
- Engage in any behaviour or activity resulting in the sexual, physical or emotional abuse of any young person or adult.



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- Procure or offer any drugs or alcohol to young people nor partake in any illegal substances in the presence of young people.
- Encourage or allow a child/young person to participate in any illegal or inappropriate activity.
- Commence a sexual relationship with a young person or his/ her family or friends regardless of whether the young person is over the age of consent. Any sexual relationship with a young person, their family or friends must be brought to the immediate attention of BBBS Aust. Coordinator or Manager and will result in relationship closure. Where the relationship involves a young person under 18 years of age, where required by law, BBBS Aust. will notify Child Protection and/or the Police.
- Organise/allow any overnight stays for the young person for the duration of the relationship
- Photograph a young person in a compromising position.

The above list is not exhaustive. Other inappropriate behaviour is also unacceptable and must not occur.

7. Recruitment selection of Staff and Volunteers

The following procedures seek to minimise the risk of attracting or recruiting inappropriate employees and volunteers and are mandatory for all positions involving direct contact with young people.

- All advertisements for employment or volunteering refer to BBBS Aust. commitment to safeguarding young people.
- All positions (paid and voluntary) are advertised externally.
- A job description (and corresponding key selection criteria) for all positions, which includes notification that a satisfactory National Criminal Record Check and Working with Children Check (where relevant) are required prior to any offer of paid employment or voluntary placement. *(NB. These are the minimum checks required by BBBS Aust. and its staff and volunteers.*
- An Application Form for volunteer applicants.
- A minimum of one interview prior to acceptance.
- A minimum of three referee checks for preferred applicants and verification of employment history.



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- Where deemed appropriate, a Psychological Profile and/or Home Visit for volunteer applicants recruited for some programs.
- A copy of this Policy is issued to all employees and volunteers within 30 days of their appointment who are subsequently required to sign a form acknowledging they have read, understood and agree to abide by this Policy. A copy of the form is included in the Community-Based Procedures Manual.
- A minimum 3-month probationary period for employees appointed on a permanent basis. *NB. Members may elect a probationary period up to 6 months.*

NB. A 100-point identity check is conducted for employees and volunteers appointed to the BBBS programs.

8. Reporting and Disciplinary Procedures

8(a) Reasonable Grounds for Reporting Abuse

'Reasonable grounds' are what an average person, given his or her training, background and experience, exercising normal and honest judgement, would suspect. It is expected, however, that staff employed to work with young people will have an additional awareness of the signs of child abuse and harm, and therefore a particular responsibility to make a report.

Reasonable grounds for making a report may include:

- A young person discloses or implies that he or she has been abused or harmed.
- Another person (e.g. parent, relative, volunteer or sibling) tells an employee or volunteer that the young person has been abused or is at risk.
- A young person tells an employee or volunteer that he or she knows someone who has been abused or is at risk (it may be that the young person is indirectly referring to themselves).
- The employee or volunteer's observations, or knowledge of a young person's behaviour or situation, leads to the suspicion they are at risk of, or have experienced, abuse and/or harm.
- The young person requires medical services as a result of abuse/harm



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- For young people over the age of 18, BBBS Aust. will consider a number of factors when determining when to make a report. These include:
 - the nature of the abuse/harm and the likelihood of continued risk; of the young person's willingness, or otherwise, to make a report;
 - the young person's capacity to make an informed decision. Where a young person has an intellectual disability, for example, BBBS Aust. has a legal responsibility to make a report or encourage the young person's carer to make a report.
 - whether the young person has younger siblings who are at risk.

8(b) Anonymous Reports

Anonymous reports will be received and investigated by BBBS Aust. and its staff and volunteers to the extent practicable. The value of information given anonymously is significantly less than information from an identifiable informant. Where possible, BBBS Aust. and its volunteers will respect a complainant's request to remain anonymous. However, in some circumstances, it may not be possible to keep information about the report or complainant confidential, such as where physical threats are involved or the law otherwise requires it.

8(c) Confidentiality

Confidentiality is essential to a fair and just process. Only the people involved in the attempted resolution or investigation of a report will have access to information about it. This means that only those people with a genuine role to play in helping to resolve a report should know its details or discuss them.

Where BBBS Aust. or its staff or volunteers have a legal or moral duty to report child abuse or harm, this overrides the duty of confidentiality under this Policy and any other law prohibiting disclosure.

All documentation pertaining to a report will be stored in accordance with BBBS Aust. Privacy Policy. Where records are subpoenaed, copies will be kept on file. BBBS Aust. and its staff will carefully assess any public information it circulates regarding employees or volunteers and the reason for the termination of their employment or volunteer placement.

8(d) False or Malicious Complaints

Any report made in good faith is generally excused from liability, including defamation. People who have reasonable grounds to report abuse or harm are protected from liability. If a civil action is brought against a person who made a report, a person will be legally protected unless he or she acted maliciously or without reasonable grounds for his or her suspicion.



If an employee or volunteer has raised a knowingly false or malicious complaint about another person, they will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action which may include counselling, warnings or termination of one's employment or voluntary placement.

8(e) Documentation

BBBS Aust. has a responsibility to document as fully as possible all reports of child abuse or harm. Employees must document a report using the 'Child/Young Person Safety Report'

8(f) Investigating Reports

The role of BBBS Aust. and its staff in investigating a report against a volunteer or employee is limited to determining that person's fitness and suitability to continue in their position as a volunteer or employee. Where termination of one's employment or voluntary placement is being considered following a report, BBBS Aust. or its staff will provide the volunteer or employee with an opportunity to be heard on why the employment relationship should not be terminated. BBBS Aust. and its staff will not investigate a report against persons who are not employees or volunteers, as there is no requirement to assess their ongoing suitability for employment or voluntary work.

8(g) Reporting Procedure for Parent/Guardians and Young People

A young person (or a parent/guardian) is encouraged to make a report to any BBBS Aust. representative.

8(h) Reporting procedure for employees and volunteers

- Immediately report any incident of abuse or suspected abuse to one's Manager or Management.
- As directed, take all responsible steps to ensure the safety of young person.
- As required, request counselling/de-briefing.

8(i) Reporting Procedure for BBBS Aust. Management (for incidents involving a parent/guardian or other non BBBS Aust. representative)

- Where possible, ensure the young person is protected from further harm.
- According to the nature of the report, immediately assess the appropriate intervention, which may include notifying Child Protection or the Police, or internal management of the incident. Suspected crimes must be



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immediately reported to the Police and protective concerns to Child Protection. *NB. A notification to Child Protection or the Police may be made prior to informing the alleged offender.*

- As appropriate, inform the parent/guardian of any notification to statutory authorities. Provide a brief summary of the material allegations and follow up in writing. Informing the parent/guardian may not be an option where a notification has been made against them.
- Inform relevant employees and provide de-briefing as appropriate.
- Take all responsible steps to provide ongoing support to the young person and their family.
- Complete a 'Child/Young Person Safety Report'

8(j) Reporting Procedure for BBBS Aust. Management (for incidents involving BBBS Aust. volunteers)

- Where possible, ensure the young person is protected from further harm.
- According to the nature of the report, immediately assess the appropriate intervention, which may include notifying the Police or Child Protection, or internal disciplinary action. Suspected crimes must be immediately reported to the Police and protective concerns to Child Protection. *NB. A notification to the Police or Child Protection may be made prior to informing the alleged offender.*
- Where appropriate, suspend or close the relationship (suspension or closure must occur where the Police or Child Protection have been notified). Inform all adult parties to the relationship by registered mail and provide a brief summary of the material allegations. The relationship cannot resume until the matter has been investigated and resolved to the satisfaction of the Member.
- Immediately notify the Chair of the Board prior to or following a notification to the Police or Child Protection.
- Complete a 'Child/Young Person Safety Report'
- As appropriate, inform relevant employees and provide de-briefing.
- Review the relationship file.
- As required:
 - Obtain legal advice.



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- o Inform the organisation's insurance carrier.
- o Provide ongoing support to the young person and their family. Offer to make an appointment or referral to support or medical services.
- o Consider payment for the victim to attend counselling for a specified period of time.
- o Direct any media or public enquiry to BBBS Aust. prior to public comment, BBBS Aust. will liaise with the Member to determine the most appropriate response, including the nominated media spokesperson.

8(k) Disciplinary Procedures for Volunteers

- Where required, suspend or close the relationship. Suspension or closure must occur where the Police or Child Protection have been notified.
- Where the volunteer holds a Working with Children Check, as required by State law, inform the relevant Child Safety Department
- As deemed appropriate, the Member may elect to: warn, offer training or counselling to the volunteer or reinstate or terminate the voluntary placement. A volunteer's placement may be terminated irrespective of whether charges are laid.
- Reinstatement may only occur after all allegations have been dismissed or resolved to the satisfaction of the Member and any authorised interveners, and the volunteer has been assessed as suitable or fit to resume their position.
- The relationship cannot resume until the matter has been investigated and deemed appropriate by the Member.

8(l) Procedure for BBBS Aust. Management (for incidents involving employees)

- Where possible, ensure that the young person is protected from further harm.
- According to the nature of the report, immediately assess the appropriate intervention, which may include notifying the Police or Child Protection, or internal disciplinary action. Suspected crimes must be immediately reported to the Police and protective concerns to Child Protection. *NB. A notification to the Police or Child Protection may be made prior to informing the alleged offender.*



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- Where appropriate, suspend the employee (with full pay for a reasonable period) from all activities or all activities involving direct contact with young people (suspension must immediately occur where the Police or Child Protection have been notified).
- Internally manage conduct that does not require notification to Child Protection or the Police. That is, reports that do not constitute crimes or protective concerns, yet still involve inappropriate and/or undesirable behaviour towards a young person. (e.g. not providing adequate supervision or yelling/swearing at a young person). This may involve a warning, training, counselling, termination of one's employment or voluntary placement or other disciplinary action as deemed appropriate.
- Immediately notify the Chair of the Board prior to or following a notification to the Police or Child Protection
- Complete a 'Child/Young Person Safety Report'.
- As appropriate, inform relevant employees and provide de-briefing
- Inform the parent/guardian of the report and/or notification. Provide a brief summary of the material allegations and follow up in writing.
- As required:
 - Obtain legal advice
 - Inform the organisation's insurance carrier
 - Provide ongoing support to the young person and their family. Offer to make an appointment or referral to support or medical services.
 - Consider payment for the victim to attend counselling for a specified period of time
- Direct any media or public enquiry to BBBS Aust. prior to public comment, BBBS Aust. will liaise with the Member to determine the most appropriate response, including the nominated media spokesperson.

8(m) Disciplinary Procedures for Employees

- Where appropriate, suspend the employee (with full pay for a reasonable period) from all activities or all activities involving or direct contact with young people (suspension must immediately occur where the Police or Child Protection have been notified).



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- Where the employee holds a Working with Children Check, as required by State law, inform the relevant Child Safety Department.
- As deemed appropriate, the Member may elect to: warn, offer training or counselling to the employee or reinstate or terminate their employment. An employee's position may be terminated irrespective of whether charges are laid.
- Reinstatement may only occur after all allegations have been dismissed or resolved to the satisfaction of the Member and any authorised interveners, and the employee has been assessed as suitable or fit to resume their position.

8(n) Procedure for BBBS Aust (for incidents involving employees or volunteers)

The Chief Executive Officer of BBBS Aust. will:

- Report the incident to the Chair of the National Board and Board Members.
- As required, contact lawyers for legal advice and advise its Member.
- Provide ongoing support and advice to its Member.
- Respond to any media enquiry and issue a press release as appropriate.
- Where appropriate, inform other staff and volunteers of the incident.

9. Review of Decisions/Right of Appeal

A complainant who is not satisfied with decisions made in accordance with this Policy may lodge an appeal within 21 days to the Board of Management governing the Member.

10. Distribution of this Policy

BBBS Aust. and its staff will widely display, circulate and promote this Policy to its employees, volunteers, young people and parent/guardians.



As a minimum:

- The Policy will be issued to all employees and volunteers appointed to BBBS Aust. Programs, who are subsequently required to sign a form acknowledging they have read, understood and agree to abide by this Policy. Volunteers will receive an abridged version of the Policy.
- A summary will be issued to parent/guardians and young people during Child Safety training.
- The Policy will be referenced on all BBBS Aust. websites/pages.

11. Policy Evaluation and Review

BBBS Aust. and its staff will review this Policy on an annual basis in accordance with the following:

- The Policy will be reviewed by identifying any significant experiences, problems or functional issues which arose in the preceding year.
- Input from key stakeholders.
- Any amendments will be widely circulated.

Version Control		
Date	Summary of Amendment	Responsibility
March 2021	Updated Existing 2020 Policy	TBC

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