



Safe Learner Environment Policy and Procedures

Purpose

The ACT German Language School Inc. (GLS) believes that it is the fundamental right of all learners and personnel in the school to have a safe, caring and protected environment.

GLS owes a duty of care to all learners, and particularly to children while they are under the care or supervision of GLS personnel. This duty requires the GLS to take all reasonable steps to protect learners from foreseeable risks.

The Safe Learner Environment Policy applies to

- All service organisations or subsidiary bodies authorised or under the control of the GLS
- All Staff, Volunteers, Members, Contractors, Visitors and Learners within the GLS or engaged by the GLS.

Definitions

Throughout this policy, the following terms are used

Learner refers to any person enrolled at the GLS

Children/child refers to any person under the age of 18 years

Abuse or neglect can be sexual, physical or emotional abuse of the learner, or neglect of the learner, to the extent that – the learner has suffered, or is likely to suffer, physical or psychological injury detrimental to the learner’s well-being; or the learner’s physical or psychological development is in jeopardy, and including a reasonable likelihood of the learner being killed, injured, abused or neglected by a person with whom the learner resides

Relevant personnel in the GLS refers to all employees, teachers, members of the GLS’ Management Committee, administrators and relevant volunteers who work directly or in close proximity with learners

Teacher refers to a qualified instructor engaged by the GLS to provide instruction to GLS learners

Parent refers to an adult in a relationship with a child, including step parent, an adoptive parent, a foster parent, guardian, or a person who has custody or daily care and control of the child

Volunteer refers to an individual who receives no remuneration for the work they do except out-of-pocket expenses; and the work fulfils a charity or community service good

Natural Justice applies when a person's rights are likely to be affected. It refers to the person's right to have an unbiased decision made after being given an opportunity to present his or her case to the decision maker

Screening and Background Check assesses the suitability of individuals to work with children

Safe environment refers to a place where adults take reasonable measures to ensure that all people, and particularly children, are protected from harm and know that adults will act on their behalf

Policy

All members of the community have a responsibility to protect the well-being of others. Children have the right to be safe and protected at all times, including when accessing services in the community.

A Safe Learner Environment is a safe and supportive setting where all learners feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. GLS provides a Safe Learner Environment by:

- taking preventative, proactive and participatory stance on child protection issues,
- valuing and embracing the opinions and views of all learners
- focusing on the protection of children and young people and taking action to protect them from harm
- providing learners, parents, guardians or carers evidence of the GLS' applicable policies and procedures when requested

The GLS acknowledges that all learners, and particularly children, are entitled to:

- be free from threat of danger, harm or loss
- have their rights upheld and welfare promoted
- protection from physical, sexual and psychological harm or neglect.

The GLS has a zero tolerance of abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with the school's policies and procedures.

Procedures

In accordance with ACT Education Directorate requirements, all teaching staff at the GLS are required to have a current Working with Vulnerable People check and be registered with the relevant ACT Government authority. Further information on recruitment and selection arrangements are provided in the Staff and Volunteer Recruitment Policy.

All relevant personnel at the GLS have a responsibility for promoting and supporting the school's standards of behaviour. When a staff member or volunteer is found to have acted outside of the Safe Learner Environment Policy, they will be subject to disciplinary action commensurate with the seriousness of their actions. Breaches of the Policy should be reported to the President of the GLS and will be investigated on a case-by-case basis.

It is not the responsibility of relevant personnel in the GLS to discipline learners. If a learner does not abide by the behaviours and rules set down by the GLS, or poses a risk to the wellbeing of other learners, the learner will be removed from the learning environment and referred back to their

parent, where applicable. At no time will GLS personnel administer any form of physical, emotional or mental discipline.

Reporting Procedures

The GLS actively encourages the reporting of all abuse where GLS personnel or learners may be involved.

The GLS is committed to building an environment where either a victim or GLS personnel feels able to report such abuse.

Child learners

If a GLS Personnel member has a reasonable suspicion that a child learner had been or is suffering abuse, a report will be made to Care and Protection Services (CPS) which is the statutory child protection agency for the ACT region. CPS is situated within the Office for Children Youth and Family Support which is an area of the ACT Community Services Directorate.

CPS has legislative responsibility for facilitating coordination across government for the care and protection of children and young people believed to be at risk of harm. Key tasks involve assessing risk and working with families and other professionals to resolve issues that compromise child safety and wellbeing. Care and Protection Services provides a continuum of service delivery to children and young people considered 'at risk' of serious abuse and harm.

CPS appraises reports of concern from the public which relate to the safety and well-being of children. Concerns may be related to

1. Physical abuse
2. Emotional abuse (including exposure to family violence)
3. Sexual abuse
4. Neglect

Contact details for CPS are

Phone: 1300 556 729 - 24 Hour General Public Line

Phone: 1300 556 728 - 24 Hour Mandated Reporters Line

Online: [Child concern report](#)

Email: childprotection@act.gov.au

In reporting any suspected child abuse or neglect, GLS Personnel will comply with the requirements set out in '[Keeping Children and Young People Safe](#)'.

If a GLs Personnel member has a reasonable suspicion that a learner is in immediate risk of abuse, the Police will be notified. The phone number is 131 444

Adult learners

Personnel of the GLS must report reasonable suspicion of abuse to the President or Secretary of the GLS Management Committee. Reasonable suspicion means fair and practical reason to believe an

incident involving abuse has occurred based on either verbal communication, hearsay, rumour or observation of behaviour.

The allegation will be investigated by a person appointed by the President of the GLS Management Committee. The investigation will be undertaken as expeditiously as possible, having due regard for natural justice.

The details of those reporting abuse will be kept private and confidential.

If a disclosure of abuse is made, the person who receives the disclosure will maintain appropriate pastoral care to the one making the disclosure. This will include:

- Treating each allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim.
- Not pushing the learner to disclose details of the alleged abuse or attempting to investigate the allegation.
- Assuring the learner that they are understood, that their disclosure is being taken seriously, that what has happened is not their fault, and that they are correct in disclosing the incident.
- Reporting the abuse to the police.
- Not making contact with the alleged perpetrator,
- Maintaining confidentiality.

Any disclosure by a learner or personnel of the GLS, reports of suspected abuse and all details of the subsequent investigation will be documented promptly and the documents will be held in a secure location where a breach of privacy cannot occur.

Authorisation

This policy is authorised by the GLS' Management Committee.

Review

This policy will be reviewed by the GLS' Management Committee, at least every three years, or more frequently in response to feedback or legislative changes.