



Ausdance ACT Child Protection Policy

This policy covers children, young people and vulnerable people

Ausdance ACT:

- aims to provide happy, safe environments where children can learn to dance or learn about dance
- acknowledges that it has a duty of care to ensure the safety of children participating in its events and activities or those run under its auspices
- will protect the images of children it commissions, or obtains from other sources, from inappropriate uses
- will ensure that children are protected through adherence by its staff, parents and Board members to this policy and guidelines.

All Ausdance ACT staff and Board members are responsible for reporting suspicions of child abuse occurring in Ausdance ACT or at Ausdance ACT events and activities, *internally* to staff in the Ausdance ACT Office or to a Board member; and *externally* as required by ACT legislation.

Policy Compliant Actions

Ausdance ACT:

- checks the background of all staff and Board members
- informs all staff and Board members about child protection matters and makes them aware of this policy and guidelines; what is expected of them, who to report to and where to get help
- provides training about the protection of children for staff and Board members if requested
- has nominated staff contacts for matters relating to child protection
- appoints one Board member to have responsibility for overseeing the protection of children and matters relating to their safety
- has procedures to deal with incidents and reports of child abuse or injury
- keeps records about children appropriately secure and destroys them when no longer needed
- has guidelines and permissions applying to still and moving images
- reports all incidents of past, present and potential harm to the relevant authorities and to the ACT Government child protection agency
- encourages member organisations, businesses and venues with which it works to have child protection policies and to conduct child safe reviews of their operations
- frames its policy and guidelines to conform with ACT legislation and practices in similar organisations.

Definitions

Child: a person under 12 years of age.

Young Person: a person over 12 years of age but not yet an adult.

Vulnerable Person (not defined by age): can include an aged person; a person with an intellectual or physical disability; a homeless person; Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people but may not include everyone with one or more of these characteristics.

Child Abuse: different types of maltreatment inflicted on a child including non-accidental physical injury, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional abuse including psychological harm and exposure to domestic violence.

Neglect: failure to provide the necessities of life for example: food, shelter, clothing and medical treatment, if the failure has caused, or is causing, significant harm to the wellbeing or development of a child.

Voluntary Reporter: staff and Board members of Ausdance ACT are voluntary reporters (*mandatory reporters* are, for example: doctors, teachers, childcare workers).

Staff: employees (for example, people working in the Ausdance ACT office or conducting classes; contractors (for example, people providing ancillary services such as stage management; lighting, filming) and volunteers (can include Board members who sometimes assist at events).

References to “**child**” and “**children**” also cover young people and vulnerable people.

Applicable ACT Legislation

Children and Young People Act 2008
www.legislation.act.gov.au

Quick Guide to Reporting

A person who *believes* that a child or young person has experienced, or is experiencing, sexual abuse or non-accidental physical injury **MUST** report this to the ACT Government child protection agency as required by ACT law - see below and Guidelines for how to do this.

Report Suspected Child Abuse to both Ausdance ACT and the ACT Government as soon as possible after the suspicion arises.

Ausdance ACT Contacts

Responsible Staff in the Ausdance ACT Office

Director: Neil Roach
Contact: 6247 9103 or director.act@ausdance.org.au

Administrator: Jenny Norris
Contact: 6247 9103 or act@ausdance.org.au

Responsible Board Member

Name: Sarah Brasch
Contact: 6288 5011 or sarahbee@webone.com.au

Reporting Child Abuse to the ACT Government

WHO TO CALL

Police by dialling 000
for urgent assistance if you believe a child or young person is in
immediate danger or a life-threatening situation

and/or
Care and Protection Services
ACT Government

1300 556 729 (24 hours)
(voluntary reporters/general public)

Website – Care and Protection Services
www.dhcs.act.gov.au/ocyfs/services/care_and_protection

Guidelines

Who in Ausdance ACT must know about and have read this policy and guidelines?

- Employees
- Contractors
- Volunteers
- Parents
- Board Members
- Others in or associated with Ausdance ACT coming into contact with children, young people and other vulnerable people.

These guidelines provide:

- Guidance for staff and volunteers on good practices and what to avoid
- Procedures for reporting suspected child abuse carried out by Ausdance ACT staff or Board members
- Procedures for reporting suspected child abuse occurring outside Ausdance ACT, for example, by family members of children attending Ausdance ACT events
- Actions aimed at avoiding harm to children by people not closely connected with Ausdance ACT (for example, volunteers) or not connected with Ausdance ACT at all (for example, someone accessing photographs on the website)

Good Practice

- Always work in an open environment where you can be observed; communicate openly with no secrets
- If manual/physical support for body positioning is required, provide it openly and seek agreement first
- When children need to be transported, ensure there is more than one child, and preferably, more than one adult, in the vehicle; in an emergency, for example an injured child needs to go to hospital, contact the Ausdance ACT office first or the child's parents)
- Keep up to date with qualifications eg Skill Set, legal requirements and insurance
- Make allegations of child abuse through established processes and reporting lines
- If in doubt, report and/or seek advice

Actions to be Avoided

- Being alone with a child, for example in dressing or first aid rooms and when working one-on-one
- Forming a special relationship with a child that could be interpreted as favouritism, such as giving gifts or special treatment.

Practices Never Sanctioned

- Allowing or engaging in horseplay, physical or sexually provocative games
- Allowing or engaging in any type of inappropriate touching
- Making sexually suggestive comments, even in fun
- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control
- Doing things of a personal nature, such as changing clothes, that children can do for themselves
- Failing to act on and record any allegations made by a child.

Incidents that MUST be reported/documented

- If you accidentally hurt a child
- If a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done

- If a child is unusually distressed and you have any suspicions or concerns about possible abuse.

Still or Moving Images

- Images of solo performers will not be identified
- If necessary, Ausdance ACT will seek the written permission of parents or guardians for use of still and/or moving images (permission form attached in Appendix)
- Only appropriate images (tasteful, unrevealing, non-exploitative) will be used in Ausdance ACT's hardcopy materials and on the internet
- Anyone with complaints about images used by Ausdance ACT should raise their objections with staff in the Ausdance ACT office
- Parents and spectators taking photographs or recording at Ausdance ACT events are to avoid inappropriate and/or intrusive filming.

Note: Tutors and coaches can use filming as a teaching aid.

Recruitment

- All staff and Board members will be vetted including police record checks. Evidence of identity must be provided.
- All jobs/tasks will be assessed for child safety risk:
 - (i) High risk – sole control over or responsibility for children and young people, for example may be the only adult in the room or may enter dressing rooms being used by children
 - (ii) Medium risk – may have a position of authority with access to children, for example volunteer or Board member
 - (iii) Low risk – all other jobs/tasks
- Ausdance staff will discuss the risk attaching to jobs/tasks in Ausdance ACT at the time of engagement or commencement of an event or activity
- Ausdance ACT will publish this policy and guidelines on its website and make them known to all staff; hardcopy will be provided if requested. Staff working with ACT and NSW teachers and/or working on school premises will also be referred to or provided with a copy of the State/Territory Education Department's Child Protection Policy
- All staff working in the Ausdance ACT office, volunteers and Board members will wear an identifying badge when attending Ausdance ACT events where children are present.

Training

- Ausdance ACT is required to make education and training available for staff
- This will be discussed at the time of engagement or commencement
- Those people wishing to be trained will be referred to courses and materials provided by the ACT Government
- Ausdance ACT will fund the training.

What happens if allegations or suspicions are reported?

- There may be three types of investigation: a criminal investigation; a child protection investigation or assessment; or an internal investigation that could be a disciplinary or misconduct investigation
- All reports of child abuse involving Ausdance ACT staff will be considered by the Executive. The first meeting of the committee should take place within 24 hours to ensure that correct reporting procedures have been followed and all relevant authorities have been informed
- If a report is made against a staff member, Board member or parent/guardian, the Executive will decide whether to temporarily suspend employment; membership; withdraw volunteer status as appropriate.
- If there is no criminal or ACT Government investigation, the Executive will determine whether the allegation, on the basis of probability and all available evidence, is true and what action should be taken. Natural justice will apply to all the parties involved.

What has to be reported?

- Report exactly what was seen or heard
- Be clear about what is hearsay or if you have made any assumptions
- Staff working in the Ausdance ACT office or the Board member responsible can provide a list of details and information required by the Police and the ACT Government child protection agency.

Confidentiality

- Store any records on file marked Confidential
- Confidential files are to be kept:
 - (i) in soft storage: as password-protected electronic copies, and/or
 - (ii) in hard copy: in a locked cabinet to which access is controlled
- Keep a copy of all information provided to the Police or ACT Government in an Ausdance ACT file.

Every effort should be made to ensure that *confidentiality is maintained for all concerned*. Information should be handled and disseminated on a **need to know** basis only.

Informing Parents or Guardians

- It is important to consider whether telling a parent or guardian about making a report will place the child at further risk.
- Sometimes there are safety issues for the reporter
- Seek advice from Ausdance ACT Director and the ACT Government child protection agency before taking any action

Note: not all reports will result in the ACT Government child protection agency contacting the family. Where allegations are serious and of a criminal nature, contacting parents/guardians may contaminate evidence that will be used in court.

Informing Alleged Abusers

**Seek advice on who should approach the alleged abuser (or parents, if the alleged abuser is a child)*

- There may be safety issues for the reporter
- Seek advice from Ausdance ACT Director and the ACT Government (Care and Protection Services) before taking any action
- Ausdance ACT Executive will inform staff of allegations made against them as soon as possible and decide the appropriate status for that person while investigations take place.

Note: Where allegations are serious and of a criminal nature, approaching an alleged abuser may contaminate evidence that will be used in court.

Reporting Concerns about Poor Practice in Ausdance ACT

- Poor practices that reduce the safety of children, even if not reportable incidents of child abuse, should be reported to staff in the Ausdance ACT office or the responsible Board member
- Reports about poor practice will be investigated by the Executive which will decide necessary action and remediation as soon as possible.

Debriefing after Child Protection Incidents or Reports

- You should seek debriefing if involved in a child protection/abuse reporting matter
- Ausdance ACT offers stress leave and will pay for counselling.

Notes to Policy and Guidelines

1. Ausdance ACT, the peak body for dance in the ACT, is not a dance studio or a dance school. Several times a year, Ausdance ACT conducts events or classes led by a tutor or coach.
2. Children participating in some Ausdance ACT events will be under the direct supervision of teachers. When that occurs, they will be also subject to their school's child protection policy, their State or Territory Government's applicable policies and the child protection and/or safety policies of associated organisations and venues.
3. Ausdance ACT keeps membership and participation records about children.
4. Abuse of children in dance includes anorexia, inappropriate sexualisation, inappropriate images, bullying and the actions of abusive parents as spectators.
5. Staff and Board members of Ausdance ACT are not trained to, nor are they expected to, deal directly with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred. When suspected cases are reported to Ausdance ACT, external assistance will be sought.

References

Ausdance ACT keeps copies of child protection materials for staff and Board members, available on request, including:

"The Ausdance Skill Set for Teaching Dance" (2010 as adapted for use in the ACT) - Part SRCCRO007B page 54 (Touch) and pages 107-109 (Dance Ethics)

"Reporting Child Abuse: Keeping Children and Young People Safe – A Shared Community Responsibility" (October 2008), Office for Children, Youth and Family Support, ACT Government

Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT); also at www.legislation.act.gov.au

Child Protection and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect in ACT Public Schools

Draft ACT Government Child Protection Policy for funded groups (March 2011) – list of information/details to provide to the ACT Government child protection agency on Page 8; description of and indicators for types of abuse in Appendix B

Example of A Child Protection Policy (2011), UK National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children – list of information/details to provide to the Police on Page 8.

These materials are also for the use of dance teachers.

Policy and Guidelines Review

- (i) By 31 December 2012
- (ii) Cyclical from 2013 onwards

Consent Form for Use of Still and Moving Images of Children and Young People by Ausdance ACT

I/we,.....parent(s)/guardian(s) of:

(child's full name).....

(child's full name).....

(child's full name).....

give Ausdance ACT permission to use any still and/or moving image being video footage, photographs and/or frames and/or audio footage depicting my/our children named above while performing or participating in an Ausdance ACT event or activity

for the purposes of:

advertisements; marketing; leaflets and for any other use for training, educational and publicity purposes, and/or for use on Ausdance ACT's website.

Signed.....Date:.....

NAME (block letters).....

Signed.....Date:.....

NAME (block letters).....