



Child Safe Code of Conduct 2023

The reputation and success of Standing Tall in Hamilton Inc. (STiH) depends upon the actions of each of employee and volunteer. Every action we take should honor our values and follow our Code of Conduct (*The Code*) to ensure the safety of all and maintain the positive reputation of our organisation.

Employees and Volunteers representing STiH are responsible for how they behave during their term of engagement and seek to live up to our values. This includes:

- **Acting with integrity:** honoring our commitments, upholding our Code, obeying the law and acting responsibly and in good faith at all times.
- **Building trust:** empowering young people to fulfil their potential by encouraging them to take full advantage of the opportunities offered in a school setting. Actively listening, seeking fair resolutions, dealing honestly with all, and maintaining transparency at all times.
- **Showing respect:** valuing diversity of thought and opinions, encouraging open and frank dialogue, and considering the impact of our decisions on all.
- **Sharing responsibility:** working together to build a strong sense of ownership of the Program amongst our School Partners and the community to ensure we get the best outcome for the young people in our Program. Mentoring does not replace the vital roles that teachers, counsellors and parents perform; it enhances them.

The Code means that everyone in our team understands the expectations – we are all ‘on the same page’. What Does *the Code* cover?

- **Behaviour**
- **Language**
- **Physical Contact**
- **Mentor Session Style**
- **Cultural Awareness**
- **Special Needs**
- **Supervision**
- **Privacy & social media**

Guidelines

1. Behaviour

What we do as staff and volunteers reflects our values. It is vital to behave in a way that upholds what we believe about children and vulnerable people – that they are valued and deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

Be a Good Role Model

Children and vulnerable people learn as much from what we do as from what we say. Avoid behaviour that gives the impression of favouritism or encourages ‘special’ relationships with individual children. Where parents, carers or members of the community observe us at work, they need to see a caring style that demonstrates the positive values your organisation seeks to uphold.





What To Do

- Treat all participants with respect and take notice of their reactions to your tone of voice and manner.
- Do not be alone with a child.
- Be aware of situations when children or vulnerable people might be changing or using the toilet.

2. Language

Words can hurt so it is important to use language that affirms the worth, dignity and significance of the participants. It is not unusual to use negative or critical language towards people in an attempt at humour, however we must ensure that jokes are not made at the expense of others as this erodes the sense of safety and care. Do not:

- Use derogatory language towards other staff or volunteers or children – even when meant as sarcasm or as a joke.
- Use ‘in jokes’, negative language, put downs or sexist language with other staff and volunteers or participants.
- Speak down to children or young people in a superior way, instead speak to them as people of value.
- Where private conversations are necessary, staff, volunteers and children should remain visible to other adults in the group.

3. Physical Contact

Many children enjoy physical contact and will seek it as a simple expression of affection and confidence; however others do not appreciate or seek physical contact. Physical contact between adults and children may be misconstrued. Children and vulnerable people may not be aware of creating such situations. It is your duty to be alert to such circumstances. We must always be SEEN to be doing the right thing as well as knowing that we are.

Expectations

Physical contact should:

- Be in response to the participant’s need and not that of the mentor.
- Be with the child or vulnerable person’s permission – resistance from the person should be respected.
- Never be in the area normally covered by bathers/ swimwear.
- Be open and not secretive.
- Be governed by the age and developmental stage of the person.

Let the Participant Choose

Children and vulnerable people should be allowed to choose the degree of physical contact they have with others, apart from exceptional circumstances or when needing medical attention. It is inappropriate to initiate close physical contact; this should come from the participant, if at all. Physical contact between staff, volunteers, and children and vulnerable people is inappropriate if it could be perceived as a threat, if it causes embarrassment to either person, or if it does not allow either person to disengage easily.

As a rule, open displays of affection initiated by children in the presence of others, are acceptable. Staff and volunteers need to be aware that consistent contact with the same person may give the impression of favouritism. It is unwise and may result in others competing for attention or feeling left out.

Any physical activity that is, or may be construed as, sexually stimulating to the mentor or participant is inappropriate and must be avoided. Physical touch has an important role in building healthy relationships. It needs to be done within these very clear guidelines and with a heightened awareness of changing community attitudes around safe and appropriate touch with children and vulnerable people.





Standing Tall in Hamilton Inc.

School-based Mentoring

Standing Tall in Hamilton Inc.

87 Thompson Street

Hamilton VIC 3300

ABN: 31 286 830 102

Inc. No: A0059849E

Child Safe Code of Conduct V2.2023

Doing the Right Thing

- Touching a child or vulnerable person between the neck and the knees should be avoided, although contact with the bony areas of the body such as the shoulder, elbow or head, is generally acceptable.
- A sideways hug around the shoulder is more acceptable than an arm around the waist.
- There will be occasions where displays of affection are natural. Children must not be shunned if they initiate and demonstrate their need for comfort, bearing in mind the age of the child and the circumstances. Care needs to be exercised that such situations don't occur in private.
- On no account must any form of corporal or physical punishment be administered, even in fun.
- The only form of physical restraint appropriate is to protect children from harm. This includes reasonable restraint to stop a fight, to stop bullying or to avoid an accident.
- What is reasonable and lawful will depend on the circumstances; appropriate judgement should be used.
- Allow children to determine the degree of physical contact they have with you, without showing favouritism.

4. Mentor Session Style

Children and vulnerable people are not always able to sense the risks associated with participating in activities. Your sessions and activity choices need to be made keeping the participant group's capability and risk appetite in mind. The activities you choose will speak loudly about the values you and our organisation hold about people.

What do I need to know?

Activities or 'wide games' that require participants to operate on their own or in pairs out of sight need to be managed carefully. Clear boundaries and rules are needed to ensure that participants can engage in activities safely. It is not appropriate for participants to be made to feel stupid or embarrassed. Whilst competitive games or activities can be fun, if they exploit gender, intellectual or physical differences, then they should be avoided.

As you identify your program activities, take into account their age appropriateness.

What do I need to do?

- Be willing to drop an activity if you sense that it is not working safely or is making participants feel angry or isolated.
- Put in extra planning and support measures when an activity has extra challenges.
- Ask the Program Manager or Coordinator to help you plan weekly sessions.

5. Cultural Awareness

Sensitivity

Staff and volunteers need to be sensitive to cultures and family traditions different from their own. These differences may affect the degree of participation of children and vulnerable people in activities and games.

Respect

No pressure should be applied to participants from other cultures and traditions to encourage participation.

The family has many forms and leaders must respect a participant's support structures. Staff and volunteers need to be sensitive about using words that make assumptions about any participant's background, family status or principal caregivers. Your team should have zero tolerance for language or activities that discriminate on the basis of gender, race, age or ability.





What do I need to do?

- Show respect for the authority structures of other cultures and traditions.
- Do not make statements that reflect ignorance, bias or ridicule about other religions and cultures.
- Do not hold, kiss, cuddle or touch children or vulnerable people in an inappropriate and/or culturally insensitive way.

6. Special Needs

Who May Have Special Needs?

People with special needs may include very small children, and people with particular intellectual, mental or physical disabilities, children with an autism spectrum disorder and the elderly.

Be Inclusive

Being inclusive of children and vulnerable people with special needs has more to do with a positive attitude and a willingness to learn, than with a list of 'Dos and Don'ts'. Being inclusive means seeing that each person has both the potential to learn and the need to be loved and included like all other children and vulnerable people.

Be Proactive

You may need extra adult help. The number of extra staff and volunteers will depend on the needs of the child or vulnerable person. Some children and vulnerable people will require one-on-one assistance. Privacy and respect are particularly important for participants with special needs who may need help with toileting. Find out as much as you can about the specific disability, as well as constructive ways to include the participant. Caregivers and schools are often the best sources of information on how to include those with special needs. When working with people with special needs, activities should be structured, yet flexible.

Be Creative

Make sure your attitudes and behaviour are positive and inclusive towards children and people with special needs, as this will have a significant influence on how others react. Encourage all children and vulnerable people to participate, play and learn together, and to share responsibilities. Where appropriate, ask the participant what they think or want. Rather than avoiding some activities because your group includes children or vulnerable people with special needs, be creative in the ways you include everyone. Limit the amount of furniture and other obstructions to allow space to move. Plan to regular breaks in your activities.

7. Supervision

Every STiH mentoring session is expected to be supervised (line of sight supervision). Sessions will either be supervised by the Program Manager or Coordinator, a School Contact, or a member of the STiH Committee of Management. Staff, volunteer mentors and participants will always be in groups with other mentors and are expected to never be alone with student mentees.

8. Privacy and social media

Personal Information

Staff and volunteers may, at times, gain access to private information about a participant (e.g. via conversations with your student mentee). You have an obligation to abide by the organisation's privacy policy in relation to protecting the right to privacy of participants and their families. Personal information and photographs obtained from your





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involvement in programs must not be used inappropriately. Appropriate use would be within the context of the program itself or uses for which permission has been obtained via the Program Manager or Coordinator (as appropriate).

Contact Outside the Program

Incidental contact between staff, volunteers and participants outside the program may occur in our community. It may be unavoidable due to living near one another or being members of the same football or netball club for example. Contact outside the Program requires care on your part, ensuring the Code is always maintained.

What do I need to do?

- Review our organisations privacy policy and Code of Conduct.
- Photographs taken during programs must not be kept for personal use or publicly shown, including on social media, without permission as indicated above.
- Keep a record of any incidental contact with participants that occurs outside the program and advise the Program Manager or Coordinator.
- If you do encounter a participant outside the program, communicate with the child or vulnerable person in an open manner, keeping in mind what you would be happy for their family to hear or read.
- Do not take a child or vulnerable person to your home or encourage meetings outside the program activity.
- Ongoing contact with participants outside the program is not permitted.

Social Media

The use of social media can pose danger to participants, staff, volunteers and organisations. Participants under 18 should not be 'friended' on social media. Be aware that whatever you post online cannot be taken back. Again, only share what you would be happy for a caregiver to see.

Note: Find helpful resources at - <https://volunteer.esafety.gov.au/>





Code of Conduct

1. STiH Staff and Volunteers are:
 - Entrusted to deliver school-based mentoring according to this STiH Code of Conduct and policies.
 - Expected to support this Code and organisation policies that have been designed in accordance with updated State and Federal legislative requirements to always ensure the safety of all children in our Program.
 - Encouraged to ask questions, seek clarification, and discuss any concerns with the Program Manager or Program Coordinator.
 - Committed to mentoring as per this Code and mentor training program, to ensure they can safely deliver each mentoring session.
 - Committed to ensuring they have the information they need to carry out their role.
 - Expected to be open, supportive, and inclusive.

2. STiH Staff and Volunteers will:
 - Communicate using positive and inclusive language.
 - Hold a valid Police Check and Working with Children Check and provide evidence of both to STiH.
 - Attend STiH organised mentor induction and refresher training as requested.
 - Honour the reputation of STiH, positively promoting the organisation within our community.
 - Honour their commitment to their assigned student mentee, attending weekly sessions. If for any reason a mentor needs to miss a session, they will contact the STiH team as soon as possible.
 - Undertake Child Safe Training and will abide by the Victoria Child Safe Standards, as well as any Child Safe policies specific to the student's school.
 - Wear a STiH provided mentor identification lanyard during every mentoring session. This includes the WWCC ID card.
 - Maintain the confidentiality of all discussions between themselves and their mentee (unless mandatory disclosure is required to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child).
 - Maintain a high level of moral and ethical standards.
 - Advise STiH if they identify any conflicts of interest that may impact their role or mentoring relationship.
 - Inform STiH as soon as practical if they feel they are not able to provide support in a specific area, or that a mentee is at risk of any harm.
 - Immediately notify STiH of any changes in their circumstances, including changes that may jeopardise their ability to be an effective mentor or put into question the reputation of the program.

3. Mentoring sessions:
 - Take place at the same time each week, during school term only, and at the school where the student mentee is enrolled, under supervision.
 - Do not take place outside of school hours or off school grounds.
 - Should be kept simple, allowing the mentee to take the lead. Aim to ensure the mentee feels safe, supported, and heard.

4. STiH staff and volunteers must NEVER:
 - Meet with a student mentee alone or without supervision.
 - Contact a student mentee outside the STiH Program (on social media, phone or any other means).
 - Request, record or share personal information or photos of the student mentee.





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Agreement

This document and the guidelines, Code, and policies referred to within are deemed to be binding. The role of STiH staff and volunteers cannot commence until the staff member or volunteer has agreed their acceptance in writing. STiH reserves the right to require staff and volunteers to stand down from involvement if they are deemed to be engaging a negative approach towards the student, fellow mentors, or STiH.

This document will be updated from time to time. When an update is made, you will be notified and provided with a copy of the new document. You will have 4 weeks to contact the STiH Program Manager if you do not agree to abide by the updated Code. After that time, the new document will come into effect. If staff and volunteers feel they cannot agree to the principles and procedures stated in this document, they must record this by sending an email with their issues to the Program Manager programmanager@standingtallhamilton.com.au.

Signature:

Full Name:

Date:

Email:

Mobile Number:

Office Use Only	Date reviewed:	Staff initials:
WWCC Card Number:		
School Name:		
Student Mentee Name:		

