

ADELAIDE WEST SPECIAL EDUCATION CENTRE POLICY ON APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL CONTACT



Adelaide West
Special Education Centre

Rationale

At Adelaide West Special Education Centre *'our vision is to maximise our students' potential through partnership with families, carers and community. We provide a positive learning environment focussing on communication, MOVE and a high quality curriculum.'*

Adelaide West Special Education Centre students belong to a sector of society who are at greater than usual risk of abuse due to greater dependency on adults. To engage students in learning and provide health and personal care support at school, physical contact in various forms may be required.

Staff are often concerned and fearful about physically supporting students and this policy clarifies the reasons and conditions for which to do so.

Appropriate physical contact by staff members at Adelaide West Special Education Centre

Physical contact is important and may be used as an identified strategy for any student. These strategies will be documented as a part of their NEP in consultation with the family, carers and therapists.

There needs to be a clear purpose and a reduction plan in place when physical contact strategies are used at school. This information is to be discussed with families and documented in the student's Negotiated Education Plan. As part of a reduction strategy and to support engagement in learning, manage emotions and sensory needs and ensure the safety of staff and students, explicit teaching of communication and social skills is consistently taught throughout the day.

All students requiring physical contact to support with personal care, health or transfer and positioning are to have appropriate plans developed by health care professionals, in consultation with families. Health support plans are to be accessible to staff and plans are to be followed as per instructions. Staff are to clearly communicate their intentions with students during these times.

Staff should discourage students from inappropriate expectations of physical contact (hugs, cuddles and sexualised touching). This should be done gently with reference to more appropriate ways to communicate.

If staff are in any doubt about issues concerning appropriate touch or observe any practice that causes concerns they should follow DECD guidelines as described in *'Protective Practices for Staff' in their Interactions with Students'*. As mandated reporters all SSOs and teachers are required to report abuse or suspected abuse to the Child Abuse Hotline (phone: 131478).

Physical Contact when a person's safety is threatened

Staff may make legitimate use of physical contact when non-physical interventions have been exhausted or are impossible to implement in the circumstances and student is:

- Attacking another student or adult
- Posing an immediate danger to him/herself or others

(Protective Practices for Staff' in their Interactions with children and young people, DECD)

Conclusion:

Physical contact may form part of teaching and learning programs at Adelaide West Special Education Centre. This policy outlines when this may be needed and gives staff the direction and security for this to occur positively and productively, while still protecting the students in our care.

Policy ratified on: 8/11/2017 by Governing Council

Review:

April 2019

Report any abuse or suspected abuse to the
Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 131478
