

Child Safeguarding Guidelines

Child Art Psychotherapy (CAP) is provided to children and adolescents aged 4-18. All members of ACAP are bound by the principles laid out in the ACAP Code of Ethics and Professional Practice.

ACAP Members are mandated persons and are obliged by law, as outlined in the Children's First Act 2015, to report any concerns relating to Child Protection or Welfare in a timely manner via the TUSLA Portal.

Principles to Safeguard Children from Harm

CAP aims to provide a safe, confidential and child-oriented therapeutic space for children and young people with a view to promote the child or young person's development, self-confidence and well-being. ACAP Members are committed to ensuring children and young peoples' safety and welfare in line with Children First Act 2015.

Principles to safeguard children from harm are:

- The safety, welfare and best interests of a child or young person is everyone's responsibility and always paramount.
- The overall aim in all dealings with children and their families is to support families to keep children safe from harm and support child well-being.
- Children have a right to be heard, listened to, and taken seriously. Taking account of their age and understanding, children are consulted and involved in all matters and decisions while attending therapy. The rights, wishes, and feelings of children, young people, and their families will be heard and respected.
- Therapeutic interventions are child-led and child-oriented in nature as well as take account of a child's holistic development and well-being.
- Therapeutic interventions build on existing strengths and protective factors in the child and family and consider at its heart the welfare of the child.
- The child's legal guardian* has a right to be consulted and involved in decisions relating to the provision of therapy. Members will endeavour to balance the legal guardian's need for consultation and involvement with the child or young person's need for a safe, secure, child-led and confidential therapeutic space. This is done within ethical and professional best practice policies as laid out in the ACAP Code of Ethics and Professional Practice and Children's First Guidelines (HSE).
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of caregivers and families.
- Child protection is a multiagency, multidisciplinary activity. Agencies and professionals must work together in the interests of children.

*See ACAP Code of Ethics and Professional Practice

Risk Assessment

The definition of harm in relation to a child is: ‘assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child’s health, development or welfare, or sexual abuse of the child’. It is not possible to eliminate risk completely, but risks can be significantly reduced if they are responsibly managed.

Members of ACAP work in a wide variety of settings, including but not limited to Children and Family Services (TUSLA), Family Resource Centres, Educational Settings and in Private Practice. It is the duty of each individual practitioner to follow the Child Protection Procedures and adhere to the Safeguarding Statement of the organisation within which they work. When working in private practice it is paramount that the practitioner follows Children’s First Guidelines in relation to Child Safety as laid out in the Children’s Act 2015.

Members working in Private Practice are bound by law to develop and display their own Child Safeguarding Statement, including a Risk Assessment particular to their place of work, in keeping with National Guidelines and the ACAP Code of Ethics and Professional Practice. All practicing Members of ACAP must have up to date training in Children’s First as provided by the HSE.

These Child Safeguarding Guidelines have been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017), and TUSLA’s Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure, and Practice, as well as with the ACAP Code of Ethics and Professional Practice.

These Child Safeguarding Guidelines will be reviewed on an annual basis at the ACAP AGM, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the guidelines refer.

For queries, please contact: info@acap.ie

Useful Link

<http://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protectionwelfare/children-first>