

What Ability Code of Conduct

Acknowledgement of Country

What Ability acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country across Australia and their connections to land, waters, and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As an organisation, What Ability is committed to working respectfully and collaboratively with First Nations peoples and communities. We recognise the importance of supporting culturally safe practices, listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, and improving our organisational knowledge and engagement over time.

We acknowledge and value the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, carers, participants, and communities to our work.

Our Values

Knowledgeable, competent and capable

Our support workers are at the heart of what we do, and we're proud of it. We invest in high-quality training, so our team feels confident and equipped to support every participant safely and with care. Our staff are skilled, prepared, and constantly learning, because the best support comes from people who know what they're doing and love doing it.

Hyper-personalised relationships

Every participant is unique, so we invest the time to truly understand their needs, goals, interests and their families. By matching participants with the right support workers and tailoring every experience, we create genuine connections that feel more like friendships than services.

We find a way to help, big or small

We're in the business of supporting people and sometimes our support extends to the family. From a flower delivery on a tough day to emergency respite, we try our best to help in their time of need.

Honest, transparent and authentic

We have a zero tolerance for dishonesty. Families trust us with what matters most, their loved ones, and we take that seriously. We communicate openly, own our actions, and always strive to improve.

Happiness comes first

Our core value is simple but powerful: happiness comes first. We believe that when people feel safe, supported, and joyful, they thrive, and that includes both our participants and our team.

Purpose

This Code of Conduct ("The Code") ensures that all employees, support workers, contractors, and volunteers of What Ability behaves ethically, professionally, and consistently with our values.

It provides a mandatory framework for conduct, supports public trust in What Ability, and helps protect the people we support, our staff, and the wider community.

Scope

This Code of Conduct applies to all What Ability employees, support workers, contractors, and volunteers.

Policy Statement

This Code outlines acceptable conduct and behaviour standards expected of everyone representing What Ability. These standards underpin public trust in our organisation and the integrity of the services we deliver.

What Ability's Code of Conduct guides how we engage with participants, families, colleagues, and the community. It reflects our commitment to professionalism, respect, and the wellbeing of those we support.

While this Code does not prescribe every possible situation, it provides a clear framework to guide ethical and professional behaviour in all circumstances.

Responsibilities

All employees, support workers, contractors, and volunteers are expected to:

- Read, understand, and follow this Code.
- Model What Ability's values in their work.
- Report any breaches or concerns to the appropriate manager or representative.
- Uphold professional, ethical, and lawful behaviour at all times.

Policy Application

Participant-Focused Support

We are all responsible for prioritising participant safety and wellbeing at all times.

I must:

- Uphold professional boundaries and act safely by always maintaining appropriate interactions when representing What Ability.

- Follow applicable support standards and requirements, treat participants by respecting their rights and provide quality care.
- Report concerning behaviour or incidents, notifying the manager by documenting details and submitting them promptly.

I must not:

- Engage in abusive or exploitative conduct, risking safety, by avoiding any form of harm or neglect.
- Ignore allegations of harm, breaching trust, by failing to report immediately to appropriate personnel.
- Prioritise personal interests over participants, compromising care.

Leadership

All employees are responsible for promoting and demonstrating our What Ability Values in action and leading by good example.

I must:

- Be accountable for actions and inactions, owning decisions, by accepting full responsibility for outcomes.
- Raise awareness of policies and procedures, informing employees, by attending or conducting regular training sessions.
- Communicate acceptable standards and behaviours, setting expectations, by modelling values in daily leadership.
- Take action on unacceptable behaviour and address issues by following established reporting/disciplinary processes.
- Promote a workplace free from bullying and foster inclusivity by encouraging a positive and supportive culture.

I must not:

- Ignore employee performance issues and risk standards by failing to address concerns promptly.
- Tolerate discrimination or harassment, breaching laws, by overlooking complaints or reported incidents.
- Set poor examples through actions, undermining values, by behaving unprofessionally or inconsistently.

Bullying and Harassment

In all work situations, including social events and social media communication, that may affect the workplace, What Ability staff must represent the company in a positive manner and report inappropriate conduct to a manager or through the feedback and complaints system. What Ability does not tolerate unlawful discrimination, bullying, harassment (including sexual harassment), or vilification in the workplace. Any such behaviour is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

I must:

- Treat stakeholders with courtesy and sensitivity, respecting rights, by refraining from offensive or harmful actions.
- Promote inclusiveness for all people, valuing diversity, by supporting varied abilities, genders, and backgrounds.
- Respect individuals' rights to privacy, keep them confidential, and handle personal information with care.
- Refrain from conduct causing offence, avoiding embarrassment, by considering the impact on others' dignity.

I must not:

- Engage in bullying or harassment, breaching tolerance, by creating hostile or intimidating environments.
- Participate in discrimination or vilification, violating laws, by making derogatory or prejudiced remarks.
- Ignore instances of inappropriate conduct, risking escalation, by failing to report promptly to management.

Conflict of Interest

All employees must inform What Ability and get approval for activities that create a conflict of interest with their work at What Ability. A conflict of interest occurs when an employee derives a monetary or other benefit from their work that they can use to gain a benefit outside of their work. An example of this would be when the employee, their family, or their friends have a personal or commercial interest that competes with What Ability's business or their duties and responsibilities.

I must:

- Inform What Ability of any potential conflicts of interest and seek approval by promptly disclosing personal or financial interests.
- Act in the best interests of What Ability, prioritising duties, by avoiding activities that compete with work.
- Separate personal and professional loyalties, maintaining integrity, by declaring any family or business ties.

I must not:

- Derive personal monetary benefit, gaining unfairly, by exploiting work opportunities for private gain.
- Allow family interests to compete, risking bias, by favouring external commercial or personal relationships.
- Failing to disclose conflicts, therefore breaching transparency by hiding personal or financial advantages.

Criminal Conduct

If an employee is charged with or convicted of a criminal offence that will appear on their National Police Check, whether related to their work or not, they must disclose this to What Ability. If What Ability has evidence that an employee may have committed criminal conduct at work or related to work, disciplinary action may be taken, and external authorities may be notified.

I must:

- Disclose criminal charges or convictions, informing What Ability, by reporting offences as soon as possible.
- Cooperate with investigations if evidence emerges and provide details by assisting internal and external reviews.
- Maintain lawful conduct at work, upholding standards, and avoid criminal activities in professional roles.

I must not:

- Conceal criminal charges or convictions, breaching disclosure, by withholding information from management.
- Engage in criminal conduct at work, risking action, by committing offences punishable by imprisonment.
- Ignore evidence of criminal behaviour, failing to report, by not notifying the appropriate authorities promptly.

Gifts, Benefits and Donations

No employee is to accept any money, an opportunity or any other benefit which could be interpreted as a bribe, inducement or secret commission.

I must:

- Inform What Ability of small gifts received, seeking a decision by declaring and discussing acceptance or return options.
- Deal with government officials at arm's length, complying with laws, by avoiding any perception of improper influence.
- Obtain approval for political contributions, unless personal, by consulting senior leadership in advance.

I must not:

- Accept bribes or secret commissions, furthering interests, by rejecting monetary or benefit-based inducements.
- Accept hospitality, compromising impartiality, and influencing decisions by declining excessive or inappropriate gifts.
- Make unapproved financial contributions and sponsor organisations by avoiding unauthorised political donations.

Vehicle Use and Transporting Participants

When driving a What Ability, participant-owned, or personal vehicle as part of their role, employees must ensure that they do so safely, responsibly and in accordance with What Ability's expectations.

Serious breaches, such as unsafe driving, driving under the influence, or driving without a valid licence, may result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment.

I must:

- Ensure any vehicles used for work purposes are roadworthy, safe, and suitable before driving.
- Complete required vehicle checklists or reports and report any damage immediately to the State or Regional Manager.
- Hold a valid driver's licence and comply with all road rules and state laws.
- Drive safely and professionally at all times to protect themselves, participants, and the community.
- Keep vehicles clean and well-presented.
- Accurately record kilometres and select the correct transport type in Supportmate.
- Follow the correct fuel reimbursement and reporting processes as directed by the employer.

I must not:

- Drive if fatigued, unwell, or under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or medication that impairs the ability to drive safely.
- Use a mobile phone while driving.
- Drive carelessly, speed, or act in a way that endangers participants or others.
- Allow unauthorised individuals to drive or travel in a What Ability vehicle.
- Fail to pay any fines, parking costs, or replace lost keys related to their driving.
- Ignore or fail to report maintenance issues or damage to any vehicle used for work.

Public Comment

Employees have the ability and right to make public comments, participate in public life and participate in public debate about political and social issues. Public comment includes speaking engagements, comments on radio or television, profiles or activities on social media, and expressing views in books, newspapers, internet sites, or any other media where the comments are expected to spread to the community.

An employee must not make public comments on behalf of What Ability unless they have been authorised to do so by the CEO and in line with What Ability's policies and procedures. Media enquiries must be referred to the CEO or What Ability Marketing team. Where an employee can be identified as a What Ability employee, they are making a public comment on behalf of What Ability. They may be identifiable by having their job title or employment listed on a social media profile that they are making a public comment on, or through the use of What Ability branding, including clothing.

I must:

- Redirect all media enquiries promptly to the What Ability CEO or Marketing Team to avoid unauthorised statements.
- Make personal comments privately, not representing What Ability, by separating work identity from public views.
- Participate in public debate responsibly, respecting boundaries, by avoiding the use of organisational branding or titles.

I must not:

- Make unauthorised public comments on behalf, breaching policy by speaking without prior approval on organisational matters.
- Use job title or company name or brand in social media profiles, implying representation, by keeping profiles free of work identifiers.
- Express views spreading to the community, risking reputation, by using What Ability branding without permission.

Drugs, Alcohol and Smoking

The misuse of alcohol and drugs may lead to poor performance, lower productivity and pose a risk to health and safety. An employee must not attend work while they are under the influence of illegal drugs, improperly used prescription medicine or alcohol.

I must:

- Inform the manager of suspected influence, reporting concerns, by documenting observations discreetly and confidentially.
- Disclose drug or alcohol dependency, seeking support, by accessing the appropriate assistance offered.
- Cooperate with testing if reasonably concerned, complying with directives, and participating in required processes.

I must not:

- Attend work under the influence of drugs/alcohol, impairing performance by consuming substances before or during shifts.
- Possess or distribute illegal drugs on premises, breaching policy, by engaging in controlled substance activities.
- Smoke in workplaces or near unapproved designated smoking areas.

Workplace Surveillance

What Ability may have security cameras operating on some of its premises and carries out both continuous and intermittent workplace surveillance of all employee computers, phone use, and travel, including GPS data on What Ability vehicles. All employees must read and be familiar with What Ability's Transportation and Vehicle Management Policy.

I must:

- Be familiar with all workplace policies relating to Workplace Surveillance and understand procedures by reviewing and acknowledging them annually.
- Comply with surveillance standards and maintain privacy by using monitored devices appropriately and ethically.

I must not:

- Tamper with surveillance equipment, breaching security, by altering cameras, GPS, or related systems.
- Misuse of monitored resources, risking data, by accessing unauthorised websites or sharing confidential info.

Child Protection and Wellbeing

We are committed to creating safe environments for children and young people under 18, prioritising their safety and wellbeing across all operations. This section establishes clear expectations to ensure compliance with relevant child protection laws and standards.

I must always:

- Act at all times in the best interests of children and young people, treating them with respect, dignity, and fairness in every interaction.
- Empower children and young people with diverse needs to participate in decisions about their care and safety, providing opportunities for their input.
- Ensure environments, both physical and online, are safe and free from harm, conducting regular safety assessments and monitoring online activities as required in What Ability policies and procedures.
- Immediately report any suspicion, disclosure, or allegation of harm, abuse, or neglect to the appropriate statutory authority or internally via incident reporting processes.
- Understand and fulfil the legal obligation to protect children from harm, staying informed about mandatory reporting requirements.
- Follow internal reporting procedures and cooperate fully with any investigations, maintaining confidentiality and accuracy in documentation.
- Actively uphold the cultural rights, identity, and safety of children from diverse backgrounds, respecting their heritage and needs.
- Adapt communication and support to meet the needs of children with disabilities, language barriers, or additional requirements, using tailored person-centred methods.
- Maintain clear and professional relationships with children and their families, avoiding personal entanglements or over-familiarity.
- Use social media, technology, and personal communication responsibly, ensuring that children are not exposed to risk or inappropriate content.
- Avoid conflicts of interest, declaring any personal or financial interests that could impact professional judgment or child safety.
- Hold and maintain a valid Working with Children Check, Police Check, and NDIS Worker Screening Check, and participate honestly in recruitment and screening processes.

- Support children, families, and staff to raise concerns in safe and respectful ways, providing accessible reporting options.
- Respond to complaints fairly, promptly, and transparently, addressing issues within established timelines and keeping all parties informed and as per What Ability Policy and Procedures.
- Protect whistleblowers and reporters from retaliation, ensuring a supportive environment for raising concerns.
- Complete all annual mandatory training outlined by the NDIS, all state-based child safety and What Ability requirements.
- Participate in supervision, reflective practice, and ongoing learning opportunities to improve child protection practices.
- Contribute to reviews, audits, and improvement initiatives, helping to strengthen child safety policies and procedures.

I must never:

- Engage in any form of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or harassment, including physical, emotional, or sexual misconduct.
- Use language or behaviour that is inappropriate, discriminatory, or harmful, such as derogatory remarks or exclusionary actions.
- Develop relationships with children that could be seen as secretive, exclusive, or exploitative, such as offering gifts or special treatment.
- Be alone with a child unnecessarily or without approval, failing to minimise risks, by not ensuring another approved adult is present.
- Arrange personal contact outside professional settings, keeping interactions professional by avoiding private communication.
- Disclose sensitive information about children, respecting privacy, by sharing details only with authorised personnel or as required by law.
- Exposing children to inappropriate material or environments, compromising safety, by allowing access to unsuitable content or locations.
- Ignore suspicions, disclosures, or allegations of harm, breaching legal and ethical duties, by failing to report promptly.
- Use corporal punishment, isolation, or other punitive measures, which are abusive, by refraining from disciplinary actions.
- Direct children to engage in unsafe or inappropriate activities, prioritising their wellbeing, by avoiding risky or exploitative tasks.
- Humiliate, frighten, or belittle children, maintaining a positive environment, by using encouraging and supportive approaches.
- Conduct unsupervised or unapproved one-on-one meetings with children, ensuring visibility, by adhering to supervision protocols.
- Share personal contact details or engage in unmonitored online interactions, avoiding boundary crossings, by using only approved channels.

Breach of Policy

Breaches of this Code will be dealt with in line with What Ability's Policies & Procedures. Serious breaches may result in disciplinary action, including termination. The Chair of the Board will deal with breaches of this policy by Directors and Board Committee Directors.

Responsibilities

- All Directors, executives, employees, volunteers, and contractors must adhere to this policy.
- The CEO or delegate is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented and up to date, and will monitor the policy for effectiveness and compliance.
- Where a position or organisational title changes or is no longer the title that appears in a policy document, and where a position named in the policy has changed, the nearest appropriate equivalent position will have the same role and/or responsibility until that policy is updated.

Acknowledgement and Adherence

All staff, contractors, and volunteers of What Ability are expected to read, understand, and adhere to this Code of Conduct at all times.

By being part of What Ability, you commit to:

- Upholding the standards, values, and principles outlined in this Code.
- Acting in the best interest of participants, children, young people, colleagues, and the community.
- Reporting any breaches or concerns to the appropriate What Ability representative.
- Maintaining professional, ethical, and lawful behaviour in all circumstances.

Adherence to this Code of Conduct is mandatory, and breaches may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

This Code applies to all staff, contractors, and volunteers from the date of publication and will form part of the obligations for all new staff as part of onboarding.