

Safe family rules for kids in out-of-home care

FOR PROFESSIONALS

Clear rules and boundaries are important for all households. These strategies help carers reduce and respond to challenging behaviours. When problematic and harmful sexual behaviours (PHSB) emerge, current rules and boundaries should be reinforced with safe family rules. These are rules that aim to reduce ongoing behaviours of concern.

Safe family rules are developed to:

- ensure kids know what's expected of them
- help adults to monitor and supervise effectively
- increase safety for everyone.

For kids displaying PHSB, safe family rules will form part of a broader safety plan.

Developing safe family rules

Safe family rules should be developed in collaboration with kids and their carers. To be most effective, they should be:

- simple
- written in child-friendly language
- focussed on what kids should do, rather than what they shouldn't do
- individualised to the household, child/teen and carer.

Rules should directly address behaviours of concern, and be easy to implement in the household. Some examples might include:

- Get changed in your bedroom or bathroom. Make sure you're alone and the door is closed.
- Keep your hands away from other kids' bodies.
- Mobile phones to be left on the kitchen bench between 8pm and 8am.
- Everyone sleeps in their own bed.
- Only watch G and PG rated movies.
- Ask permission before using the laptop.

Implementing safe family rules

When safe family rules are effectively implemented, they can assist with supervision and monitoring of kids displaying PHSB. They also increase safety for kids displaying PHSB, and those around them.



Start by providing a written copy of the rules to carers and the child/teen displaying PHSB. Next, work closely with them to ensure understanding and that all rules can be followed consistently. To be effective, safe family rules must be familiar to supervising adults.

Check in regularly with carers to ensure rules are working well and being followed – if not, time to update them. Work with kids and carers to determine which safe family rules are working, and which need to change.