



Child Safe Policy

Our Service is committed to the safety, wellbeing and support of all children and young people within our facility. Management, Staff and volunteers will treat all children with the utmost respect and understanding. Our Service believes that:

All children should be safe, happy and empowered. We have zero tolerance of child abuse and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures and educator training.

National Quality Standards (NQS)

| Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety | |
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| 2.3 | Each child is protected |
| 2.3.2 | Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect Children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury |
| 2.3.4 | Educators, coordinators and educators are aware of their roles and responsibilities to respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect. |

Education and Care Services National Regulations

| Children (Education and Care Services) National Law | |
|---|--|
| 84 | Awareness of child protection law |
| 273 | Course in child protection Understanding of the Child Safety Standards and Child Safety Statement |

PURPOSE

Preventing child abuse and responding to allegations is everyone's business. We believe it is our responsibility as educators to ensure the safety welfare and wellbeing of all children.

We follow the Child Safe standards in relation to driving a continuous improvement for all, in relation to protecting children from abuse. We use these standards to ensure that we do everything possible to prevent and respond to child abuse.

Our commitment to Child safety

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated **VERY** seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety. We are committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and reducing and removing these risks. We will regularly train our staff at induction and throughout the year. We support and respect all children, as well as our educators and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

To create and maintain a child safe organization, an early childhood service must have in place,

- **Standard 1** Strategies to embed an organizational culture of child safety, including thorough effective leadership arrangements.
- **Standard 2** A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety.
- **Standard 3** A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behavior with children.
- **Standard 4** Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personal.
- **Standard 5** Processes for responding to and reporting child abuse.
- **Standard 6** Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.
- **Standard 7** Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

We aim to provide the children at our Service with the opportunity to develop to their full potential free from harm and abuse.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management and visitors of the Service.

Our Children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our service. We involve them where possible in making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our service, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we,

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally

Our Educators, staff and volunteers

The policy guides our educators and volunteers on how to behave with children in our service. All our educators and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct. Educators and families will be given the opportunity to contribute to the review of the code of conduct. We will use a Child Safety Audit to work through the standards and allow family input into these processes.

Training and Supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in the service understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all educators and volunteers (in addition to parents/guardians and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our educators, staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimize risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our educators and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse., to promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds and the safety of children with a disability.

All educators and volunteers will read the child protection, child safe policy and sign the child safety statement prior to commencement. All will be supervised regularly to ensure a great understanding of the services commitment to children's safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behavior towards children is safe and appropriate. Any inappropriate behavior will be reported through the correct channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. Our selection criteria demonstrate a commitment to child safety and awareness.

All people engaged in child related work including volunteers are required to hold a current working with children check, Child protection certificate and have some knowledge of the mandatory reporting process.

Fair procedure for Personnel

The safety and wellbeing of the children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to our educators, staff and volunteers. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using the departments incident reporting forms, including investigation updates. All records are stored securely. If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families about any actions we as a service will take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be educators, staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative responsibilities

Our service takes our legal responsibilities seriously including:

- **Failure to Disclose** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect** People of authority in our service will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any Personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

Risk Management

In Victoria organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess and take steps to minimize child abuse risks, which includes risks posed by physical environments (for example doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no educators or staff and volunteers having contact with a child on social media)

Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

Our service takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. All involved with children are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, educators and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behavior.

We have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place.

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident.

Factors contributing to a reasonable belief may be:

- A child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- Behavior consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- Observing suspicious behavior

Regular Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and following any incidents that occur. We will ensure that families and children can contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, cultural and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Victoria Specifications

In Victoria, the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 section 182 (1) and 184 states that where the following mandated reporters form the belief on reasonable grounds that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm because of physical injury or sexual abuse and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type must make a report to Child Protection Services as soon as practicable:

- Teachers
- Principals
- Doctors
- Nurses including midwives
- Police.

Under the Education and Training and Reform Act 2006, a person registered as a teacher or an early childhood teacher, principles of government and non-government schools within the meaning of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 are also mandatory reporters.

In addition, any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child needs protection, can make a report the Victorian Child Protection Service. It is the Child Protection worker's job to assess and, where necessary, further investigate if a child or young person is at risk of harm.

| Reporting Authority | Contact Details |
|------------------------------|--|
| Department of Human Services | Child Protection Crisis Line (urgent concerns) Ph. 13 12 78 Ph. 1800 212 936 National Child Abuse Helpline: Ph. 1800 99 10 99 (9am-5pm AEST) |

Source

- Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2015,
- Child Safe Standards 2016
- Child Safe Audit
- Child safety Statement
- Department of Human Services
- ECA Code of Ethics.
- Guide to the National Quality Standard.
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- The Ombudsman’s Act 1974
- Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference (2005). *Creating safe environments for children: Organisations, employees and volunteers: National framework.*
- Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference (2005). Schedule: Guidelines for building the capacity of child-safe organisations. *Creating safe environments for children: Organisations, employees and volunteers: National framework.*
- Vic Community Services: VIC Mandatory Reporting Guide
- The Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998
- Early Years Learning Framework
- National Quality Standard.
- Ombudsman VIC www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au
- <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>
- Supporting changing family’s future
- **National Comparison of Child Protection System**
- Reporting abuse and neglect
- Child Wise
- <https://www.childwise.org.au/page/48/state-legislation-reporting-nt>
- Mandatory Reporting

Review

| Date Reviewed | Modifications | Next Policy Review Date |
|---------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Aug 2017 | | Aug 2018 |
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