



Child Protection Policy

Version Control

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Skunkworks Community Limited is a registered company under the Corporations Act 2001.

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1. Introduction

This policy is designed to protect all children and young people who attend events organised and managed by Skunkworks Community Limited and Skunkworks Productions Limited. The policy defines children and young people as anyone under the age of 18 years and includes students attending to receive assistance with their study, tutors, and visitors to the homework club.

Where “Skunkworks” is used in this document it means both Skunkworks Community Limited and Skunkworks Productions Limited. This policy applies to both organisations.

Child Protection Statement: Skunkworks is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people accessing our service. We support the rights of the child and will act without hesitation to ensure a child-safe environment is maintained at all times. We also support the rights and wellbeing of our staff and volunteers and encourage their active participation in building and maintaining a secure environment for all participants.

2. Policy coverage

This policy applies to all individuals involved with Skunkworks, including:

- paid and volunteer staff
- children and young people participating in the program
- visitors including parents and family members, program partners, etc.

Skunkworks expects that all those involved with the program will follow the policies and procedures outlined in this document. If breaches of these policies and procedures occur, they will be dealt with by our Child/Youth Safety Officer (see section 5 for more information on this position).

3. Documents

The following documents form part of Skunkworks Child Safety Procedures and should be read in conjunction with this policy.

Document	Version	Last reviewed	Link
Child Safety Code of Conduct.	1	31 May 2020	click here
What to do when an allegation of child abuse is made	1	31 May 2020	
Child Safety Incident Report	1	31 May 2020	
WWC spreadsheet	1	31 May 2020	

4. What is child abuse?

Child abuse can take the form of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or neglect. Child abuse can have long term and significant effects on a child or young person’s development. Skunkworks is committed to responding without delay to any suspicions of child abuse or neglect.

4.1. Physical Abuse

This abuse occurs when a person intentionally injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. The injury may involve: slapping, kicking, punching, shaking, burning, shoving, grabbing, pinching, biting, strangling or any other form of behaviour causing physical injury. Physical abuse can also involve a situation where a parent or caregiver is not adequately ensuring a child or young person's safety, leading to them being placed in situations of extreme physical danger.

4.2. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is when a person uses their power over a child or young person to involve them in sexual activity. Sexual abuse covers a wide range of sexual activities including both contact and non-contact situations. Contact situations can involve fondling of the child or young person's genitals, being forced to touch somebody else's genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or other object. Non-contact abuse can involve obscene calls or remarks made in any written form. It involves exposure to pornography or being photographed for pornography.

3.3. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse involves a consistent attack on the child or young person's self-esteem to the extent that it is affecting the child or young person's physical, emotional, social and/or intellectual development. It can take the form of rejection, put-downs, intimidation, threats, frightening or isolating the child or young person.

3.4. Neglect

This is a situation where a child or young person's basic daily needs are not being met and this is risking their health and development. It can involve a lack of food, clothing, personal hygiene, shelter, medical treatment or appropriate supervision.

4. Legal Requirements

Skunkworks is aware of its legal and moral obligation to protect the children and young people in its care. It recognises that it could be legally liable for any abuse that may occur while a child or young person is in its care. Therefore, we are committed to keeping those individuals employed by the homework club, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, aware of their legal obligations in relation to child protection.

Working with Children Check:

Under the Working with Children Act 2005 a person who is performing 'child related work' needs to apply for a Working with Children Check. Particularly relevant to Skunkworks is section 9.3 under the Act that requires a check of all persons involved with "coaching or tuition services of any kind for children". All individuals over 18 years of age who are working in a paid or voluntary capacity with the Skunkworks need to have a current Working with Children Check and Police Check.

Children, Youth and Families Act:

In Victoria the Child, Youth and Families Act 2005 is the legislation which covers the protection of children and young people. Under Victorian law a child is regarded as being a person under 17 years of age. For more detailed information and a link to the Act see Appendix 1.

5. A Child Safe Organisation

Skunkworks is committed to protecting the children and young people in its care and will promote itself as a child safe organisation in any materials published whether in hard copy or on electronic media, using the following Child Protection

Statement:

Skunkworks is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people accessing our service. We support the rights of the child and will act without hesitation to ensure a child-safe environment is maintained at all times. We also support the rights and wellbeing of our staff and volunteers and encourage their active participation in building and maintaining a secure environment for all participants.

Child/Youth Safety Officer: Skunkworks has a designated Child/Youth Safety Officer. The Child/Youth Safety Officer is supported in this role by the Directors of Skunkworks. The Child/Youth Safety Officer for 2022 is Colin Harrison.

The Child/Youth Safety Officer must:

- Have undergone at least one day's training on child abuse and creating a child safe organisation to fulfil this role.
- Attend further training as appropriate and take proactive steps to be kept informed of developments in the field of child abuse prevention.
- Be the first contact point for anyone involved with Skunkworks who has a concern about a child or young person.
- Confidentially document minor concerns about a child or young person that could build into an overall concerning picture. Make sure any records are kept strictly confidential and include date and signature.
- Report any concerns to police or Child Protection or support a fellow staff member/volunteer who is making a report.
- Ensure all those involved with Skunkworks are aware of all policies and procedures connected with the Skunkworks Child Protection Policy.
- Monitor any concerning emails, messages or images on the Internet or via other technology that arise in the course of the Skunkworks program.
- Proactively promote a culture at Skunkworks that is a welcoming, secure and supportive environment so children and young people will feel comfortable in expressing any difficulties or concerns they may have.
- Oversee the annual review and changes to the policies and procedures connected with Skunkworks Child Protection Policy.
- Arrange training needed in relation to child protection or protective behaviours for staff, volunteers, children or young people involved with Skunkworks.
- Coordinate follow up that may be required after a report of abuse to the police or Child Protection.
- Liaise with the Directors of Skunkworks who are responsible for handling any media enquires that arise.

6. Reporting Procedures

Skunkworks has the following guiding principles in relation to responding to concerns about a child or young person's safety and welfare. Skunkworks recognises that any allegation of abuse involves:

- The right of the child /young person to be listened to, protected and supported
- The right of the child/young person and their families to have their concerns acted on
- The right of the alleged perpetrator to a fair process
- Everyone’s right to privacy
- The responsibility of Skunkworks to ensure all concerns are dealt with promptly and in a respectful manner.

6.3. Procedures for all staff (paid or voluntary):

The Child/Youth Safety Officer must be immediately informed:

- If a child or young person is displaying signs indicating they are being abused or may have been abused. This includes when a child or young person has disclosed any information that they have been abused/neglected or that they know of another child or young person who has.
- Of any behaviour by staff (paid or voluntary), parents, visitors to the program or between children/young people and their peers that is concerning e.g. someone seeking to be alone with a particular child or group of children.
- At all times the confidentiality and privacy of those involved must be respected.
- Debrief with the Child/Youth Safety Officer as required.
- It is the responsibility of any staff member paid or voluntary who has raised a concern about a child or young person’s welfare to ensure their concerns have been acted upon.

6.4. Procedures for Child/Youth Safety Officer:

- Once notified of a concern the Child/Youth Safety Officer will then proceed to manage the case confidentially.
- Steps should be taken to immediately ensure the child or young person’s emotional and physical safety. If appropriate the child or young person’s parents or caregivers will be notified.
- If necessary, prior to formally reporting the incident, the Child/Youth Safety Officer may consult with the Department of Human Services Child Protection Unit or Childwise for advice and information.
- When a decision is being made to report to the police or the Department of Human Services Child Protection Unit, the Child/Youth Safety Officer, if feasible, will do so in consultation with the Manager of the XYZ Community Centre. Any notification must happen promptly and the child or young person’s safety/welfare should be the top priority.
- The Child/Youth Safety Officer will keep confidential written documentation of any concerns raised including steps taken in follow up. All documentation should be dated and signed.
- Any support required by the child, young person, their family or staff of the XYZ Homework Club is to be arranged by the Child/Youth Safety Officer.
- If the alleged perpetrator of the abuse is a staff member (paid or voluntary) of XYZ Homework Club, the Child/Youth Safety Officer must initially remove this person from contact with the children and young people. This may include “standing down” the person until investigations are complete. Consultation with the Manager of the XYZ Community Centre needs to occur prior to the “standing down” or as soon as possible afterwards. Formal follow up in relation to a staff member being stood down is to be managed by the Manager of the XYZ Community Centre.

- Throughout the whole process the Child/Youth Safety Officer must keep the Manager of the XYZ Community Centre informed of any developments in the situation.
- The Child/Youth Safety Officer must ensure their concerns about a child or young person's welfare are being acted upon, this may mean in some circumstances reporting again to police or the Department of Human Services Child Protection Unit.

6.5. Procedures for the Directors of Skunkworks

- Support the Child/Youth Safety Officer and XYZ Homework Club as required. • Is responsible for the formal follow up of a staff member being "stood down".
- Will respond to any media and external enquires to the situation. individuals and our communities."

7. Indicators of Abuse

When looking at indicators of abuse, adults need to be aware that if any of the below do exist it does not automatically mean abuse is happening. This is where professional judgment is vital. It is expected that if anyone has doubts or concerns no matter how small about a child or young person, that these will be discussed as soon as possible with the Child/Youth Safety Officer.

Some indicators of Physical Abuse:

- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts, welts.
- Symptoms indicating poisoning.
- Fractured bones
- Internal injuries
- Shaking injuries
- Evidence of strangulation
- Refuses to talk about injuries or implausible reasons given for injuries
- Wary or distrustful of adults
- Expresses little or no emotion when hurt
- Is scared of returning home or of their parents being contacted.
- Withdraws from physical contact
- Is aggressive towards others or alternately can be very passive or compliant
- Wears winter clothing that covers their arms and legs in warmer weather.
- Self-destructive behaviour
- Regular "running away" incidences
- Is fearful when other children cry or shout

Some indicators of Sexual Abuse:

- Itchiness, soreness, discharge or unexplained bleeding
- Injury to genital or rectal area
- Discomfort in urinating or defecating
- Frequent urinary tract infections
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy in adolescence where the identity of the father is vague or secret
- Bruising and other injuries to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen and thighs
- Torn, stained or bloodied underwear
- Difficulty walking or sitting

- Anxiety related illnesses like anorexia or bulimia
- Shows persistent and age-inappropriate sexual activity
- Very attentive to adults of a particular sex or fearful of a particular sex
- Display an unusual interest in the genitals of others
- Acting out sexual behaviour with adults, dolls or other children.
- Open displays of sexuality e.g. repeated public masturbation
- Precocious knowledge of sexual matters.
- Complains of stomach or headaches
- Regressive behaviour eg bedwetting, separation anxiety
- Acting out behaviour such as aggression, lying, stealing, running away, drug or alcohol abuse, suicide attempts.
- Difficulty sleeping and nightmares
- Excessive bathing

Some indicators of Emotional Abuse:

- Delayed development in one or more areas
- Speech disorders
- High anxiety
- Low self-esteem
- Very aggressive or passive
- Difficulties in relating to adults or peers
- Inappropriate behaviour for their age eg. overly adult such as parenting other children to overly infantile eg. thumb-sucking.
- Fear in new situations
- Excessive running away or drug/alcohol abuse.
- Compulsive stealing

Some indicators of Neglect:

- Regularly tired and/ or hungry as a result may steal food or fall asleep in class
- Poor hygiene
- Low self-esteem
- Left unsupervised for long lengths of time or abandoned by parents/caregivers.
- Regularly wears clothing that is not suitable for the weather
- Medical needs that have not been attended to.
- Frequently away from school or arriving very late
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Poor social relations or indiscriminate with affection
- Hangs around at school or other programs outside their regular hours.

8. Risk Management

All programs and activities at Skunkworks are required to undergo regular child protection risk analysis. This will be carried out by Child/Youth Safety Officer and the Directors of Skunkworks. The risks are evaluated and strategies developed to minimise the likelihood of harm occurring.

9. Recruitment, Screening, Training and Supervision of Staff and Volunteers

Skunkworks is committed to ensuring all staff and volunteers undergo comprehensive screening to create a safe environment for the children and young people accessing its services.

Recruitment Procedures

- In all advertisements and material promoting positions, the organisation's commitment to child protection and screening mechanisms should be made clear
- Written position descriptions must be developed for all positions, which include key selection criteria and promote Skunkworks commitment to child protection.
- Applicants should be encouraged to self-assess their suitability for the position and be provided with further information about the organisation and position.
- All volunteer applicants must complete a volunteer application form, which includes a requirement to provide at least one professional and one personal referee

Interview and Background Check Procedures

- STAFF: Applicants meeting key selection criteria will be selected for interview. Panel interviews should be conducted with behavioural and situational based questions. The organisation's commitment to child protection should be reiterated, including mention of the Skunkworks Child Protection Policy and outlining of screening mechanisms.
- VOLUNTEERS: Face to face interviews must be conducted on prospective volunteers to understand volunteer motivations and to inform prospective volunteers about the volunteer role, program operations, screening mechanisms and compulsory training.
- Two forms of identity must be checked at volunteer and staff interviews, including one with a photograph.
- Working With Children Checks must be conducted on all staff and volunteers – receipt should be sighted before volunteers commence and volunteers must only work under direct supervision until check arrives
- Police Checks must be conducted on all staff and volunteers
- All applicants must be provided with a copy of Skunkworks Child Protection Policy.
- Two reference checks should be conducted by phone for preferred applicants (volunteer and staff) and should include verification of applicant's identity and employment history.

Procedures for Induction, Training and Supervision of Staff

- Adherence to Skunkworks Child Protection Policy is required by all staff as part of the Contract of Employment. New staff must be given a copy of the Skunkworks Child Protection Policy and asked to sign a clause acknowledging they have read, understood and agreed to abide by the policy.
- During the probationary period of 3 months all new staff will be oriented in relation to:
 - understanding, recognising and responding to abuse and neglect;
 - understanding the Skunkworks Child Protection Policy; and
 - other important aspects of their role related to protecting the wellbeing of children and young people
- Staff should participate in education and training programs to improve their knowledge of child protection and best practice in responding to allegations of abuse and neglect.
- Staff should be supported and supervised as positive role models to children and young people. Any concerns in relations to their suitability to work with children and young people

should be addressed in the Performance Management process. Induction, Training and Supervision of Volunteers

- As part of the induction process, Skunkworks will discuss the Code of Conduct with volunteers and ensure the volunteer understands the responsibilities and boundaries of the role. The Code of Conduct includes a clause acknowledging the volunteer has read, understood and agreed to abide by the Skunkworks Child Protection Policy.
- Volunteers should be trained about the Skunkworks Child Protection Policy, including learning about understanding, recognising and responding to abuse and neglect.
- Volunteers should have the opportunity to participate in additional workshops and training to improve the protection of children and young people.
- Volunteers should be supported and supervised as positive role models to children and young people. Any concerns in relation to their suitability to work with children and young people should be addressed by the Skunkworks Directors, involving the Child/Youth Safety Officer, in private discussion with the relevant volunteer.
- Skunkworks will evaluate the volunteer program regularly.

10. Drugs and Alcohol

Skunkworks recognises that the use of alcohol and drugs by staff and volunteers can impact on:

- the safety and well-being of the children and young people accessing the program
- the integrity and professionalism of the program, and
- the degree to which staff and volunteers behave as appropriate role models

As such staff and volunteers should not attend the program under the influence of alcohol or any recreational drugs. Individuals taking prescription drugs that may affect their ability to carry out their duties in a responsible and professional manner should discuss this with the Skunkworks Directors.

Skunkworks acknowledges that the use, supply and possession of recreational drugs, and the use of alcohol for people under the age of 18 is against the law. Skunkworks also recognises that the use of recreational drugs and and/or alcohol can have negative impacts on a young person's physical health, and their social and emotional wellbeing. The program does not allow the possession, supply or use of drugs or alcohol to anyone under 18 years of age during the running of the any Skunkworks event. This includes the possession of drug paraphernalia.

11. Code of Conduct

Skunkworks seeks to clarify acceptable behaviour in order to enhance the safety and wellbeing of the children and young people accessing its program, and to protect staff, volunteers and the organisation. All new staff and volunteers need to read and sign the code of conduct before commencing.

12. Review and Monitoring

The policies and procedures outlined in this document are to be formally reviewed at least annually. Feedback on the policy will be sought from: staff and volunteers; children and young people attending; and from anyone else involved with the program. The review will assess:

- whether all parts of this policy and related procedures are being successfully adhered to and whether any alterations are necessary
- which staff member will be the Child/Youth Safety Officer for the coming year
- any training needs for the coming year
- changes or updates in information and/or law related to Child Protection.

13. Acknowledgements

Information contained in this resource has been sourced from following locations:

- Child Protection and Care, Department of Human Services, 'Responding to Child Abuse', 2002.
- Ardoch Youth Foundation, 'Youth Safeguard Policy', 2007
- Childwise: 'Choose With Care: A handbook to build safer organisations for children', 2004