

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Purpose

This policy sets out how everyone in our organisation can work together to keep children safe.

Scope

This policy applies to everyone in our organisation (whether paid or unpaid) including staff members, board and committee members, contractors, volunteers, children, families and visitors. This is because everyone at our organisation is responsible for child safety and wellbeing.

This policy also applies to all our services and activities, which means it applies:

- during and outside our core business hours
- on our physical premises
- in any other location where we conduct our services or activities
- in our online environments.

Policy

Inclusive and supportive environment

We welcome and support all children to be part of our organisation and recognise that every child is unique.

Our staff and volunteers strive to be inclusive, well informed, respectful and responsive to the diverse needs of all children.

We do not tolerate bullying, harassment, discrimination and racism and take decisive action against it.

We recognise the importance of protecting children with specific needs related to:

- culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- disability
- out of home care
- trauma
- identification as LGBTQIA+
- infancy.



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We are committed to providing an environment where children who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander feel safe to practice their culture.

We respect the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

We recognise the role that connection to culture can have for the safety, self-esteem, confidence, sense of identity and belonging of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Child empowerment

We empower children and educate them about their rights. This includes their right to be protected from child abuse, bullying, harassment, discrimination and racism, and their right to be heard and to be involved in decisions that affect them.

We educate and support children to:

- identify child safe environments
- understand the expected standards of behaviour from adults and other children
- recognise unsafe behaviour and unsafe situations
- identify and manage risks in their physical and online environments.

We provide this information in a way that is age appropriate, culturally safe, accessible, and easy to understand.

At our organisation children have a voice, and we listen to them. Children are encouraged and supported to speak up about concerns. When a child speaks-up they are treated respectfully, and their concerns are taken seriously.

Children are given opportunities to participate in decisions that affect them. We ask them to tell us about their needs, and how we can best support them.

Collaboration with families

We recognise and respect the role of parents, carers and families have in keeping children safe and managing their wellbeing.

We understand that parents, carers and families have a unique understanding of their child. This includes valuable information about their child's strengths, abilities, interests and challenges.

We welcome parents, carers and families to participate in decisions affecting their child. We also encourage them to partner with us to protect the safety and wellbeing of children.

We do this by:

- providing them with information about our child safe policies and practices
- encouraging them to provide feedback and supporting them to make complaints if they have concerns
- providing them with information about incidents that impact on their child
- inviting them to participate in the review of child safety policies and procedures.

Recruitment

We use child safe recruitment practices.

We understand that our staff and volunteers are at the frontline of keeping our children safe.

We take steps to attract, recruit and retain staff and volunteers who:

- are suitable to work with children
- value and respect children
- understand the different needs of children
- engage in culturally safe practices
- understand their roles and responsibilities in providing for child safety and wellbeing.

Induction and training

We are committed to supporting our staff and volunteers to develop and enhance their knowledge, skills and capacity in providing for the safety and wellbeing of children.

All new staff and volunteers go through an induction program that includes:

- our child safety and wellbeing systems, policies and procedures
- expected standards of behaviour
- how to manage feedback, complaints and incidents
- their reporting obligations
- privacy and information sharing
- records management.

Staff and volunteers are provided with ongoing and regular training as needed such as:

- preventing, identifying, assessing, mitigating and managing risks to the safety and wellbeing of children
- the different types of child abuse and the indicators that a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed
- identifying and responding to bullying, harassment, discrimination
- supporting children who have been harmed.

Codes of Conduct

We have Codes of Conduct in place that set a high standard of behaviour that we expect from our staff, volunteers, our children, our families and visitors.

Our Codes of Conduct:

- ensure that all adults and children understand what acceptable conduct is by setting clear boundaries and expectations
- explain the potential consequences of engaging in unacceptable conduct
- help children understand what they can reasonably expect from the adults and children around them.

We enforce our Codes of Conduct.

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Risk management

We are committed to preventing, identifying, assessing, mitigating and managing risks to the safety and wellbeing of children.

We regularly conduct comprehensive risk assessments of all our services, programs, activities and facilities offered to children. We also conduct these comprehensive risk assessments whenever we use services, programs, activities and facilities that are managed by third parties.

We also assess and manage risks that may arise in our online environments.

Incident management

Our staff are alert to the risks of child abuse, bullying, harassment, discrimination and racism. They have been trained to recognise this conduct, and to respond appropriately.

Our staff take appropriate action in relation to any child safety risks or incidents.

Incident management action may include reporting to relevant authorities, taking proactive steps to prevent further harm to children, taking appropriate action in relation to those who may have engaged in harmful conduct, and supporting children and others who may have been impacted.

Feedback and complaints

We encourage all children, families, staff, volunteers and community members to report any concerns for the safety and wellbeing of children.

We believe feedback and complaints give us a valuable opportunity to reflect on our practices, and to identify and manage any risks to children.

Anyone can provide feedback. This can include expressing concerns about a policy, procedure or practice, or providing a suggestion about how we can improve the safety and wellbeing of children who are part of our organisation.

Anyone can make a complaint. This may include making a complaint about someone who may have breached the Code of Conduct, or reporting an incident in which a child was harmed.

All feedback and complaints are taken seriously, documented and actioned. We follow a proper and thorough process in line with our complaints policy and procedure.

Regular review of policies and practices

We understand that child safety is an ongoing responsibility that needs to be continuously reviewed and improved.

We review our child safety policies, procedures and practices at least every 12 months, and after any significant feedback, complaint or incident related to child safety.

We assess our implementation of the Child Safe Standards.

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We communicate any relevant and appropriate information from reviews with children, families, staff and our community.

We consult with staff, volunteers, children, families and the community about how to improve the ways in which we provide for the safety and wellbeing of children who are part of our organisation.

Privacy and information sharing

We collect, use and disclose information in accordance with our legislative obligations including child information sharing laws.

We protect and promote children's rights to privacy and confidentiality.

We also believe that appropriate and timely information sharing and collaboration between services, where the law requires or permits, can improve child safety and wellbeing outcomes.

We take our reporting obligations and any concerns for the safety or wellbeing of children seriously.

Records management

We make and store records in accordance with our legislative obligations.

All records relevant to child safety and wellbeing are maintained appropriately.

Legal responsibilities

We take our legal responsibilities seriously.

This includes but is not limited to, our:

- duty of care
- obligation to implement the Child Safe Standards
- reporting obligations
- information sharing obligations
- records management obligations.

Related Policies

Our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is one of several policies that we have in place to keep children safe. These policies can be accessed through our organisation's ChildAware portal or by contacting the organisation directly.

Review

This policy will be reviewed at least every 12 months or following any significant child safety incidents.

Contact

If you would like to talk to someone about this policy, you can contact our Child Safety Officer or a leader at our organisation.

You can also find important information in our related policies via our organisation's ChildAware portal or by contacting the organisation directly.

If you or a child are in immediate danger, contact 000 (Triple Zero) immediately.

If you or a child require support or professional assistance, contact:

- your local health practitioner
- a counsellor
- Lifeline - Tel. 13 11 14 - www.lifeline.org.au
- Beyond Blue - Tel. 1300 22 4636 - www.beyondblue.org.au
- Kids Helpline - Tel. 1800 55 1800 - www.kidshelpline.com.au.