



Child Safe Environment

Policy

At Wonder Kidz we hold the care, safety, and wellbeing of our children as a central and fundamental responsibility of our programs. Wonder Kidz has a moral, legal, and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing environment where our children are respected, and they are safe and feel safe.

POLICY RATIONALE

This policy provides a set of clear guidelines to strengthen safety for all children attending our programs. The policy has considered the Victorian Child Safe Standards in relation to supporting efforts to drive cultural change to protect children from abuse. This policy provides standards for:

- Creating safe environments in which children can participate in all aspects of programs and experiences in safety and comfort.
- Ensuring all staff members have adequate knowledge of risk identification, safety and emergency procedures for supervision and advocacy of children in our care.
- Ensuring all staff understand and comply with policies and procedures for reporting concerns of child safety as per legislation and regulations.

POLICY STATEMENT

At Wonder Kidz we hold the care, safety, and wellbeing of our children as a central and fundamental responsibility of our programs. Wonder Kidz has a moral, legal, and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing environment where our children are respected, and they are safe and feel safe. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torre Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALO)

backgrounds. Wonder Kidz has committed to be a child safe organization.

In actioning this commitment, Wonder Kidz have established policies designed for the safety of children. In line with our stance against child abuse, we will treat all child abuse, allegations and/or child safety breach, seriously. Wonder Kidz staff are aware of our expectations and consequences as outlined in our policies, procedures, induction, and training programs.

Our team supports the seven child safe standards and promotes these with staff, families, and children, through the induction and ongoing training processes. These seven standards being:

- **Standard 1:** Strategies to embed an organizational culture of child safety, including through 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 personnel.
- **Standard 5:** Process for responding to and reporting suspected 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.

Our Wonder Kidz:

This policy empowers children who are vital and active participants in our organization. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We accommodate their preferences and respect what they express. We promote diversity and tolerance in our organization, and welcome people from all walks of life and cultural background.

In particular we:

- Promote cultural safety, participation, and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- Promote cultural safety, participation, and empowerment of children from CALD backgrounds.
- Ensure that children with disability are safe and can participate equally.

Our Wonder Team:

This policy informs all staff of Wonder Kidz' expectations in interacting and caring for children. All our staff must agree to abide by our Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct specifies the expected standards all Wonder Kidz staff must adhere to when working with children. All staff as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Code of Conduct. All staff members wear an easy to recognize Wonder Kidz Uniform so all children can quickly and confidentially identify staff.

Visitors to the service:

Any visitors to the service, will always be supervised by a designated staff of the service. Each visitor will be required to identify themselves and the reason for their presence at the service. If the staff feel that their presence is not appropriate, they can:

1. Ask the visitor to leave immediately.
2. If an unauthorized visitor, refuses to leave the service when asked, the Police will be contacted for support to remove the unauthorized person.

In such as case, children will be moved to a safe place to wait for Police support or a lockdown procedure will be enacted, whichever action is deemed by the person in day-to-day charge to be more effective in protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of children and Staff.

3. Wonder Kidz management will be notified immediately of this type of incident.

Training and Supervision

We have a deep commitment to staff training. We acknowledge training and education is a critical component to ensuring all staff understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Wonder Kidz culture encourages all staff, parents, carers and most of all, children, to feel confident and comfortable to discuss any allegations of child abuse and/or child safety concerns. Wonder Kidz` staff training programs include the identification and appropriate responses, as well as risk mitigation strategies, of child abuse. Wonder Kidz support staff through ongoing supervision to:

- Develop skills necessary for the protection of children in our care from abuse
- Promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children; promote the cultural safety of children from CALD backgrounds; and the safety and inclusion of children with disability.

New employees are supervised to ensure the Wonder Kidz' commitments to the message of child safety being everyone's responsibility' is a lived commitment. Supervision of new staff and volunteers also allows monitoring of behaviors towards children and on-going learning to increase is safety and appropriate interactions.

Wonder Kidz commitment means that any behavior threatening the safety of children will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

Wonder Kidz is noticeably clear before and during the recruitment process that our staff have ethical as well as legislative obligations to children. All people engaged in child-related work, are required to hold, and provide evidence of a current Working with Children Check. Wonder Kidz reserves the right to request a Criminal History Check (Police Check) at any time during the recruitment process or employment period. Wonder Kidz reference checks all new staff to ensure the recruitment of safe and trustworthy team members. Where a criminal history is revealed during the recruitment process, the applicant will be given an opportunity to provide further context and/or information. The Working with Children Check will be validated on a regular basis, at least annually.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is Wonder Kidz primary concern. We act in a fair and reasonable manner to all staff. The decisions Wonder Kidz make regarding recruiting, assessment of incidents and/ or exercising disciplinary action, will always occur via transparent processes and will be based on evidence.

Wonder Kidz records all allegations of abuse and/or safety concerns via incident reporting forms. This includes investigation updates and information necessary authorities and/or bodies. All records are securely and confidentially stored.

Where allegation/s of abuse and/or safety concern/s are raised, Wonder Kidz provides information and updates to families and children as appropriate on all progress and any actions Wonder Kidz takes.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded respect privacy of all individuals, be they staff, parents or children, unless there is a risk to a persons' safety. Wonder Kidz have procedures and practices to ensure all personal information is protected and confidentially stored.

Wonder Kidz believes that everyone is entitled to know how information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it. Wonder Kidz acts in a transparent and fair manner through all processes.

Legislative responsibilities

Wonder Kidz prioritizes our legal responsibilities and believe these to be of the utmost seriousness. These legislative commitments include:

- 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 organization 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

All organizations are required to protect children where risks are identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, Wonder Kidz proactively manages risks of abuse to our children. We implement risk management strategies including the identification, assessment, appropriate response and immediate and ongoing risk mitigation strategies to minimize child abuse and risks. All risks to children are noted and managed. These include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child or family, from our programs on social media).

Regular review

This policy is reviewed annually and following significant incidents if they occur. Wonder Kidz ensures that families can contribute to policy design, through surveys

and reflection of feedback provided. Wonder Kidz is an inclusive organization welcoming local Aboriginal communities, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities and people with a disability.

ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

Wonder Kidz treats all allegations seriously and commits to thorough and swift investigation procedures. We work to ensure all children, families, and staff are familiar with the procedures of action including reporting of all identified abuse or inappropriate behaviors.

Wonder Kidz believes everyone has a responsibility to report allegations of abuse where there is reasonable belief that an incident took place.

Wonder Kidz acknowledges a response is required where:

- Behaviors 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 behaviors.

Procedures

- Staff actively supervise all children attending Wonder Kidz programs and ensure appropriate positioning both indoors and outdoors to ensure maximum supervision for children in our care.
- Staff ensure that all children are made aware of program activities location and the program schedules through visuals and social stories designed during program preparations.
- Staff guide program experiences and implement daily routines to ensure children are supervised, supported and safe.
- Wonder Kidz Manager, assess the suitability of the physical environment before Wonder Kidz commitment to any venue. On duty supervisor reassess the environment daily for risk of harm or hazard to children.

- Staff complete a daily safety checklist during the program to ensure that hazards, risk, and concerns are noted and appropriately addressed.
- Staff assist in maintaining a space that is as safe as possible.
- Staff ensure that any other person/s visiting or present at the service support the achievement of an environment that is physically and emotionally secure for all children. Any persons not supporting a child safe environment are asked to leave.
- Staff maintain appropriate ratio to child. Person/s visiting the program during operating times are encouraged to make appointments to ensure these ratios are kept.
- Staff are especially vigilant when the environment includes water hazards. Rigorous risk assessments are completed before such activities. All Staff read and abide by said risk assessments.
- Where water activities are scheduled, Staff inform children of boundary areas and behavioral expectations prior to the commencement of activities. Staff will reflect on the swimming ability consent documents, signed by each child's parent/guardian, to ensure children are placed in appropriate groupings for swimming.
- Staff provide current Working with Children Checks and relevant any other qualifications (Asthma, Anaphylaxis, First Aid, CPR) training to ascertain fitness and propriety of Staff.
- Wonder Kidz ensures that the nominated supervisor in day-to-day charge and all staff at the service who work with children are advised of any existing child protection orders.
- All staff are made aware of any court orders related to child protection through our registration forms.
- Wonder Kidz provides an environment that is free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol for all staff and children. All staff at each service comply with and uphold the tobacco, illicit drugs, and alcohol-free environment. Staff will

observe for the presence of a member of the public smoking or drinking, when outside of the approved indoor spaces and if necessary, will return to a smoke/alcohol free area or the approved indoor space.

- Wonder Kidz provides a "Quiet Rest area" for children to assess at any given time throughout the day.

REFERENCES:

ACECQA National Quality Framework Resource Kit (2012)

Quality Area 2 - Children's health and safety

Quality Area 7 - Leadership and Service Management

Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011) R 84

Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010) S 168(2)(h), S 165

Version control Date: 30. Feb.2021

To be reviewed: Feb.2024