



# Child Protection 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.

Wonder Kidz has a zero tolerance for child abuse and stands against all forms of child abuse, including but not limited to, any form of sexual, physical, serious emotional or psychological abuse and/or serious neglect.

Aspects of child abuse and maltreatment include:

Physical Harm This involves any non-accidental injury to a child or young person by a parent or caregiver. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns, fractures, bites, shaking and throwing.

Sexual Harm This occurs when an adult or someone bigger and/or older than the child uses power or authority over the child or young person to involve the child in sexual activity. Physical force is sometimes involved and often intimidation, threats and engaging a child in “keeping secrets is used as a way of preventing a child from disclosing the abuse. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity. It may include fondling of the child's genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, or exposure of the child to pornography.

Emotional/Psychological Harm This occurs when a child or young person is repeatedly rejected, frightened by threats, or exposed to domestic violence. This may involve a severe lack of appropriate nurturing, scapegoating or verbal abuse such as name calling or being put down by the parent or caregiver to the extent that it affects the child's physical, emotional, and intellectual growth and development.

Environmental Neglect This is failure to provide the child with the necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, and supervision, to the extent that the child's physical health and development are placed at risk.

## POLICY RATIONALE

This policy applies to leaders, staff, children on placement, and parents/guardians whose child/ren are attending, or who wish to enroll child/ren, in Wonder Kidz services. Wonder Kidz has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that all our children are safe in our care.

### Wonder Kidz believe that:

- People caring for children must act in the best interests of the child and take all reasonable steps to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing
- All children have the right to feel safe and are always safe
- Practice will be based on a partnership approach and shared responsibility for children's safety, wellbeing, and development

- All children will be given the opportunity to reach their full potential and participate in society irrespective of their family circumstances and background.

Wonder Kidz is committed to:

- Establishing, maintaining, and strengthening a child-safe environment
- Developing and maintaining an open and aware culture in which children feel valued, respected, and cared for.
- Supporting the rights of the child
- Fulfilling their duty of care by protecting children from any reasonable, foreseeable risk of injury or harm.
- Promoting children's development and wellbeing.

## POLICY OBJECTS

- To ensure a safe environment and minimize the risk of (PREVENT) abuse of children enrolled at Wonder Kidz
- For the reporting of child abuse or suspicion of child abuse.

## PROCEDURES

Management is responsible for:

- Identifying the potential risks of child abuse at Wonder Kidz.
- Developing and implementing effective strategies to prevent child abuse.

- Ensuring staff recruitment and induction supports the implementation of this policy.
- Ensuring appropriate training and education for staff in recognizing child abuse, symptoms of child abuse, what to do and how to respond.
- Ensuring clear procedures are in place for reporting suspicions of child abuse and management of complaints.
- Regularly involving parents/guardians, staff, and children in the development of a child safe environment.
- Protecting the rights of children and families and, to the greatest extent possible, encouraging their participation in any decision-making.
- Offering support to the child, family, and staff in response to concerns or reports relating to the safety and wellbeing of a child in any Wonder Kidz service.
- Implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, and staff.
- Child Safety screening of Team Members: All Team Members, including subcontractors, will need to adhere to child safety screening laws pertaining to the jurisdiction they will be engaged in. There are different requirements for child safety screening documentation and evidence, including exemptions, across all Australian states and territories:

Victoria:

<https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/organisations/organisation-obligations>

Team Members are responsible for:

- Maintaining a professional role with children, with clear boundaries that serve to protect everyone from misunderstandings, perceptions, or a violation of the professional relationship.
- Undertaking training on child protection awareness, including processes for reporting, and managing concerns and/or incidents, in line with the appointed role. This includes mandatory child protection awareness training in some states.
- Being aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse to a child.
- Reporting any concerns, as soon as practicable, of suspected or discovered harm to a child to the Service supervisor on the day that the concerns or child disclosures are noted.
- All educators must report any concerns that a child may be exposed to harm or neglect, directly to the service supervisor on duty but must still notify the Manager to ensure Wonder Kidz meet their regulatory requirements.
- Cooperating with other services or professionals to work in the interests of the child and family.
- Ensuring that families are made aware of the support services available to them and of the benefits these services can provide, especially to those families in most need of assistance.

- Acknowledging and respecting children's individual identity, right to privacy, circumstances, and cultural identity, and being responsive to the needs of the child.
- Educating and empowering children to talk /express about events and situations that make them feel uncomfortable (using their preferred communication tool).
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Reduce the circumstances where a child may be alone with one educator
- Complying with the Interactions with children policy of the service.

Individual State Requirements & Contact Details VICTORIA The relevant ACT for this state is: Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Victoria),(CYFA),[http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol\\_act/cyafa2005252/](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/cyafa2005252/) Under the CYFA (s. 182), doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals, police, out of home care workers (excluding voluntary foster and kinship carers) early childhood workers, youth justice workers and registered psychologists are mandatory reporters.

The Child Protection Manual will assist educators and clarify reporting requirements. Child Protection Training Module: <http://www.elearn.com.au/det/earlychildhood/> Department of Health and Human Services <https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts> Phone: Business hours as per website – subject to regional location 131 278 (After Hours).

The parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Reporting observations and/or concerns about potential situations of child abuse or neglect to the service supervisor on duty.
- participate in the Wonder Kidz parents` frequent feedback surveys, events, parents` meetings and keeping open communication that are conducted to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes.

### Creating a Child Safe Organization

Supporting the principles of creating a child safe organization, Wonder Kidz team will be implementing the following practices to ensure that our environment is safe and nurturing.

1. The organization welcomes children and their families/guardians:
  - Staff readily interact with children in an age appropriate and respectful way.
  - Children are treated as individuals; and staff strive to understand each child`s particular interests and needs.
  - Staff encourage the children participation.
  - Children are supported and comforted appropriately, consistent with the child`s wishes.



2. The organization recognizes that children are vulnerable:

- Staff accept their role to protect children involved with their service.
- Staff accept there is a difference in power between a child and an adult.
- The service maintains appropriate educator to child ratios.
- Policies are in place to minimize the risk involved in one-to-one situations with a child.
- Equipment and activities appear appropriate for the activity and age of the children.
- Information about children is treated confidentially.

3. The organization recognizes that children with special needs, including a disability are among the vulnerable groups:

- All staff relate to all children in a respectful and developmentally appropriate manner.
- Policies are in place to guide the physical and psychological care requirements of all children.
- Staff readily interact with children in an age appropriate and respectful way.
- Policies are in place to minimize the risk involved in one-to-one situations with a child.

4. The organization actively encourages the participation of Aboriginal children:
  - Staff acknowledge and show respect for Aboriginal culture, encouraging positive cultural identity (of the local area in which the service is located).
  - Program planning includes regular experiences that encourage diversity for all children and consideration of the cultural heritage of others.
  - Families are encouraged to identify their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage at enrolment, through a question on the child's enrolment record or at the specific service in which their child/ren is attending.
5. The organization recognizes and responds to the needs of children from diverse cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds:
  - Cultural diversity is welcomed and celebrated.
  - Activities offered are representative of the cultural and religious mix of the local community.
  - Staff acknowledge and show respect for the diversity.
  - Families are encouraged to identify their cultural heritage at enrolment, through a question on the child's enrolment record or at the specific service in which their child/ren is attending.

## Child Protection Risk Assessment

Risk assessment means identifying the potential for child abuse within our service and taking steps to reduce the possibility of it occurring. It is important to create awareness among all staff of possible risks to children from abuse, and how to implement a range of strategies to protect them from those risks and abuse.

### Signs or indicators of harm

- Physical signs of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect may include but are not limited to bruises, burns, sprains, bites, cuts, fractures, frequent hunger, malnutrition, poor hygiene, and inappropriate clothing.
- Behavioral signs of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect may include but are not limited to: wariness or distrust of adults, fear of parents and going home, fearful when other children cry or shout, excessively friendly to strangers, very passive and compliant, headaches or stomach pains, displaying sexual behaviors that is unusual for the child's age, frequent rocking, sucking and biting, difficulty sleeping, withdrawn, aggressive and demanding, highly anxious, delayed speech, acting like a much younger child, often being tired and falling asleep.
- Disclosures by the child or others.
- Reporting made by other associated agencies (i.e., the school in which the service is located)

- any staff do not need permission from parents or caregivers to make a notification, nor do they need to be informed that a notification is being made.
- If any staff make a notification in good faith, they cannot be held legally liable—regardless of the outcome of the notification.
- The identity of the notifier will remain confidential unless the notifier chooses to inform the child and/or family, or if the notifier consents in writing to it being disclosed or the court decides it requires that information.

#### Incident/concern management and reporting guidelines:

When determining if a concern should be reported to the relevant authorities, the educator and management representative should consider:

- The best interests of the child are always the primary consideration, with due regard to confidentiality and fairness to the person against whom the allegation is made.
- all staff are clear about whom they can approach to express concerns.
- Any investigation by the relevant authority will ensure procedural fairness and natural justice for a person suspected of abusing a child.

- Records are kept about any child safety complaint and stored in accordance with the Record Keeping (including Confidentiality of Records) policy.
- Records contain information about the action taken, any internal investigation and any reports made to statutory authorities or professional bodies.
- All staff are aware of the need to report serious matters involving child protection to external authorities. Privacy is maintained, and the information is only reported to appropriate persons.
- The physical and sexual abuse of children are crimes and are reported to the police.
- A report can be made, even if they do not have all the necessary information. • Permission is not required from the parents, and they do not need to be notified that a report has been made.

#### Forming a professional judgement:

Making objective observations and forming a professional judgement are based on:

- Warning signs (or indicators) of harm or potential harm that have been observed or inferred for information.
- Knowledge of child development and sensory triggers.
- Knowledge of any support currently being received by the family.

- Consultation with colleagues and other professionals.
- Professional obligations and duty-of-care responsibilities.
- Established protocols.
- Individual service processes.
- Legal requirements, such as mandatory reporting.

### How to make a notification

- Staff will discuss any observation/disclosure with the Service Director.
- The Service Director will then contact the regional Child Protection office as soon as possible.
- Staff can also self-report to the regional child protection office at any time.
- In an emergency, outreach crisis response, the Child Protection unit operates twenty- four hours.
- Provide the following information:
  1. The child's name, date of birth and address
  2. The parent's name, date of birth, address, and telephone number
  3. If the family identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
  4. The reason for believing that the injury or behavior is the result of abuse or neglect
  5. The reason why the call is being made at this point
  6. An assessment of immediate danger to the child/ren (information may be sought on the whereabouts of the alleged abuser/s)
  7. A description of the injury or behavior observed
  8. Knowledge of other services involved with the family

9. Any other information about the family, such as siblings in the home
  10. Any specific cultural background, language barriers or disability circumstances.
- A notification should still be made, even if the notifier does not have all the necessary information
  - A child protection worker will determine whether the child or young person's described circumstances fall within the legal definition of 'a child in need of protection'.
  - A decision will be made as to the urgency of the situation.
  - The notifier will be informed as to the progress of the investigation as soon as possible
  - The police will become involved in cases of sexual or physical abuse allegations.
  - The notifier may have an ongoing role, including:
    1. Acting as a support person with the child or young person.
    2. Attending a case conference.
    3. Participating in case-planning meetings.
    4. Continuing to monitor the child's behavior.
    5. Observing/monitoring the conditions on a protective court order that may relate to access or contact with a parent/guardian.

6. Liaising with other professionals and child protection workers in relation to a child or young person's wellbeing.
7. Providing written reports for case-planning meetings or court proceedings in relation to the child's wellbeing or progress.

A notification record is to be maintained for Wonder Kidz records of all the above information.

### Background and legislation

The protection of kids with special needs, who are one of the most vulnerable groups in society, is a shared responsibility between the family, the general community, police, government, and professionals working with children. It involves making sure that all children are safe, their needs are met and minimizing the possibility of child abuse. Each adult has a significant role to play to always ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, including making an appropriate response when an allegation has been made.

Each state in Australia may provide individual information about managing reports and suspicions of child abuse in early childhood education and care service. On a National Level, all persons in day-to-day charge of an early childhood service, are required to have some form of child protection training (individual State requirements apply). All other educators are required to have knowledge of their roles and responsibilities in relation to child protection reporting.



This includes the existence and application of the current child protection laws and any obligations they may have under the law.

In Victoria,

The Community Care Division of the Victorian Government's Department of Health and Human Services refers to a publication known as, Protocol Between Child Protection and Children's Services (2004). This directs educators to numerous resources for the reporting processes, including the PROTECT guide.

**References:**

- Australian Childhood Foundation:  
www.childhood.org.au
- Choose with Care (Building Child Safe Organisations), an information and training program: www.childwise.net.au
- Office of the Child Safety Commissioner: www.ocsc.vic.gov.au
- Protocol between Child Protection and Children's Services 2004, Community Care Division Victorian Government Department of Human Services
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Victorian Child Safe Standards
- Safe from Harm, the role of professionals in protecting children and young people:  
www.education.vic.gov.au
- Responding to Child Abuse, DHS Children, Youth & Families publication
- Working with children: www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- ACECQA National Quality Framework Resource Kit (2012)
- Quality Area 1 – Educational Program and Practice.
- Quality Area 2 – Children's health and safety
- Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010), Section 167
- Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011), Regulation 84
- Child Protection Act 1999 (QLD)
- Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (QLD)

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