



CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY (Victoria)

Our Service is committed to the safety, wellbeing and support of all children and young people. Management, staff and volunteers take every reasonable precaution to protect children in our care and treat all children with the utmost respect and understanding at all times. We are dedicated in promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability

Our Service embeds the new Child Safe Standards (VIC) [effective July 2022] and promotes a culture of safety and wellbeing to minimise the risk of child abuse or harm to children whilst promoting children's sense of security and belonging.

We acknowledge that staff within an early childhood service are in a unique position to monitor behavioural and emotional changes, physical injuries, and the general wellbeing of a child due to the development of safe environments and trusting relationships with children and families. Our staff are trained to identify signs and behaviours that may indicate child abuse and thoroughly understand their obligations and responsibilities to respond to incidents, disclosures or suspicions of child abuse as mandated reporters.

Our Service takes a 'zero' tolerance approach to child abuse and is committed to raising awareness about the importance of child safety in our environment and the community.

'Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility.'

Victoria State Government- Education and Training (2019).

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.
2.2.3	Child protection	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.

QUALITY AREA 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN		
5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP		
7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS and NATIONAL LAW	
82	Tobacco, drug and alcohol-free environment
84	Awareness of child protection law
102(A-D)	Transportation of children (risk assessments and authorisations)
103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
104	Fencing
105	Furniture, materials and equipment
106	Laundry and hygiene facilities
109	Toilet and hygiene facilities
115	Facilities designed to facilitate supervision
122	Educators must be working directly with children to be included in ratios
123	Educator to child ratios- centre based services

136	First aid qualifications
155	Interactions with children
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
165	Record of visitors
166	Children not to be alone with visitors
167	Record of service's compliance
168 (h)	Education and care services must have policies- Providing a child safe environment
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
S162 (A)	Persons in day-to-day charge and nominated supervisors to have child protection training
S165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
S166	Offence to use inappropriate discipline
S167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
358	Working with children check to be read

OTHER RELEVANT LAWS

Education and Training Reform Act 2006- Child safe standards- Managing the risk of child abuse in schools. Ministerial Order No. 870
The Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012
Failure to Disclose 2014
Failure to Protect 2015
The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
Family Law Act 1975
Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015
Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)

RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES RELATED TO CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Adventurous Play Policy Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (VIC) Child Protection Policy Code of Conduct Policy Cyber Safety Policy Dealing with Complaints Policy Delivery of Children to and Collection from an Education and Care Service Premises Excursion/Incursion Policy Furniture and Equipment Safety Policy Governance Policy Injury, Incident, Trauma and Illness Policy Interactions with Children, Families and Staff Policy Medical Conditions Policy Nutrition and Food Safety Policy	Physical Environment Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy Recruitment Policy Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy (VIC) Safe storage of Hazardous Chemicals Policy Safe Transportation of Children Policy Sleep and Rest Policy Staffing Arrangements Policy Student and Volunteer Policy Sun Safe Policy Supervision Policy Technology Policy Unidentified Dog Policy Water Safety Policy Work Health and Safety Policy
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PURPOSE

Our Service has a legal and ethical responsibility to provide and maintain a child safe organisation where all children are safe, respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. Children's safety and wellbeing is paramount, and we aim to take all practical steps to protect children from harm, ensuring a healthy and child safe environment. Our Service provides children and staff with an environment free from the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.

SCOPE

This policy applies to families, staff, educators, management, the approved provider, nominated supervisor and visitors of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations the approved provider must ensure that policies and procedures are in place for providing a child safe environment and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed (Regulation 168, Regulation 170). The National Law requires management to ensure all children being educated and cared for are adequately supervised and every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury.

Our focus is to build a child safe environment which is reflected in our Service policies and procedures and understood and practiced by all educators and staff.

OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Our Service is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. We understand our responsibilities and statutory duty of care to comply with both the Victorian New Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme to build our capacity as an organisation to prevent and respond to allegations of child abuse. We have a dedicated *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* which explains our service's approach to meeting the Standards.

Our Service has a zero tolerance to child abuse, and we are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We promote diversity and tolerance, and aim to form equitable and positive relationships with children. We ensure children participate in decisions affecting them, and listen to and respect their suggestions and ideas. We respond to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm.

Our Service strongly opposes any type of abuse against a child and endorses high quality practices in relation to protecting children. All staff understand their roles and responsibilities in protecting children from abuse and neglect, and maintain up-to-date knowledge of child protection law (Reg 84). Staff will undertake child protection awareness training every 12 Months and whenever significant changes are made to the child protection law or reporting requirements. Staff will comply with our Code of Conduct at all times.

[Primary policy- Child Safety and Wellbeing (VIC)]

RECRUITMENT

Our Service maintains a rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening and selection process to ensure the best staff possible based on skills, qualifications, experience and suitability for the position available. All staff participate in robust interviews and have reference checks completed to ensure the applicant's suitability to the role, previous experiences and their commitment to child safe values and practices. All staff are provided with a comprehensive induction process which outlines our Code of Conduct, current policies including Child Protection, Child Safety and Wellbeing, Reportable Conduct Scheme, Work Health and Safety Policy and other related policies to ensure a child safe environment.

[Primary policy – Recruitment]

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK

Working in conjunction with the Child Protection Act and National Regulations, the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children is paramount within our Service and community. A Working with Children Check (WWCC) is a requirement for people who work in child-related work. It involves a national criminal history check and a review of findings of workplace misconduct.

The result of a Working with Children Check is either a clearance to work with children and is valid for five years, or a bar against working with children. Cleared applicants are subject to ongoing monitoring and relevant new records may lead to the clearance being revoked.

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will ensure they have read each person's Working with Children Check before engaging educators, staff or volunteers in the Service. Management is responsible for the periodic review and maintenance of up-to-date records of employees' Working with Children Check, including the Working with Children Check number and the date on which each clearance expires.

[Primary policy – Child Protection, Recruitment, Staffing Arrangements]

CHILD PROTECTION

Children and young people always have a right to be safe and protected. To comply with legislation and ensure a child safe environment, educators are provided with training and ongoing supervision to ensure they understand that *child safety is everyone's responsibility*.

All educators and staff are mandatory reporters and must make reports if they suspect on reasonable grounds, a child is at risk of significant harm. All staff are provided with up-to-date training about child protection law and their obligations under this law and to ensure they are confident in following the reporting guidelines within Victoria and adhere to our *Child Protection Policy*. (Reg 84).

Through continual education and training, educators and staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe. Training gives educators and staff confidence to identify, respond and report child abuse.

Nominated supervisors and persons in day-to-day charge must complete a course in child protection approved by the Regulatory Authority on an annual basis.

[Primary policies – Child Protection, Child Safety and Wellbeing]

REPORTABLE CONDUCT SCHEME

The Reportable Conduct Scheme seeks to improve organisation's responses to allegations of child abuse and neglect by their employees and volunteers. The Approved Provider must notify the Commission for Children and Young People (the Commission) about any allegations of misconduct involving a child. Reportable conduct applies to all employees, volunteers, students (over the age of 18) and contractors at our Service.

Our Service will ensure an appropriate level of confidentiality of information relating to the reportable allegations as per the Children's Guardian Act 2019. We take our legislative responsibilities as part of the Reportable Conduct Scheme seriously and will respond to any reportable allegation or conviction against employees or volunteers that may arise.

As an Information Sharing Entity our Service is obligated to share confidential or sensitive information about a person with other ISEs to support safety and wellbeing as part of the [Child Information Sharing Scheme](#) and the [Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme](#) and [MARAM reforms](#).

[Primary policy- Reportable Conduct Scheme (VIC)]

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT – SUPERVISION AND SAFETY CHECKLISTS

Children's safety is embedded in our day-to-day practices. We ensure effective and adequate supervision is provided to children at all times. Educators will employ 'active supervision' strategies within the service environment and when participating in excursions or transporting children. Consideration will be made for the different ages and abilities of children and the activities that may require different levels of supervision.

Sleeping infants and toddlers will be closely monitored at regular intervals and will always be within sight and hearing distance of educators so that a child's breathing and the colour of their skin can be monitored.

Through conducting risk assessments, we assess and manage risks in the physical environment, collaborating with children to develop behaviour guidelines for play including adventurous play to ensure their safety. Educators have a sound understanding of their duty of care and responsibilities in ensuring a child safe environment.

Educators conduct regular safety checks to maintain basic standards of safety within our Service. We believe that child safety is a shared responsibility at all levels within our Service. Children are encouraged to speak up about their safety and the safety of their friends by telling an educator if they feel unsafe in a particular situation or environment.

Educators will complete the following daily checklists to assist and record inspections of the physical environment where foreseeable risks may be evident and cause harm or injury to a child: open/clock checklist, maintenance checklist, first aid & evac bag checklist and outdoor safety checklist. Any findings that require attention will be either dealt with immediately or submitted into the maintenance book depending on priority.

[Primary policies – Code of Conduct; Supervision; Sleep and Rest; Nappy Change and Toileting; Health and Safety, Staffing Arrangements, Supervision]

STORAGE OF HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

We reduce the risk of harm to children and educators by using eco-friendly products. Our Service will endeavour to provide a safe environment, where necessary chemical and hazardous equipment are safely stored away from children and handled appropriately.

Management and educators will keep a register of hazardous chemicals used at the Service, including relevant Safety Data Sheets (SDS).

To maintain a safe environment for children, the following audits and checklists are conducted: Safe Storage of Hazardous Chemicals audit, Poison audit and Medication storage audit.

[Primary policies – Safe Storage of Hazardous Chemicals, Administration of Medication]

EQUIPMENT, FURNITURE & MAINTENANCE RECORD

There are several factors that can contribute to a hazard, such as a deprived program, insufficient supervision and dilapidated equipment. To ensure a child safe environment free from hazards, we have implemented practices and continue to monitor Service policies and procedures that uphold Australian Safety Standards.

The premises and all equipment and furniture used within the Service are audited to ensure all aspects are safe, clean and in good repair. We understand that hazards are specific to developmental stages; educators are aware that toys and equipment need to be checked to ensure they are safe and developmentally appropriate for children. Regular checks occur within the Service to ensure that all toys, furniture and equipment are in good condition and working order.

These checks include: Maintenance record

[Primary policy – Furniture and Equipment Safety]

RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL

It is a legislative requirement that Management and educators implement a risk management system where they identify and manage hazards and risks within the workplace to ensure a child safe environment. The key principles of risk management include:

1. Identifying all hazards or potential hazards in the service/residence/venue
2. Assess the risk of harm or potential harm for each hazard
3. Control or manage the risk – Risk Rating Matrix
4. Monitor and improve safety – Risk Assessment Action Plan
5. Evaluate and Review

It is the responsibility of all staff and educators at the Service to complete a risk assessment where children's safety may be jeopardised and when organising an excursion/incursion or any transportation of children. Children's safety must be incorporated into everyday practice within the Service. Common hazards within the Service which may require a risk assessment include:

- cross-infection and infectious disease
- administration of medication
- anaphylaxis procedures and management
- building and equipment (including storage)
- inadequate space for conducting activities and experiences

- hazardous chemicals
- electrical appliances
- food preparation and storage
- environmental influences such as shade, noise etc
- sun safety
- children's behaviours
- water safety
- fire equipment
- pets and/or animals
- inadequate supervision of children
- children's activities and experiences
- Work Health and Safety such as manual handling (e.g. safe lifting of children from cots and highchairs)
- non-compliance risk
- hot drinks
- transportation of children (regular outing and regular transportation)
- excursions

To maintain a child safe environment, we will adhere to Service policies and procedures and conduct the following checklist and audits: Excursion risk assessment

[Primary policies – Emergency Evacuation; Incident, Illness, Accident and Trauma; Sleep and Rest; Safe Transportation; Sun Safe; Administration of First Aid; Medical Conditions]

EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION PROCEDURES

Management will ensure that copies of the emergency and evacuation floor plan are displayed in prominent positions near each exit of the service premises, including indoor and outdoor learning areas.

All staff are familiar with emergency evacuation procedures and regulatory requirements.

Rehearsals for emergency and evacuation procedures, including lock downs, are conducted at least once every 3 months.

[Primary policy- Emergency Evacuation]

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE AUTHORISATION

Our Service prioritises children's safety at all times. We will only release children to an authorised person as named on the child's enrolment form. We request families provide current court orders, and parenting plans to ensure our records are up to date.

National Regulations require our Service to keep a record of children and visitor's arrival and departures, with the signatures of the person responsible for verifying the accuracy of the record and the identity of the person collecting the child.

Educators will work in collaboration with our *Delivery of Children to and Collection from an Education and Care Service Premises Policy* and *Student and Visitors Policy* to ensure children feel safe and secure.

To ensure children's safety, educators have a clear understanding of their legal obligation to check identification when a person is collecting a child. To maintain compliance, parents will notify the centre in writing and educators will add the contact to the pickup list if they authorise a person who is not on their emergency contact form to pick up their child.

[Primary policies - Delivery of Children to and Collection from an Education and Care Service Premises; Student and Volunteer]

CODE OF CONDUCT

Management, educators, staff, volunteers and students will adhere to our Service's Code of Conduct Policy. We will:

- provide adequate supervision of children at all times
- take reasonable action to protect children and young people for risk of harm
- ensure the service premise is free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol
- adhere to our *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*
- not discriminate against any child because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability
- be responsible for our own, and others' health and safety
- be a positive role model to children
- respect children's privacy and dignity at all times
- not put children at risk of abuse: refusing food/play, making threats, exposing children to inappropriate language or material (movies, internet, photos)
- report any allegations of child abuse to the Approved Provider as mandatory reporter

- notify the approved provider and/or the regulatory authority within 24 hours of any serious incident or complaint as per the National Regulations

[Primary policies – Code of Conduct; Privacy and Confidentiality]

ONLINE SAFETY

Our Service is committed to creating and maintaining a safe online environment with support and collaboration with staff, families and community. Management ensures anti-virus and internet security systems are installed to block access to unsuitable web sites, newsgroups and chat rooms.

Our Service ensures backups of important and confidential data are made regularly and either stored securely offline, or online. Software and devices are updated regularly to avoid any breach of confidential information.

Families are provided with information about our software program which is password protected and used to share observations, photos, videos, daily reports and portfolios. Passwords are not to be shared with others as per our written agreement.

Written authorisation is requested as part of the enrolment process for children to use computers/tablets; have their photo taken and published as part of promotional marketing or on the app program used by the service. The identity of a child is not published on any platform.

Personal mobile phones are wiped at the end of each day if they are used to take photos or video of children at the Service.

Only educational software programs and apps that have appropriate content and have been examined prior to allowing their use are used in the Service. Children are always supervised using any technology.

[Primary policies – Cyber Safety; Technology; Privacy and Confidentiality; Code of Conduct]

CONTINUOUS REVIEW

To ensure we maintain a culture of continuous improvement, we will ensure our child safe practices are regularly reviewed, evaluated and improved. We aim to ensure all educators, staff and volunteers understand and effectively implement our policies and procedures to provide a child safe environment at our Service.

We will regularly review and monitor the effectiveness of our Child Safe policies and procedures and invite children, staff members, families and communities to contribute to their development.

Any updates or revisions will be communicated to all stakeholders.

FAMILIES

Our Service ensures families are always welcome and feel comfortable asking questions on how we prioritise child safety. We provide a range of opportunities for consultation and collaboration about decisions about their child's safety whilst at our Service including:

- policy and procedure review
- child protection
- Child Safe Standards (VIC)
- allegations/grievance procedures
- sun safety
- written authorisations- parenting orders
- code of conduct
- inclusivity and supporting children with diverse needs.

SOURCE

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ACECQA. (2021). Policy and procedure guidelines. *Providing a Child Safe Environment*.

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Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)

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Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (as amended 2014) (Vic)

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Commission for children and young people *Being a child safe organisation* <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/being-a-child-safe-organisation/>

Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference. (2005). Creating safe environments for children: Organisations, employees and volunteers: National framework.

Department of Health and Human Services' Service Providers: <http://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards>
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)

Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2011).

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).

Guide to the National Quality Framework. (2017). (Amended 2020).

National Comparison of Child Protection Systems: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/national-comparison-child-protection-systems>

Reporting abuse and neglect: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/reporting-abuse-and-neglect>

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training). (2017). Early childhood guidance: Identifying signs of child abuse: www.education.vic.gov.au

The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)

The Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998

The Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012

Victoria State Government Health and Human Services. Creating child safe organisations:

<https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/creating-child-safe-organisations>

Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	MAY 2022	NEXT REVIEW DATE	MAY 2023
MODIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy rewritten as Child Safe Environment Policy. A new <i>Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy</i> has been drafted to reflect the New Child Safe Standards (effective 1 July 2022)• Additional law/regulations added- ACECQA Guidelines to Policy and Procedure document (June 2021)• Additional laws/regulations added• Additional related policies		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS		NEXT REVIEW DATE
APRIL 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• review of policy and sources to ensure currency• no further changes as yet due to alignment to National Principles for Child Safe Organisations following review of Victorian Child Safe Standards (review in November 2021)		NOVEMBER 2021