

# Child Protection Policy

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**Quick reference:** harm | risk of harm | reporting obligations | neglect | abuse | physical abuse | emotional abuse | sexual abuse | cyber abuse | image based harm | harmful sexual behaviours | exploitation | grooming | child safety | child wellbeing | child safe standards | complaints | reportable conduct | trauma-informed practice | inclusion and equity | culturally responsive practice | code of conduct | supervision | duty of care | privacy | record keeping | investigations | mandatory reporting | notifications | incidents | record keeping | supporting children | contacting parents | indicators of harm | breaches | disclosures | suspicions | beliefs | mandatory child protection training | inappropriate conduct | reportable sexual conduct by staff

## PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

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- (1) To set out:
  - a. How we respond to incidents, disclosures, suspicions, beliefs, complaints and concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing, including harm or risk of harm, alleged criminal offences against a child, reportable conduct, and allegations of children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours
  - b. Our child protection reporting obligations and procedures (as required under criminal law, the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)*, *Children, Youth and Families Regulations 2017*, *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*, and the *Education and Care National Laws and Regulations*, including the National Quality Standard (NQS))
  - c. How we meet our training, privacy, information sharing and record keeping requirements, and ensure procedural fairness for staff who are the subject of an allegation
- (2) This policy is a requirement under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*. The approved provider must ensure that policies and procedures are in place for dealing with complaints and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed. Our complaint handling system must be child focused and address the management of a complaint that alleges a child is exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours (reg 168(2)(o))
- (3) This policy meets the Victorian Child Safe Standards, which require us to have child-focused processes in place for dealing with child safety complaints and concerns, and reporting to the relevant authorities
- (4) This policy also helps to fulfil our obligation under the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme to have systems in place to prevent and respond to child abuse

## SCOPE

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- (5) This policy applies to:
  - a. 'Staff': the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, paid workers, volunteers, work placement students, and third parties

who carry out child-related work at our service (e.g., contractors, subcontractors, self-employed persons, employees of a labour hire company)

- b. Children who are in our care, their parents, families and care providers
  - c. Visitors to our service who carry out child-related work, including allied health support workers
- (2) It applies to all physical, digital and online environments of our service (including off-site and outside of operating hours)
- (3) It should be read in conjunction with our related policies and procedures for child safety and wellbeing (referenced throughout the policy)

## DEFINITIONS

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- (6) The following definitions apply to this policy and related procedures:
- a. 'Child-related work' is used in this policy to refer to the work of our service (an education and care service for children). It does not apply where contact with children is incidental or would not reasonably be expected to occur, or where the service or activity is provided by a relative of the child's (e.g. a grandparent, aunt or uncle)
  - b. Inappropriate conduct means conduct that a reasonable person would consider to be inappropriate in an education and care service. Includes behaviour that is inconsistent with professional standards; causes or is likely to cause emotional, psychological or physical harm; or has violent or sexual connotations (see Child Safe Code of Conduct for a list of prohibited conduct)
  - c. 'Harm' and 'risk of harm' are used in this policy as overarching terms that cover neglect and various forms of abuse. It includes physical, sexual and psychological abuse; neglect; ill-treatment; grooming; exposure to family violence; commercial child sexual exploitation; online child sexual abuse; and sexual abuse that is perpetrated by other children and young people
  - d. 'Harmful sexual behaviours' - a general term to describe behaviour in children under 18 years that fall across a spectrum of sexual behaviour problems, including those that are problematic to the child's own development, as well as those that are coercive, sexually aggressive and predatory towards others
  - e. 'Mandatory reporting' terms are defined in the policy statement under the heading 'Mandatory reporting'
  - f. 'Parents' includes guardians and persons who have parental responsibilities for the child under a decision or order of court
  - g. 'Reportable conduct' terms are defined in the policy statement under the heading 'reportable conduct'

- h. 'Reportable sexual conduct' means either a sexual offence - that is, an offence referred to in clause 1 of [Schedule 1](#) to the *Sentencing Act 1991*; or sexual misconduct, which includes behaviour, physical contact or speech or other communication of a sexual nature, inappropriate touching, grooming behaviour and voyeurism
- i. 'Staff', unless indicated otherwise, refers to the approved provider, persons with management or control, the nominated supervisor, paid employees, volunteers, students, and third parties who are covered in the scope of this policy. Note: 'staff', 'employees' and 'workers' etc may have their own, different definitions in legislation covered in this policy

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

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### **Critical information**

- (7) Staff must call 000 if a child is in immediate danger
- (8) Staff must report any criminal conduct and/or if they form a reasonable belief a child is in need of protection because they have suffered or are likely to suffer significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect, and the child's parents have not, or are unlikely to protect the child
- (9) Staff can contact [Police on 131 444](#) (non-urgent matters) and [Child Protection on 1300 555 526](#)
- (10) Staff must report even if they are unsure and have not directly observed the abuse or neglect (e.g. in the case of a disclosure)
- (11) Staff should make enough enquiries to form a reasonable belief and to meet the needs of a child. However, once a staff member has formed a reasonable belief, they must report it and not investigate the matter themselves
- (12) Staff must also act if they have a significant concern for a child's wellbeing, though the procedure for this will be different from the ones for responding to harm or risk of harm
- (13) Staff must respond to any immediate risks posed by the subject of an allegation. The approved provider and nominated supervisor must assess and manage future risks to all children and staff. They must also protect the rights of all parties involved

### **Duty of care**

- (14) The approved provider and nominated supervisor must ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children in our care from the harm and any hazard likely to cause injury (*National Law s 167*) (National Quality Standard 2.2)
- (15) The approved provider and nominated supervisor also have a duty to ensure that no child in our care is subject to inappropriate conduct (*National Law s 166A*) or inappropriate discipline (*National Law s 166*)

- (16) Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding child safety, including to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect (as required under National Quality Standard 2.2.3 'Child Protection')
- (17) Our duty of care extends to reporting to the police and/or other authorities (where appropriate), arranging internal and external support for affected children and families, and sharing information with authorised individuals and agencies to support child safety and wellbeing

### **Child-focused complaint system**

- (18) The approved provider must ensure our complaint handling system is child focused, and can effectively deal with a complaint that alleges a child is exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours (*National Regulations* reg 168(2)(o))
- (19) Likewise, we must meet the Victorian Child Safe Standards by having processes for complaints and concerns that are child-focused, and policies and procedures in place that set out our obligations to act and report on child safety concerns and complaints
- (20) Staff leaders will encourage a culture where staff, children and families feel confident and supported to speak up about suspicions, disclosures, or observations of harm or risk of harm or breaches of our Child Safe Code of Conduct
- (21) Staff must understand that they are required to report concerns internally and externally, even if they are unsure
- (22) We will take all concerns seriously and respond in a timely, respectful and appropriate way, following our child protection reporting procedures and obligations under the law
- (23) We will encourage reporting by having clear policies and procedures, visible information for children and families, open and trusting relationships, and protective behaviour education that gives children the language and confidence to speak up
- (24) Victimisation, silencing or failure to act on a concern are not tolerated
- (25) See also our Child Safe Environment Policy and Complaint Handling Policy

### **Child protection procedures**

- (26) Staff must be trained to prevent, respond and report harm or risk of harm to a child
- (27) They must follow all relevant child protection procedures (attached):
  - a. **Managing an emergency (child protection):** if there is an immediate risk to health and safety
  - b. **Managing disclosures and suspicions of harm**
  - c. **Reporting:** to make a report to the police, mandatory reports to Child Protection and/or notifications to the regulatory authority
  - d. **Contacting parents**
  - e. **Providing support**
  - f. **Managing allegations of harmful sexual behaviour in children**

## **g. Managing allegations of reportable conduct**

### **Managing a disclosure or a suspicion**

- (28) If a staff member receives a disclosure or has a suspicion about harm or risk of harm to a child regardless of whether the suspected/disclosed harm or risk of harm takes place at or outside the service, they must follow our procedure for managing disclosures or suspicions of harm (attached)
- (29) A disclosure or suspicion can also be about a child harming another child or a child who is at risk of being harmed by another child.

### **Criminal conduct**

- (30) We must report and protect against criminal offences involving children
- (31) Staff must report to police anything that could be considered a criminal offence. This includes sexual assault, physical assault, grooming offences, and producing, disseminating or possessing child abuse material
- (32) In Victoria it is a criminal offence for adults not to disclose to Police if they have information that leads them to form a reasonable belief that another adult has sexually offended against a child under 16 in Victoria (known as 'failure to disclose')
- (33) It is also a criminal offence for a person in authority not to reduce or remove a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 years, who is under their care, supervision or authority, may become the victim of sexual abuse committed by an adult associated with the organisation (known as 'failure to protect')

### **Mandatory reporting**

- (34) In Victoria, early childhood teachers, approved providers, nominated supervisors, and persons with a post-secondary qualification in the care, education or minding of children who are employed or engaged by an education and care service are 'mandated reporters'.
- (35) It is our service's policy to include in the definition of 'mandated reporters' all staff, volunteers, students and third-party contractors carrying out child-related work who are engaged by our service
- (36) By law, mandatory reporters must make a report to the Child Protection (Victorian Department for Families, Fairness and Housing) or Victorian Police if, in the course of practicing their profession or carrying out duties of their office, position or employment, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection (see definitions), including from suffering, or the risk of suffering, significant harm caused by physical injury or sexual abuse, and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect the child
- (37) It is our service's policy to extend the scope of what to report to also include reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection from suffering, or the risk of suffering, significant

harm as a result of emotional/psychological abuse or neglect and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect the child

- (38) 'In need of protection' means:
- a. the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type; or
  - b. the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of sexual abuse and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type
- (39) Harm may be a single act, omission or circumstances or accumulate through a series of acts, omissions or circumstances

### **Reportable conduct**

- (40) The approved provider must notify the Social Services Regulator (SSR) of allegations of child abuse (and other child-related misconduct) made against their workers and volunteers, irrespective of whether this relates to their employment or activities at the service (*Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*)
- (41) Under the Scheme, our service must respond if a reportable allegation is made against an 'employee' who is over 18 years old (the definition of employee includes the approved provider, company directors, persons with management or control, paid staff, volunteers, contractors engaged by us to provide a service, labour hire workers, volunteer workers, and secondees)
- (42) A reportable allegation is an allegation that an employee has engaged in conduct that may be reportable conduct, which is:
- a. sexual offences (against, with or in the presence of, a child);
  - b. sexual misconduct (against, with or in the presence of, a child);
  - c. physical violence (against, with or in the presence of, a child);
  - d. behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm; significant neglect
- (43) The approved provider must make the report regardless of whether the allegations relate to the individual's employment or activities at the service
- (44) Staff and volunteers must report allegations of reportable conduct (including any made against themselves) as soon as practicable to the approved provider, who will then notify the SSR
- (45) If a staff member becomes aware that the approved provider is the subject of reportable conduct or the approved provider is not satisfactorily meeting our obligations, they must notify the SSR directly
- (46) The approved provider must make the report within 3 business days of receiving a report or otherwise becoming aware of reportable allegations

- (47) In responding to an allegation, the approved provider will follow our procedure for Managing allegations of reportable conduct
- (48) The Scheme requires our service to have systems in place that prevent child abuse and, if child abuse is alleged, to ensure allegations can be brought to the attention of appropriate persons for investigation and response. Our Child Protection Policy and Procedures, along with our other child safe policies, procedures, and risk management plans fulfil these obligations
- (49) As the head of the organisation, the approved provider is ultimately responsible for making sure that our service complies with the Scheme, and will refer to the detailed guidance available [here](#) to ensure we meet our obligations

### **Notifiable incidents or circumstances**

- (50) The approved provider must notify the regulatory authority in writing within the prescribed time of the following incidents or circumstances:
- a. any serious incident at the service and any complaints alleging that a serious incident has occurred or is occurring while a child was/is being cared for by our service - including a child being subjected to inappropriate conduct (within 24 hours)
  - b. circumstances at the service which pose a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of children (within 7 days)
  - c. any incident or allegation that physical or sexual abuse of a child or children has occurred or is occurring while the child or children are being educated and cared for by the service (within 24 hours)
  - d. any reportable sexual conduct committed by staff, volunteers, students or contractors against, with or in the presence of a child, regardless of whether any criminal proceedings have begun or concluded (within 24 hours)
  - e. if there has been a change relevant to whether the approved provider is a fit and proper person to be involved in our service (within 7 days)
    - the suspension or cancellation of a working with children card or teacher registration of a nominated supervisor, or disciplinary proceedings of a nominated supervisor under an education law (within 14 days)
- (51) The approved provider must also notify WorkSafe of notifiable workplace incidents, where required

### **Reporting staff**

- (52) Staff must make report following our reporting procedure (attached), if they witness, suspect, or receive a disclosure about another staff member (including students, contractors and volunteers):
- a. Engaging in conduct that breaches our Child Safe Code of Conduct

- b. Subjecting a child to inappropriate conduct (see definition) or inappropriate or unreasonable discipline (including corporal punishment)
  - c. Engaging in any conduct that reaches the threshold for mandatory reporting, reportable conduct, reportable sexual conduct (Victoria) or is potentially criminal conduct
- (53) Staff must notify the approved provider/nominated supervisor as soon as practicable and complete a Child Safety and Wellbeing Breach – Incident Report Form (template attached)
- (54) We take all inappropriate conduct and breaches to our Child Safe Code of Conduct seriously. The nominated supervisor and approved provider act in line with our child safe and HR policies in responding to any allegations or incidents

### **Harmful sexual behaviour in children**

- (55) Staff must respond appropriately and promptly to concerns or complaints about harm or risk of harm to a child (either by adults or by other children), or that a child is exhibiting harmful sexual behaviour (*National Regulations* reg 168(2)(o))
- (56) Staff will be trained to recognise appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviour in children, and to know which actions to take in response
- (57) Staff must follow our procedure for managing allegations of harmful sexual behaviour in children (attached)
- (58) Where appropriate, staff must make reports to the police and/or external authorities in line with our child protection reporting procedures

### **Child protection training and awareness for staff**

- (59) The approved provider must ensure that the following persons have successfully completed approved child protection training within the required period (*National Law* s 162A):
- a. Nominated supervisors
  - b. Persons in day-to-day charge
  - c. All staff – (that is, anyone we employ, appoint or engage to work in or as part of our service, including contractors and students)
  - d. Volunteers
- (60) The approved provider and nominated supervisor will check with the regulatory authority which courses are approved
- (61) The nominated supervisor, all staff members, volunteers and students must be made aware of current child protection laws, understand how to apply child protection laws and their obligations under them (*National Regulations* reg 84)
- (62) We will meet the Child Safe Standards by equipping, through ongoing education and training, staff (including volunteers and students) with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe. We train, and give information to, staff so they can recognise and

respond to indicators of child harm, including harm caused by other children and young people

- (63) Staff are required to complete mandatory child protection training within one month of starting at our service and complete refresher training every 12 months and whenever significant changes are made to child protection law or reporting requirements
- (64) Staff will be trained to recognise the physical and behavioural signs of harm in a child and what actions to take if they suspect or have knowledge that a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm
- (65) Staff can access information on the indicators of harm, including exposure to family violence and signs that an adult may be engaging in child sexual abuse or grooming in our ACF course. A list of indicators is also attached to this policy
- (66) The approved provider must make sure that evidence and dates of inductions and training is kept on each staff member's record (*National Regulations* reg 145)
- (67) The approved provider/nominated supervisor will check staff members' awareness of current child protection when they start at our service and during their ongoing staff appraisals
- (68) Information and resources are available on our website to help staff meet their child protection training and awareness obligations
- (69) Child protection awareness will be a standing agenda item at staff meetings

## **Child Safety and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes**

- (70) Children's services are 'information sharing entities' (ISE) under both Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme and the Child Information Sharing Scheme
- (71) As an ISE, we are authorised to request and share relevant information with other ISEs to support child wellbeing and safety, and assess or manage the risk of family violence towards adults and children
- (72) Staff are authorised to (a) **respond to requests** (this is mandatory), (b) **make requests** and (c) **proactively share** information to promote child wellbeing or safety, and/or assess and manage risk of family violence
- (73) We are legally obliged to respond to a request from another ISE
- (74) Staff who share information in good faith and with reasonable care will not be held liable for any criminal, civil or disciplinary action for providing information. They will not be considered to have breached any code of conduct or professional ethics or to have departed from any acceptable standards of professional conduct
- (75) The approved provider is responsible for ensuring our service complies with the Child Information Sharing Scheme and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme. If there is any doubt about our obligations, the approved provider can seek further guidance from the Department of Education (email [CISandFVIS@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:CISandFVIS@education.vic.gov.au) or [1800 549 646](tel:1800549646))

- (76) Refer to our [Child Safety and Family Violence Information Sharing Policy](#) for details on our obligations under both Schemes

## **Notifying parents and supporting families**

- (77) The approved provider must also ensure that we notify the child's parents as soon as practicable (and within 24 hours) if their child has been involved in any incident, injury, trauma or illness while at our service (*National Regulations reg 86*)
- (78) We will provide families with information about child safety, protective behaviours and local support services through our usual communication channels (e.g., displays, newsletters, in person discussions)
- (79) We will work with families to provide coordinated support and refer them to external support services, where appropriate and with consent
- (80) We will consider the needs, circumstances and backgrounds of families and tailor our support accordingly
- (81) If there are concerns about harm or risk of harm to a child, staff must follow our procedures for contacting parents (attached) and supporting families (attached)

## **Privacy and record keeping**

- (82) Any information we gather on a child protection matter - records, identities and reports – must be kept and stored as confidential and only be disclosed if required by law, or when it is required to ensure the safety and well-being of a child
- (83) Staff must follow directions from the relevant authorities regarding confidentiality and ensure they comply with all relevant legislation
- (84) Staff must not promise absolute confidentiality to anyone involved in a child protection matter (including children) as we may have disclose personal information in certain circumstances
- (85) We are committed to keeping full and accurate records about any incidents, responses and decisions that relate to child safety and well-being, including sexual abuse
- (86) Individuals have a right to access, amend and annotate their own records, except if in doing so they are breaking the law or breaching one of our other policies
- (87) Records that relate to child safety and well-being – e.g., suspicions, disclosures, allegations, convictions, reports, complaints, grievances, investigations, complaints handling, breaches, disciplinary actions, referrals, exchanges of information, risk assessments, policies and procedures - will be kept in an indexed, logical and secure way
- (88) We must complete record within 24 hours of an incident, injury, trauma, and illness involving a child and stored it until the child is 25 years old
- (89) Records related to child sexual abuse that has or is alleged to have occurred will be kept for the best practice period of a minimum of 45 years (and longer if possible)

- (90) Online records will be stored password protected file and physical records in a secure cabinet. Access will only be granted on a 'need to know' basis and in line with our other relevant policies
- (91) Reporters are protected under Victorian law. The reporter's identity is kept confidential, except in certain exceptional circumstances (e.g. orders of the court). Reports made in good faith do not breach professional conduct or ethics and the reporter is legally protected in respect of the report

## **Procedural fairness**

- (92) Child protection matters will be dealt with in a fair, transparent and timely manner
- (93) We do not conduct any internal investigations unless we are instructed to so by a relevant authority
- (94) Reportable conduct investigations are carried out according to the Reportable Conduct Scheme's guidelines and our procedure for managing allegations of Reportable Conduct
- (95) Our records are accurate, confidential and stored securely
- (96) We protect the privacy of those involved in line with the law and our relevant policies (Note, confidential information may be exchanged with relevant agencies to ensure the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children)
- (97) If an allegation is found to be substantiated, the approved provider and nominated supervisor follow advice from the relevant authorities and act in line with our HR policies when considering actions against the staff member

## **PRINCIPLES**

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- (98) Our paramount concern is the best interest, rights, safety, welfare and wellbeing of children, and we are committed to implementing the Victorian Child Safe Standards and the National Quality Framework across all levels of our service
- (99) We are committed to implementing the approved learning framework
- (100) We comply with all relevant legislation, regulations and standards at all times
- (101) Our interactions with children are respectful, equitable and supportive
- (102) Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and hazards in our physical and online environments
- (103) We always act on harm and risk of harm to a child and report where necessary and appropriate
- (104) We listen to children and take their concerns seriously. Our child-focused complaint systems prioritises the safety of children
- (105) Staff are given the training, resources and support to act on child safety and wellbeing concerns

- (106) Our governance, operations policies, risk management plans, procedures, systems and practices are best-practice and up-to-date

## POLICY COMMUNICATION, TRAINING AND MONITORING

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- (1) This policy and related documents can be found in our front office and on our website
- (2) The approved provider and nominated supervisor provide information, training and other resources and support regarding the Child Protection Policy and Procedures and related documents
- (3) All staff (including volunteers and students) are formally inducted. They are given access to, review, understand and formally acknowledge this Child Protection Policy and Procedures and related documents
- (4) The nominated supervisor runs a professional development program for each staff member, which covers this policy and procedures
- (5) Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined in this policy and in individual position descriptions. They are communicated during staff inductions and in ongoing training
- (6) The approved provider and nominated supervisor monitor and audit staff practices through spot checks and performance reviews and address non-compliance. Breaches to this policy are taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action against a staff member
- (7) At enrolment, families are given access to our Child Protection Policy and Procedures and related documents
- (8) Families are notified in line with our obligations under the *National Regulations* when changes are made to our policies and procedures

## LEGISLATION OVERVIEW

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### Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations

Law	Description
s 2A	Paramount consideration – safety, rights and best interests of children
16HA	Approved providers must notify Regulatory Authority of reportable sexual conduct committed by staff (Vic)
s 162A	Child protection training
s 165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
s 166	Offence to use inappropriate discipline
s 166A	Offence to subject child to inappropriate conduct (NSW)
s 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
s 170	Offence relating to unauthorised persons on premises
s 174	Offence to fail to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority
s 175	Offence relating to requirement to keep enrolment and other documents
Regulations	
reg 84	Awareness of child protection law
reg 85 - 89	Incidents, injury, trauma and illness
reg 120	Educators who are under 18 to be supervised
reg 145 – 152B	Staff and educator records – centre-based services
reg 168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
reg 170	Policies and procedures to be followed
reg 171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
reg 172	Notification of change to policies or procedures

Law	Description
reg 175	Prescribed information to be notified to Regulatory Authority
reg 176	Time to notify certain information to the Regulatory Authority
reg 181,183 - 184	Confidentiality and storage of records

## Other applicable laws and regulations

Act/Regulation	Description
<i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)</i> <i>Children, Youth and Families Regulations 2017</i>	Principal relevant Act to child protection
<i>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)</i>	Includes provisions for child-related criminal offences
<i>Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 (Vic.)</i> <i>Sex Offenders Registration Regulations 2014</i>	Registration and reporting of child sexual abuse offenders
<i>Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic.)</i> <i>Worker Screening Regulations 2021</i>	Working with children checks
<i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)</i>	Reportable conduct scheme and child safe organisations
<i>Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (OHS Act)</i>	Work place health and safety
<i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic.)</i> <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (General) Regulations 2017</i> <i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic.)</i> <i>Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth) (AHRC Act)</i>	Human rights laws
<i>Privacy Act 1988</i>	Principal act protecting the handling of personal information
<i>Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (VIC)</i>	Preventing family or domestic violence

## National Quality Standard

Standard / Element	Concept	Description
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 hazards
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practiced and implemented
2.2.3	Child Protection	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to child safety, including the need to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect
4.2	Professionalism	Management, educators and staff are collaborative, respectful and ethical
4.2.2	Professional standards	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships
5.1	Relationships between educators and children	Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child
5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child is maintained
5.2	Relationships between children	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships
5.2.2	Self-regulation	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role

Standard / Element	Concept	Description
6.1.2	Families are supported	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing
7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service that is child safe
7.1.2	Management systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service that is child safe
7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service
7.2	Leadership	Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community
7.2.1	Continuous improvement	There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place
7.2.3	Development of professionals	Educators, co-ordinators and staff members' performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development

## My Time, Our Place V.20

Outcome	Key Component
3: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A STRONG SENSE OF WELLBEING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and young people become strong in their social, emotional and mental wellbeing</li> <li>Children and young people become strong in their physical learning and wellbeing</li> <li>Children and young people are aware of and develop strategies to support their own mental and physical health, and personal safety</li> </ul>
5: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and young people interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes</li> </ul>

## National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

### Most relevant principles

Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice

Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused

Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

Key policies      Child Safe Environment Policy | Child Safe Code of Conduct | Child Safe Risk Management Plan | Recruitment, Induction and Training Policy | Complaint Handling Policy | Child Safe Procurement Policy | Excursions Policy | Tobacco, Vape, Drug and Alcohol Policy | Safe Arrival of Children Policy | Transport Policy | Sleep and Relaxation Policy | Managing Emergencies and Evacuations Policy | Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy | ECEC Code of Ethics | Child Safety and Family Violence Information and Sharing Policy | Governance and Management Policy | Visitors Policy | Volunteers and Students Policy | Staff Code of Conduct

Procedures      Child Protection Procedures (attached)

Resources            Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record template (in Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record Policy) | Recording disclosures of harm/risk of harm template (attached) | Recording suspicions of harm/risk of harm template (attached) | Child Safety and Wellbeing Breach – Incident Report Form (attached) | List of indicators of harm (attached) | Child protection reporting summary (attached)

## SOURCES

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Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations | National Quality Standard | Family Assistance Law | Working with children law | Victorian Government guidelines on the Child Safe Standards | *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* | ACECQA resources, including obligations of early childhood education and care providers | Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics | Victorian Government resources – including child protection training, protective behaviour resources, cultural safety guidance | Australian Privacy Principles | ACECQA’s NQF Child Safe Culture Guide | NQF Online Safety Guide | eSafety Commissioner Resources | National Principles for Child Safe Organisations | SSR Guidelines for the reportable conduct scheme

## POLICY INFORMATION

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Approval            Dina Kahn

Review                Reviewed annually and when there are changes that may affect child safety, including after any responses to incidents, disclosures or suspicions of harm or risk of harm. The review will include checks to ensure the policy reflects current legislation, continues to be effective, or whether any changes and additional training are required

**Last reviewed: 25<sup>th</sup> March 2026    Date for next review: 25<sup>th</sup> March 2027**

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES – Child Protection

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### Approved provider responsibilities (not limited to)

Ensure our service meets its obligations under the *Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations*, including to take every reasonable precaution to protect children from harm and hazards likely to cause injury. Ensure that no child is subjected to inappropriate conduct, any form of corporal punishment or any discipline that is unreasonable

Ensure that our service's governance, management, operations, policies, plans, (including risk management/action plans), systems, practices and procedures for child protection matters are appropriate in practice, best practice, comply with the Child Safe Standards and comply with all relevant legislation

Ensure we have a child-focused complaint management system that responds properly to any complaints or concerns about child safety and wellbeing and any allegations of harmful sexual behaviour in children

Ensure our Child Protection Policy and Procedures is in place and available for inspection

Take reasonable steps to ensure this policy and procedures are followed (e.g. through clear and accessible communication, and systemised inductions, training and monitoring of all staff – including volunteers, students)

Ensure that systems are in place to identify and minimise or eliminate risks of harm to a child in line with our policies/procedures (including our Child Safe Risk Management Plan) and our legal requirements. Ensure staff can and do use the risk assessments/plans, including children's individual action plans

Promote a culture of reporting. Act on any incidents, allegations, disclosures and suspicions of: criminal conduct; harm or risk of harm to a child; allegations of harmful sexual behaviour in children; inappropriate conduct by staff; breaches of our Child Safe Code of Conduct; or reportable conduct by staff. Report where necessary to the relevant authorities and in line with our procedures and legal obligations

Ensure our service complies with the Reportable Conduct Scheme, including by having systems, policies and procedures in place to prevent, detect and respond to reportable conduct

Ensure that staff complete all the required training. Ensure that the nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, all staff, students and volunteers have completed the mandatory approved child protection training. Ensure that all staff, including volunteers and students, are made aware of current child protection laws, how they apply and any obligations they have under them. Keep evidence of child protection training

Ensure child protection related records are made and confidentially stored according to our policies and legal obligations. Keep all child protection matters confidential unless we are legally required to disclose

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Regularly review this Child Protection Policy and Procedures in consultation with children, families, communities and staff. Keep it available for inspection

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Notify families at least 14 days before changing this Child Protection Policy and Procedures if the changes will: affect the fees the charged or the way they are collected; or significantly impact the service's education and care of children; or significantly impact the family's ability to utilise the service.

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Work collaboratively with support services and or/professionals to support children (and their families) and staff members who have been impacted by harm or the risk of harm

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### **Nominated supervisor / persons in day-to-day charge responsibilities (not limited to)**

Ensure our service meets its obligations under the *Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations*, including to take every reasonable precaution to protect children from harm and hazards likely to cause injury. Ensure that no child is subjected to inappropriate conduct, any form of corporal punishment or any discipline that is unreasonable

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Support the approved provider to ensure that our service's management, operations, policies, plans, (including risk management/action plans), systems, practices and procedures for child protection matters are appropriate in practice, best practice, comply with the Child Safe Standards and all relevant legislation

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Implement this Child Protection Policy and Procedures and all other parts of our child-focused complaint management system that responds properly to any complaints or concerns about child safety and wellbeing, and any allegations of harmful sexual behaviour in children

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Take reasonable steps to ensure this policy and procedures are followed (e.g. through clear and accessible communication, and systemised inductions, training and monitoring of all staff – including volunteers, students)

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Identify and minimise or eliminate risks of harm to a child in line with our policies/procedures (including our Child Safe Risk Management Plan) and our legal requirements. Ensure staff can and do use the risk assessments/plans, including children's individual action plans

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Promote a culture of reporting. Act on any incidents, disclosures, allegations and suspicions of: criminal conduct; harm or risk of harm to a child; harmful sexual behaviour in children; inappropriate conduct by staff; breaches of our Child Safe Code of Conduct; or reportable conduct by staff. Report where necessary to the approved provider and relevant authorities and in line with our procedures and legal obligations

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Successfully complete approved child protection training and other relevant professional development activities

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Support the approved provider to ensure that all staff, including contractors, volunteers and students, complete all required training, including mandatory child protection training, and are made aware of current child protection laws, how they apply and any obligations they have under them. Keep evidence of child protection training

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Ensure child protection related records are made and confidentially stored according to our policies and legal obligations. Keep all child protection matters confidential unless we are legally required to disclose

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Contribute to policies and procedure reviews and risk assessments and plans in consultation with children, families, communities and staff. Support the approved provider to notify families of changes according to legislation and our policies and procedures

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Work collaboratively with support services and or/professionals to support children (and their families) and staff members who have been impacted by harm or the risk of harm

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### **Educators / other staff responsibilities (not limited to)**

Discharge your duty of care (e.g. by taking every reasonable precaution to protect children from harm or hazards likely to cause injury). Do not subject a child to inappropriate conduct, any form of corporal punishment or any discipline that is unreasonable

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Follow our child-focused complaint management system - including this [Child Protection Policy and Procedures](#) - to respond properly to any complaints or concerns about child safety and wellbeing and any allegations of harmful sexual behaviour in children

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Act on any incidents, allegations, disclosures, and suspicions of: criminal conduct; harm or risk of harm to a child; harmful sexual behaviour in children; breaches of our [Child Safe Code of Conduct](#); inappropriate conduct by staff; or reportable conduct by staff. Report where necessary to the nominated supervisor/approved provider and relevant authorities and in line with our procedures and legal obligations

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Report any issues with our child protection policies and procedures to the appropriate person (e.g. approved provider, nominated supervisor, lead educator)

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Identify and minimise or eliminate risks of harm to a child in line with our policies/procedures (including our [Child Safe Risk Management Plan](#) and other risk assessments/plans such as children's individual action plans)

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Undertake all necessary child protection training and professional development activities. Be aware of current child protection laws, how they apply and any obligations you have under them

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Complete child protection records as required. Provide them to the approved provider/nominated supervisor as soon as practicable

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Keep all child protection matters confidential unless we are legally required to disclose

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## Overview of Child Protection Procedures

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### Introduction

These procedures apply to our:

- [Child Protection Policy](#)
- [Complaint Handling Policy](#)
- [Child Safe Environment Policy](#)
- [Child Safe Code of Conduct](#)
- [Child Safe Risk Management Plan](#)
- [Child Safe Procurement Policy](#)

'Staff' includes the approved provider, nominated supervisor, volunteers, students and third parties defined in the scope of the [Child Protection Policy](#), unless otherwise indicated

### Procedures

1. Managing an emergency (child protection)
2. Managing disclosures and suspicions of harm (child protection)
3. Reporting (child protection)
4. Contacting parents (child protection)
5. Providing support (child protection)
6. Managing allegations of harmful sexual behaviour in children (child protection)
7. Managing allegations of reportable conduct (child protection)

### Resources

1. Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record template (in Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record Policy)
2. Recording disclosures of harm/risk of harm template (attached)
3. Recording suspicions of harm/risk of harm template (attached)
4. Child Safety and Wellbeing Breach – Incident Report template (attached)
5. List of indicators of harm resource (attached)
6. Quick guide – summary version of Child Protection Policy (attached)
7. Child protection reporting summary (attached)

## PROCEDURE - Managing an emergency (child protection)

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### When to use this procedure

- If there is an immediate risk to health and safety of a child
- If an incident of harm or risk of harm occurs at our service
- If there is no immediate risk, staff go straight to [Reporting procedure](#)

### 1. Respond to threats to health and safety

- Intervene to protect other children
- Separate the child and anyone else involved in the incident
- Make sure that all parties are supervised
- Administer first aid
- Call 000 for an ambulance
- Call 000 for police assistance if the person who is alleged to have harmed the child poses an immediate risk to anyone else at the service
- Follow instructions

### 2. Preserve evidence

- If an incident of suspected harm to a child has occurred at our service, take action to preserve any items that may be used as evidence
- Do not clean up the area where the incident has occurred. Cordon off the area/room/building and try not to allow anyone to enter
- If sexual abuse or physical abuse has occurred or is suspected, ensure that the person who has allegedly committed the abuse and the child remain in their clothing. If this is not possible, handle the clothes as little as possible, do not to wash, and store them in a sealable plastic bag
- Leave any other possible items of evidence untouched, where possible
- Secure evidence such as CCTV footage, emails, computers, devices etc

### 3. Manage possible witnesses

- Take reasonable steps to prevent potential witnesses (including children) from talking about the alleged incident
- If the alleged incident involves two or more children, they should be separated and supervised in separate rooms

- If the alleged incident involves a staff member, they should be asked to stay with the nominated supervisor or person in day-to-day charge. Instruct the staff member not to discuss the alleged incident with any other staff, children or family members
4. Document the incident using our Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record template as soon as possible (and within 24 hours) so the details are accurately captured
  5. Report according to procedure for Reporting as soon as practicable
  6. Notify the approved provider/nominated supervisor as soon as practicable
  7. Inform parents according to procedure for Contacting parents
  8. Support any children involved and their families according to procedure for Providing support
  9. If relevant, follow procedures for Managing allegations of harmful sexual behaviour in children or Managing allegations of reportable conduct
  10. Assess and manage risks - the approved provider and nominated supervisor must assess and manage any risks to children or other staff member

## PROCEDURE – Managing disclosures and suspicions of harm (child protection)

### When to use this procedure

- If you receive a disclosure. That is, if someone, including a child, tells you about harm or risk of harm that has happened and/or is happening to a child. Disclosures may start with:
  - I think I saw...||
  - Somebody told me that...||
  - Just think you should know...||
  - I'm not sure what I want you to do, but...||
  
- If you have a suspicion of harm or risk of harm, or a significant concern for a child's wellbeing. Harm or risk of harm may be suspected if, for example:
  - A child says they have been harmed or is at risk of being harmed
  - Someone else – e.g., another child, a parent, or a staff member - says harm has occurred or there is a risk of it occurring
  - A child says they know someone who has been harmed or might be harmed (it is possible that they may be referring to themselves)
  - There are significant changes in the behaviour of a child, or the presence of new unexplained and suspicious injuries
  - A suspicious incident is witnessed
  - A person who is in a position to give reliable information tells you of harm/risk of harm to a child (e.g. a relative, friend, sibling, neighbour of the child)
  - Other signs such as family violence, or familial substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability that is impacting the child's safety and wellbeing

**\*\*Note:** A disclosure or suspicion can also be about a child harming another child or a child who is at risk of being harmed by another child.

### 1. Respond to disclosures

- Find a private place to talk
- Remain calm and listen in an attentive, active and non-judgemental way
- Encourage the person (including a child) to talk in their own words
- Take anything a child says seriously
- Ask just enough open-ended questions to act protectively without asking any leading questions which suggest an answer and could compromise later investigations
- Tell the person they have done the right thing in revealing the information and they'll need to tell someone who can help keep the child safe
- Do not investigate or mediate the matter yourself

2. Respond to suspicions
  - Remain alert to any warning signs or indicators (staff can access resources on the indicators of harm or risk of harm, including exposure to family violence, and signs that an adult may be engaging in child sexual abuse or grooming) <insert location> [template attached to this policy]
  - Pay close attention to changes in the child's behaviour, ideas, feelings and words
  - Assure a child that they can come to talk when they need to, and listen to them and believe them when they do
  - Do not investigate or mediate the matter yourself
3. Document disclosures or suspicions using the templates available <insert location> [templates attached to this policy] as soon as possible so the details are accurately captured, including:
  - Time, date, location and who was present
  - Full details of the (suspected) harm or risk of harm
  - Exactly what the person said using "I said", "they said," statements
  - The questions staff asked
  - Any comments staff made
  - Any actions by staff following the disclosure
  - Record your own observations as well as accurate details of any conversation with a parent (who may for example explain a noticeable mark on a child)
  - Make notes of observations in a non-judgemental and accurate manner
4. Report according to procedure for Reporting as soon as practicable
5. Notify the nominated supervisor/approved provider as soon as practicable
6. Inform parents according to procedure for Contacting parents
7. Support any children involved and their families according to procedure for Providing support
8. If relevant, follow procedures for Managing allegations of harmful sexual behaviour in children or Managing allegations of reportable conduct
9. Assess and manage risks – the approved provider and nominated supervisor must assess and manage any risks to children or other staff member

## PROCEDURE – Reporting (child protection)

### When to use this procedure

- If a child has been or may be the victim of a criminal offence
- If you witness an incident where you believe a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm
- If you form a reasonable belief that a child has experienced or is experiencing sexual abuse or non-accidental physical injury
- If there are any serious incidents or allegations of serious incidents while a child was/is being cared for at the service
- If there are any circumstances at the service that pose a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of children
- If there is any incident or allegation that physical or sexual abuse of a child or children has occurred or is occurring while the child or children are being cared for by our service
- If you observe, suspect, believe, or receive an allegation of, inappropriate conduct or reportable sexual conduct by a staff member (including contractors, students and volunteers)
- If the approved provider or any person with management or control is no longer a fit and proper person to be involved in our service
- If there has been a suspension or cancellation of a WWCC or teacher registration of a nominated supervisor, or disciplinary proceedings of a nominated supervisor under an education law
- You do not need to have proved that the alleged incident/conduct has occurred to make a report
- If there is concern for a child's welfare, but it does not reach the threshold for reporting to the authorities, staff can connect children and families to external support services, following procedure for [Providing Support](#)
- See procedure for [Managing allegations of reportable conduct](#) if you need to report reportable conduct

### 1. Reporting to the police and mandatory reporting

- Report to the [Police on 131 444](#) if a child has been or may be the victim of a criminal offence (including a sexual offence) or if an alleged perpetrator of abuse may be a risk more generally to all children
- If you form a reasonable belief that a child has been abused or neglected or is at risk of abuse or neglect, including if a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse, report to the child protection intake service where the child normally resides:
  - North Division intake: 1300 664 977
  - South Division intake: 1300 655 795

- East Division intake: 1300 360 391
  - West Division intake - metropolitan: 1300 664 977
  - West Division intake - rural and regional: 1800 075 599
- If you are not sure which number to call, check the following website for details on the LGAs covered by each intake service at [Child protection contacts](#)
  - Report after hours to the [Child Protection Emergency Service 13 12 78](#)
  - If you are not sure whether you should report, you can use the resources on the Victorian Government's [website](#), including their free Mandatory Reporting eLearning module and [factsheets](#)
  - Make the report yourself as soon as practicable. The report is not to be referred to another worker to determine if it is a reportable matter, but the person making the report may be supported by the approved provider and/or nominated supervisor, if this is appropriate
  - Record name of person taking report on the telephone and ask them for written confirmation that the report has been made
  - Get clear guidance from Child Protection or Police about what the next steps in the process are, including with whom information about the report should/can be shared
  - Notify the nominated supervisor as soon as possible. The nominated supervisor must notify the approved provider as soon as possible
  - Create a record with the nominated supervisor's assistance and store it according to our [Child Protection Policy](#) record keeping requirements
  - Do not carry out any internal investigations unless you have been instructed to do so by Child Protection/Police/ Social Services Regulator (SSR)
  - Refer to our responsibilities in our Child Safety and Family Violence Information Sharing Policy (if applicable)
2. **Reporting to the regulatory authority** - the approved provider must notify the regulatory authority in writing within the prescribed time period via the [NQA IT System](#) of:
- any serious incident at the service; and any complaints alleging that a serious incident has occurred or is occurring while a child was/is being cared for by our service (notify in writing, within 24 hours)
  - circumstances at the service which pose a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of children (notify in writing, within 7 days)

- any incident or allegation that physical or sexual abuse of a child or children has occurred or is occurring while the child or children are being educated and cared for by the service (notify in writing, within 24 hours)
  - any allegations or disclosures that a staff member or volunteer is engaging or has engaged in inappropriate conduct (considered to be serious incident so notify in writing, within 24 hours)
  - any reportable sexual conduct (sexual offences or sexual misconduct) committed by staff, volunteers, students or contractors against, with or in the presence of a child, regardless of whether any criminal proceedings have begun or concluded (notify in writing, within 24 hours)(Vic)
  - if there has been a change relevant to whether the approved provider is a fit and proper person to be involved in our service (notify in writing, within 7 days)
  - the suspension or cancellation of a WWCC or teacher registration of a nominated supervisor, staff member or volunteer or disciplinary proceedings of a nominated supervisor under an education law (notify in writing, within required time)
  - The approved provider must also notify WorkSafe, where required
3. **Reporting an adult within the service (additional steps)** (includes paid staff, volunteers, students, third party contractors, allied health practitioners, visitors, regardless of whether the conduct is alleged to have happened within the course of the person's employment or involvement with our service)
- Report the adult within the service as you would anyone else who was the subject of an allegation – that is, follow steps 1 and 2 above (if applicable)
  - Follow procedure for Managing allegations of reportable conduct if you need to report reportable conduct
  - The approved provider/nominated supervisor must assess and manage the immediate risks to other children and staff members, and take action to protect children from harm. Depending on the situation, actions might include:
    - Suspending any volunteers and contractors who are the subject of allegations
    - Standing down staff with/without pay
    - Reviewing the duties of staff who are subjects of allegations, including whether it is appropriate to restrict their access to children
    - Ensuring staff subject to allegations are supervised at all times
    - Seeking advice from the relevant agencies about what is appropriate
    - Seeking legal advice
  - Do not breach the rights of staff and keep our obligations under workplace laws

- Give appropriate support to any staff member who has an allegation made against them, including help to access appropriate support/counselling
- Provide support to other staff members who are impacted
- Keep information confidential, including the identity of the subject of the allegation

## PROCEDURE - Contacting parents (child protection)

### When to use this procedure

- If a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm
- If you have made a child protection report
- If a child allegedly exhibits harmful sexual behaviour
- If a child has been affected by another child allegedly exhibiting harmful sexual behaviour

#### 1. Get permission to contact parents first

- Before contacting parents, get permission from the Police or Child Protection
- We may be advised not to disclose any information to the parents if, for example, the parent is alleged to have been involved in the harm or risk of harm, the child would be put at greater risk and/or telling the parents is likely to adversely affect investigations

#### 2. Contact parents

- If we are allowed, the approved provider/nominated supervisor/other appropriate staff member must contact the parents as soon as possible on the day of the incident, disclosure, suspicion or belief
- The staff member contacting the parents should:
  - Be empathetic
  - Communicate sensitively, professionally and calmly
  - Give the parents details of the situation and what action we have taken and will be taking (e.g. reporting, protecting the child from further harm)
  - Give the contact details of the Police/Child Protection officer who is handling the case, if applicable
  - Outline what the next steps are likely to be, if this is known (e.g. they will be contacted by the Police/Child Protection, the investigation might take time, their child may need to be interviewed)
  - Give the parents an opportunity to ask questions
  - Ask the parents how they would like us to support them and their child
  - Assure them that we will be providing ongoing support to them and their child (as set out in [Providing support](#) procedure)
- We should have clear advice from Police/Child Protection about what information we can share with the parents. However, if not, staff must not share any information with the parents that they think may put the child or any other person at risk (e.g., risk of further harm, destruction of evidence, retaliation)

#### 3. Make a record of the discussion and follow up on any actions that arise from the conversation

## PROCEDURE - Providing support to families (child protection)

### When to use this procedure

- If a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm
- If you have made a child protection report
- If you have a significant concern for a child's wellbeing
- If a child allegedly exhibits harmful sexual behaviour
- If a child has been affected by another child allegedly exhibiting harmful sexual behaviour

### 1. Support children and their families

- Staff can give direct support to the affected child and their family
- The nominated supervisor can provide referrals to professionals and community services
- Where a child has harmed or is at risk of harming another child, staff will provide support to both children and any other children who are affected. If the situation involves allegations of a child exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours, follow procedure for Managing Harmful Sexual Behaviour in Children
- The nominated supervisor must ensure that any other children or family members who have been impacted by any incidents, disclosures or suspicions are also offered support
- Help children to know how to respond to questions that other children ask about the incident and tell them staff member/s will be supporting them

### 2. Give collaborative and planned support

- Allow children and families to be part of decision-making processes, where possible
- If a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, where appropriate, the nominated supervisor will:
  - Set up regular contact with the child's parents (if it is safe and appropriate) to discuss the child's health and wellbeing
  - Develop a safety/support plan with the child's parents (e.g. how the child will be monitored by staff at the service, how staff will communicate with the child's parents, any allied health and wellbeing support services needed)
  - Consult with allied health and wellbeing support service about how the child should be supported, where possible and appropriate

### 3. Refer children and their families to external support services

- The nominated supervisor can refer children and their families who have been impacted by harm/risk of harm to external support services including:
  - Family violence services
  - Support for sexual assault victims
  - Children's mental health support services
  - Counselling/support services
- Referrals can also be made when there is significant concern for a child's wellbeing that have a low/moderate impact on the child, but their immediate safety is not at risk (i.e. not enough to warrant a report to Police/Child Protection). Examples of this include: parenting problems; pressure on the family from physical or mental illness, substance abuse, disability; social or economic disadvantage; family lacks social support/is isolated
- Get the family's consent and maintain the confidentiality of the child and the family when working with external support services.
- Refer families to the Orange Door (replaces the old Child FIRST service), the access point to get help and care for families, including those experiencing family violence
- Can use the Service Finders section on the Orange Door website to determine suitable family referral services

#### 4. Support children with diverse needs and backgrounds

- Consider the needs, circumstances and backgrounds of individual children and tailor their support accordingly:
  - Children with disabilities - consider the age, developmental stage and cognitive and functioning. Be aware that children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to ongoing harm when considering any future risk management
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds - provide culturally appropriate support
  - Children from refugee backgrounds - recognise that these children and their families might also be experiencing trauma, dislocation and loss, which may significantly affect their wellbeing. Staff should be sensitive to these circumstances, but also make sure that the safety and wellbeing of a child is paramount
- Where possible, seek expert advice from the relevant disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, cultural or refugee support services and arrange for an interpreter to help communicate with the child and family, if needed
- If staff are unsure who to ask, they can contact the regulatory authority for referrals and advice

## PROCEDURE – Managing allegations of harmful sexual behaviour in children

### When to use this procedure

- If there is an allegation that a child has exhibited harmful sexual behaviour
- Use this procedure whether the above behaviour is self-directed or directed towards another child or adult

#### 1. Be aware of the spectrum of sexual behaviours:

- Children and young people display a range of sexual behaviours. Most of the time these are age-appropriate, and generally consistent with the child's developmental stage and the context in which they are growing up (e.g., living in a society where they are regularly exposed to sexualised imagery used in popular culture or in marketing, online material, and the influences of a child's religious/cultural backgrounds etc)
- A small number of children display developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour and an even smaller number display 'harmful sexual behaviour', which can be directed at themselves and/or other children
- Harmful sexual behaviour ranges in seriousness and impact
- The Victorian Government's [resources](#) can help staff understand the spectrum of sexual behaviours in children. Staff should use these resources, the contextual information, professional judgement and (where applicable) advice from the relevant authorities to decide on the most appropriate response to a child exhibiting sexual behaviours

#### 2. Use the traffic light system to recognise appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviour

GREEN - Developmentally appropriate <b>Action</b> - Explain to child about social expectations regarding GREEN	ORANGE – Concerning <b>Action</b> - Monitor and support child, possibly report ORANGE behaviour	RED – Very Concerning, serious, severe <b>Action</b> - Must report RED behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour that is expected for the age and developmental stage</li> <li>• Socially acceptable</li> <li>• Appropriate sexual curiosity/expression/exploration</li> <li>• May be exhibited at inappropriate contexts, especially by young children</li> <li>• Often one-off incidents</li> <li>• Child responds to redirection and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour is outside what would be expected for the child's developmental stage</li> <li>• Concerning because of its persistence, intensity, frequency and/or duration</li> <li>• Socially unacceptable</li> <li>• May be a one-off incident, but usually is repeated</li> <li>• May involve a disparity in age, developmental stage</li> <li>• May display a lack of respect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extension of ORANGE behaviour</li> <li>• Excessive, often with physical violence, sadism, degradation</li> <li>• Secretive, manipulative, can involve bribery or trickery</li> <li>• May be highly intrusive and harmful to others</li> <li>• Uses power and force, coercion, threats, deception</li> <li>• Limited respect for the rights of others</li> </ul>

<p>reinforcement of expected behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equal in age or developmental stages between the individuals concerned</li> <li>• Generally positive emotional experience (laughter, giggling, joy)</li> <li>• Others are unharmed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be not reciprocal or mutual</li> <li>• Child has a negative emotional experience (e.g. guilt, remorse, shame, confusion)</li> <li>• Risk of health and safety to child and others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often persistent behaviour along difficult to shift patterns of thought that have developed over a long time</li> <li>• Child may experience shame, anger and pleasure</li> </ul>
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### 3. Respond to allegations or incidents of harmful sexual behaviours

- If someone is in immediate danger, follow procedure for Managing an emergency
- If someone has made a disclosure or there is a suspicion about a child exhibiting harmful sexual behaviour, follow procedure for Managing disclosures and suspicions of harm
- Remain calm
- Intervene to protect all children
- Do not shame or use judgemental language
- Keep discussion minimal if the behaviour involves possible criminal or child protection matter
- Develop an initial response plan

### 4. Document the behaviour and store the record confidentially and securely

### 5. Report following procedure for Reporting (if applicable)

- RED sexual behaviour must be reported
- Assess whether ORANGE sexual behaviour must be reported

### 6. Notify the nominated supervisor/approved provider as soon as practicable

### 7. Contact parents following procedure for Contacting parents

- If we have reported the allegation to Police/Child Protection, get clearance to contact parents
- Contact the parents of the child who has allegedly exhibited harmful sexual behaviour
- Contact any other parents of children who:
  - Have been impacted by the harmful sexual behaviour
  - Witnessed the behaviour

- Notify other parents if accounts of the behaviour might be circulating, but do not disclose confidential information
  - Do not disclose the names of the children involved
8. Provide support, following procedure Providing support, to the child allegedly exhibiting harmful sexual behaviour and any other children, families and staff members who are impacted
9. Assess and manage risks
- The approved provider and nominated supervisor assess and manage the immediate risks to other children and staff members, and take action to protect children from harm (in consultation with support and child protection services)
  - Depending on the situation, actions might include:
    - Implementing a risk management strategy
    - Implementing a support and safety plan for impacted child/ren
    - Suspending/excluding the child from the service
    - Increased monitoring and constant supervision
    - Restricting the child's contact with other children or only allow them to have supervised contact
    - Restricting access to sensitive computer systems, files or facilities (if applicable)
10. Implement a behaviour support plan
- If the child remains at the service, the approved provider and nominated supervisor will need to establish a behaviour support plan that ensures the safety of other children and staff members. The behaviour support plan will need to address how the child will be monitored and provided with the support they need
  - Establish the plan in consultation with family services, child's parents, carers, professionals and support services
  - Monitor and review plans regularly and when there is any new behaviour by the child that may impact on their or other children and staff's safety and wellbeing
11. If a child exhibits GREEN – developmentally appropriate sexual behaviour:
- Do not punish or shame the child/ren for the behaviour
  - Safely and sensitively intervene
  - Use non-judgemental language to describe the behaviour that should stop
  - Remind them of the expectations of behaviour at the service
  - Discuss the impact the behaviour might have on others

- Explain that the behaviour might be inappropriate to the situation (e.g., it is private behaviour)
- Redirect them to another activity
- Document the behaviour and response
- Report to the nominated supervisor
- Contact the parents of the child/ren to notify them of the behaviour and our response
- Reinforce to the parents that the behaviour is age/stage appropriate
- Be aware that sexual behaviour in children may be viewed differently among different cultures, religions and familial backgrounds
- Provide parents with information about sexual behaviour in children if this will help them

## PROCEDURE – Managing allegations of reportable conduct

### When to use this procedure

- When you become aware that a worker has engaged in reportable conduct (see procedure for definition)

#### 1. Respond to reportable conduct

- Report criminal offences to the Police, make any necessary reports to Child Protection and the regulatory authority
- Manage the risks to children, staff and others

#### 2. Report reportable conduct

- The approved provider must notify the Victorian Social Services Regulator of allegations of the following 'reportable conduct' made against their workers and volunteers (includes any company directors, business owners, labour hire workers, volunteer workers and secondees):
  - sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
  - sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
  - physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
  - any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
  - significant neglect of a child.
- The approved provider must make the report regardless of whether the allegations relate to the individual's employment or activities at the service.
- Staff and volunteers must report allegations of reportable conduct (including any made against themselves) as soon as practicable to the approved provider, who will then notify the SSR.
- If a staff member becomes aware that the approved provider is the subject of reportable conduct or the approved provider is not satisfactorily meeting our obligations, they must notify the SSR
- The approved provider must make the report within 3 business days of receiving a report or otherwise becoming aware of reportable allegations
- Make the report using the [online form](#) on the SSR website
- Consult with Police and Child Protection after making report so as not prejudice any concurrent police investigation or court proceedings

#### 3. Investigate reportable conduct

- The Reportable Conduct Scheme may require our service to investigate reportable allegations of convictions
- Consult with the Police and Child Protection before doing anything that could compromise any criminal or statutory child protection investigations, or a criminal prosecution
- If we are told to suspend an investigation, we will inform the SSR and take steps to manage the risks posed by that suspension.
- Plan and conduct investigations strictly in line with guidance from the SSR. The approved provider will:
  - Conduct investigations in a timely way
  - Manage all conflicts of interest (actual, potential or perceived)
  - Protect against any interference from interested third parties
  - Plan, conduct and document the investigation
  - Appoint a suitable investigator
  - Give the employee written notice when the investigation is over and a written report of the findings and the reasons for the findings
  - Form view/not form the view, on reasonable grounds, that the alleged reportable conduct has occurred on balance of probabilities
  - Take appropriate action in response to the findings

#### 4. Carry out investigations in line with the principles of procedural fairness

- Give the staff member an opportunity to make submissions when they are informed: that they are the subject of an investigation; of any proposed adverse finding; and of any proposed action to be taken as a result of the finding
- Always act fairly and without bias, manage conflicts of interests, and make reasonable inquiries before making a decision

#### 5. Manage risks

- As part of our risk management for an allegation, we will consider the safety and wellbeing of any children or other adults involved
- Conduct three risk assessments according to the processes set out in our Child Safe Risk Management Plan and in the SSR guidance:
  - Initial risk assessment – based on all the information we have at hand when a reportable allegation is first made
  - Ongoing risk assessment – during or on suspension of an investigation, based on any new information arising from the investigation

- Final risk assessment – at the completion of an investigation, regardless of the finding, to inform the actions or proposed actions to be taken by the approved provider

6. Report findings of investigation

- The approved provider must submit an update on the allegation within 30 calendar days and a final report detailing the outcomes of the investigation as soon as practicable to the SSR, following the SSR's guidelines for reports
- The report will set out the findings and the reasons for the findings. It will describe, and give reasons for, our past and proposed actions in response to the allegation (e.g. disciplinary procedures, referring to authorities, no action needed)

7. Take appropriate action in response to the findings

8. Inform the child involved and their family of the outcomes of investigations if we have permission to do so (follow procedure for Contacting Parents)

9. Comply with our obligations to provide certain information if the SSR or another authorised agency requests it

10. Keep information about a reportable allegation confidential and store it securely, in line with our record keeping policies and procedures

## RESOURCE - Disclosure of harm or risk of harm record template (child protection)

### Disclosure of harm or risk of harm record

This form must be completed as soon as practicable after you receive a disclosure of harm.

A disclosure of harm occurs when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened, is happening, or is likely to happen to a child. Disclosures of harm may start with:

- I think I saw...||
- Somebody told me that...||
- Just think you should know...||
- I'm not sure what I want you to do, but...||

Keep this record on the child's enrolment record and retain according to our Child Protection Policy

#### Details of the child

Child's full name	
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#### Details of the disclosure

Date of disclosure	Time
___ / ___ / _____	_____ am / pm
Name of the person who made the disclosure	
Are they related to the child?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, what is the relationship?	
What did the person disclose? Try to use the exact words they used. Use "I said" "they said" statements, include any questions you asked and comments you made	

Where did the disclosure occur?	
Was anyone else present during the disclosure?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, what is/are their name/s, role/s and employer/s	
Have you followed our Procedures for making a report?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Describe the actions you have taken following the disclosure	

Details of person completing this record		
Full name	_____	
Position/role	_____	
Date record was made	Time record was made	Signature
___ / ___ / _____	_____ am / pm	x _____

## RESOURCE - Suspicion of harm or risk of harm record template (child protection)

[The Victorian Government also has a template for recording suspected child abuse available to [download](#)]

### Suspicion of harm or risk of harm record

This form must be completed as soon as practicable after form a suspicion of harm

You should suspect harm if:

- a child says they have been harmed
- someone else, for example another child, a parent, or an employee, says harm has occurred or is likely to occur
- a child says they know someone who has been harmed (it is possible that they may be referring to themselves)
- they are concerned at significant changes in the behaviour of a child, or the presence of new unexplained and suspicious injuries
- they see the harm happening

Keep this record on the child's enrolment record and retain according to our Child Protection Policy

#### Details of the child

Child's full name	
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#### Details of the suspicion

<p>Why do you suspect harm? Try to use the exact words a child or someone else uses if relevant. Provide as much detail as possible</p>	
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If relevant, what date and time did the person say something?	___ / ___ / _____      _____ am / pm
Have you followed our Procedures for making a report?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Describe the actions you have taken because of your suspicion	

Details of person completing this record		
Full name	_____	
Position/role	_____	
Date record was made	Time record was made	Signature
___ / ___ / _____	_____ am / pm	x _____

**RESOURCE - Child safety and wellbeing breach - incident report template****Child safety and wellbeing breach - incident report**

This form must be completed as soon as practicable after you witness or become aware of a breach.

Store and retain this record according to our Record Keeping Policy / Child Protection Policy

Details of the child	
Child's full name	

Details of the breach	
Date of breach	Time
___ / ___ / _____	_____ am / pm
Location of breach	
Name of person(s) involved in the breach	
Description of breach	
Immediate action taken	
If no action taken - reason	
Name of the authority the breach has been reported to (if relevant)	

Name of the person reported to	
--------------------------------	--

Details of person completing this record		
Full name		
Position/role		
Date record was made	Time record was made	Signature
__ / __ / _____	_____ am / pm	x

## RESOURCE - Indicators of harm (child protection)

There are many indicators of harm to children. Behavioural or physical signs which assist in recognising harm to children are known as indicators. The following is a guide only. One indicator on its own may not imply abuse or neglect. However, a single indicator can be as important as the presence of several indicators. Each indicator needs to be considered in the context of other indicators and the child's circumstances. A child's behaviour is likely to be affected if he/she is under stress. There can be many causes of stress and it is important to find out specifically what is causing the stress. Harm can be single incidents or ongoing, and may be intentional or unintentional.

<b>General indicators of harm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marked delay between injury and seeking medical assistance</li> <li>• History of injury</li> <li>• The child gives some indication that the injury did not occur as stated</li> <li>• The child tells you someone has hurt him/her</li> <li>• The child tells you about someone he/she knows who has been hurt</li> <li>• Someone (relative, friend, acquaintance, sibling) tells you that the child may have been abused</li> </ul>
<b>Neglect</b>	<p>Child neglect is the continued failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child with the basic things needed for his or her proper growth and development, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care and adequate supervision.</p> <p><b>Parental/caregiver indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depriving or withholding physical contact</li> <li>• Failure to provide psychological nurturing</li> <li>• Treating one child differently to the others</li> <li>• Dirty, chaotic, unhygienic environment, e.g., house over-run with pets, faeces not cleaned up etc</li> <li>• Nowhere for child or young person to sleep</li> <li>• Unable or unwilling to provide adequate food and/or clothing</li> <li>• Inability to respond emotionally to the child</li> <li>• Leaving the child or young person inappropriately without supervision</li> <li>• Abandoning the child</li> <li>• Depriving of or withholding physical contact or stimulation for prolonged periods</li> <li>• Overwhelmed with other problems, e.g., substance abuse</li> <li>• Showing no concern for the child or young person's wellbeing when it would be reasonably expected</li> <li>• Family is isolated from relatives, other adults or social supports</li> <li>• Greeting the child or young person with indifference</li> <li>• An extremely chaotic life</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicators in children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor hygiene: matted hair, dirty skin or strong body odour</li> <li>• Loss of 'skin bloom' and poor hair texture</li> <li>• Untreated physical or medical problems</li> <li>• Frequent illness and low-grade infections</li> <li>• Persistently untreated head lice</li> <li>• Hungry – scavenging, stealing or hoarding food</li> <li>• Constantly tired and listless</li> <li>• Delay in developmental milestones</li> <li>• Low weight for age and/or failure to thrive for no medical reason</li> <li>• A flat and superficial way of relating</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety about being dropped or abandoned</li> <li>• Self-comforting behaviour, e.g., rocking and/or sucking</li> <li>• Inadequate clothing in winter</li> <li>• Frequent lateness to or absence from the service</li> <li>• Child or young person states that no one is home to provide care</li> <li>• Longing for adult affection</li> <li>• Child or young person avoids going home</li> </ul>
<p><b>Physical abuse</b></p>	<p>Physical abuse is a non-accidental injury or patten of injuries to a child caused by a parent, caregiver or other person.</p> <p><b>Perpetrator indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct admissions of injuring the child</li> <li>• Direct expressions of desire to injure the child</li> <li>• Family history of violence, including previous harm to children</li> <li>• Telling a story of injury which is inconsistent with the physical findings</li> <li>• Showing little concern about the welfare of a child or the treatment and care of an injury</li> <li>• Isolating a child or young person from contact with school, services etc in order to hide injuries or prevent disclosure.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicators in children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disclosure by the child</li> <li>• Facial, head and neck bruising</li> <li>• Other bruising and marks which show the shape of the object used (e.g, a handprint, belt buckle)</li> <li>• Multiple bruises or injuries</li> <li>• Lacerations and welts</li> <li>• Bite marks</li> <li>• Dislocations</li> <li>• Fractures of bones, especially in children under three years old</li> <li>• Burns and scalds – a burn with a clear outline may be suspicious</li> <li>• A large number of scars of different sizes or ages, or on different parts of the body</li> <li>• Explanation offered by the child is not consistent with the injury</li> <li>• History of injury which is vague or variable</li> <li>• Marked delay between injury and presentation for medical assistance</li> <li>• Flinching when approached by adults</li> <li>• Frozen watchfulness</li> <li>• Repeated presentations of the child to health or other services with injuries, swallowing of non-food substances or minor complaints</li> </ul>
<p><b>Emotional abuse</b></p>	<p>Emotional abuse occurs when an adult harms a child’s development by repeatedly treating and speaking to a child in ways that damage the child’s ability to feel and express their feelings.</p> <p><b>Perpetrator indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excessive or unreasonable demands</li> <li>• Unrealistic expectations of the child or young person</li> <li>• Persistent hostility and severe verbal abuse</li> <li>• Rejection, ridiculing and scape-goating</li> <li>• Exposing child to domestic violence</li> <li>• Constant criticism, belittling, teasing and withholding of affection and praise</li> <li>• Belief that a particular child or young person is intrinsically ‘bad’, ‘naughty’ or ‘evil’</li> <li>• Using inappropriate social or physical isolation as punishment</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicators in children</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over compliant, withdrawn, passive and/or tearful</li> <li>• Displaying age-inappropriate behaviours, e.g. overly adult (parenting other children) or overly infantile (thumb sucking, rocking, wetting or soiling)</li> <li>• Lack expectations and trust in people</li> <li>• Fearful of parent(s) and/or caregiver(s)</li> <li>• Indiscriminate attachment</li> <li>• Disruptive or aggressive behaviour towards others</li> <li>• Hyper-vigilance, particularly in pre-school children</li> <li>• Exhibiting extreme attention seeking or risk-taking behaviour</li> <li>• Withdrawn or seen as a 'loner' – difficulty relating to others</li> <li>• Highly anxious</li> <li>• Developmental delay</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sexual abuse</b></p>	<p>Sexual abuse can be physical, verbal or emotional in nature. It can include non-contact and contact activities and can involve a range of behaviour including but not limited to: sexual acts, penetrative or non-penetrative, with a child or young person under the age of consent, forcing a child to strip or masturbate, inappropriate touching of a child, whether clothed or unclothed, engaging in any kind of sexual activity in front of a child, including watching pornography, taking, downloading, viewing or distributing sexual images of children, possessing images of child sexual abuse, encouraging a child to perform sexual acts in front of a webcam or any recording device, grooming a child (or their parent or carer).</p> <p><b>Perpetrator indications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposing a child or young person to pornography or using a child or young person for pornographic purposes</li> <li>• Intentional exposure of child or young person to sexual behaviour in others</li> <li>• Previously committed or suspected of child sexual assaults</li> <li>• Inappropriate curtailing or jealousy regarding age-appropriate development of independence from the family</li> <li>• Coercing the child or young person to engage in sexual behaviour with other children</li> <li>• Verbal threats of sexual abuse</li> <li>• Exploitation or corruption of children or young people</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicators in children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They describe sexual acts</li> <li>• Direct or indirect disclosures</li> <li>• Age-inappropriate behaviour and/or persistent sexual behaviour</li> <li>• Self-destructive behaviour</li> <li>• Regression in development achievements</li> <li>• Child being in contact with a suspected or know perpetrator of sexual assault</li> <li>• Bleeding from the vagina or anus</li> <li>• Injuries such as tears to the genitalia</li> <li>• Sexually transmitted diseases</li> </ul>
<p><b>Grooming</b></p>	<p>Grooming is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child or young person for sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent or carer. Young people are often 'groomed' before they are sexually abused.</p> <p>At first, they may be tricked into thinking they are in a safe and normal relationship so they may not know it's happening or may feel they have no choice but to be abused.</p>

	<p>It may be hard to identify when someone is being groomed until after they have been sexually abused, because grooming behaviour can sometimes look like 'normal' caring behaviour; however, this is not always the case.</p> <p><b>Perpetrator indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paying undue attention paid to a child including giving gifts or going on special outings together</li> <li>• Inappropriate touching such as tickling and back rubbing</li> <li>• Inappropriate joke telling, sexual in nature</li> <li>• Emotional or behavioural changes- including the abrupt onset of mood swings, secretive behaviour or withdrawal</li> <li>• Openly or pretending to accidentally expose the child to nudity, sexual material</li> <li>• Oversteps social boundaries with parents (e.g., comes to child's birthday party uninvited)</li> <li>• Offers to take the child to sports or other activities, or offers to babysit child or take them camping</li> <li>• Offers to do things for the family – such as repairs or gardening</li> <li>• Overly complimentary to family and parents</li> <li>• Tries to be flirtatious or romantic with parent/family members</li> <li>• Offers to mentor/coach child</li> <li>• Shows an undue interest in the child's interests, wellbeing, life</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicators in children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talks a lot about a particular adult or older child, or wants to spend a lot of time with them or meet them alone</li> <li>• Is in a relationship with a much older person</li> <li>• Is skipping school or sporting activities</li> <li>• Is spending less time with friends or changes friendship groups suddenly</li> <li>• Spends more time alone in their room</li> <li>• Has unexplained gifts like new toys, clothes, jewellery or electronics and doesn't want to talk about where the gifts came from</li> <li>• Doesn't want to talk about what they've been doing or lies about it</li> <li>• Stops telling you about their day or asking for your advice.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Psychological abuse</b></p>	<p>Psychological harm occurs where the behaviour of the parent or caregiver damages the confidence and self-esteem of the child, resulting in serious emotional deprivation or trauma. In general, it is the frequency and duration of this behaviour that causes harm.</p> <p><b>Perpetrator indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excessive criticism</li> <li>• Withholding affection</li> <li>• Exposing child to domestic violence</li> <li>• Intimidation or threatening behaviour</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicators in children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constant feelings of worthlessness</li> <li>• Unable to value others</li> <li>• Lack of trust in people</li> <li>• Lack of people skills necessary for daily functioning</li> <li>• Extreme attention seeking behaviour</li> <li>• Extremely eager to please or obey adults</li> <li>• Takes extreme risks, is markedly disruptive, bullying or aggressive</li> <li>• Suicide threats</li> <li>• Running away from home</li> </ul>
<p><b>Domestic violence</b></p>	<p>Any behaviour that's violent, threatening, controlling or intended to make the family feel scared and unsafe can be considered family and domestic violence</p>

**Perpetrator indicators**

- Controlling behaviour (also known as coercive control) – e.g. stopping family members from seeing people, leaving the house or other activities
- Physical violence
- Sexual assault
- Emotional abuse
- Stalking family members e.g., repeated phone calls/messages, unwanted or obsessive attention, following or monitoring
- Technology facilitated abuse of family members e.g., checking computers/phone use, spyware trackers, publishing intimate photos without consent, threatening to share photos or messages to harm you
- Financial abuse of family members e.g., stealing money, not allowing family members to work, making others account for how they spend money, withholding financial information

**Indicators in children**

- Show aggressive behaviour
- Develop phobias & insomnia
- Experience anxiety
- Show symptoms of depression
- Have diminished self esteem
- Demonstrate poor academic performance and problem solving skills
- Have reduced social competence skills including low levels of empathy
- Show emotional distress
- Have physical complaints

## RESOURCE – Quick guide to Child Protection Policy for staff

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[This an optional summary of our Child Protection Policy for staff. You can use it as a handout or to display]

All staff, volunteers, students and contractors must follow our [Child Protection Policy](#) and Procedures at all times. Child safety overrides all other considerations.

### Your core responsibilities

- Protect children from harm or risk of harm, including all forms of abuse and neglect, or inappropriate conduct by other staff or volunteers
- Act on any incident, allegation, disclosure, suspicion or belief
- You are a mandatory reporter. Report concerns even if you are unsure or did not witness the incident
- Follow procedures exactly – do not investigate matters yourself
- Keep information confidential and make timely written records accurately using our forms
- Manage risks to the affected child/ren and families, including any risks posed by children or adults at the service
- Cooperate fully with Police, Child Protection, the early childhood regulatory authority and the Social Services Regulator (SSR)
- Failure to act, delay reporting or silencing concerns is not tolerated and may be an offence under the law

### If a child is in immediate danger:

- Call 000 immediately if required
- Protect the child and other children
- Notify the nominated supervisor and approved provider as soon as possible

### If a child or someone else discloses harm:

- Stay calm, listen and take the concern seriously
- Use the person's words – do not ask leading questions
- Reassure the person they have done the right thing
- Make a written record using our form
- Do not investigate or confront anyone

### Report incidents, allegations, disclosures, suspicions, beliefs

- Make mandatory reports to Police and/or Child Protection where required
- Seek advice from the Police or Child Protection if you are unsure whether to report
- Report incidents or allegations of 'red' sexual behaviour in children and consider reporting 'orange' sexual behaviour
- Report immediately if you witness or suspect other staff have breached our Child Safe Code of Conduct, including by engaging inappropriate conduct
- Notify SSR of any reportable conduct by a staff member (approved provider)
- Notify early childhood regulatory authority where required (approved provider)
- Share information with authorised agencies according to our legal obligations

### Notify parents

- Follow procedures for notifying parents

- Get permission to contact parents from Police or Child Protection where necessary (e.g., if an allegation is about a parent or contacting the parent may result in a child being unsafe)
- Be empathetic and make a contemporaneous written record of discussions

**Support children and families**

- Follow procedures for supporting affected children and families
- Refer children and families (with their consent) to support services, such as Orange Door

## **Child protection reporting summary - VIC**

**Call 000 if there is an immediate risk to health and safety**

**Report to the Police on 131 444 if a child has been or may be the victim of a criminal offence (including a sexual offence) or if an alleged perpetrator of abuse may be a risk more generally to all children**

**If you form a reasonable belief that a child has been abused or neglected or is at risk of abuse or neglect, report to the child protection intake service where the child normally resides:**

**North Division intake: 1300 664 977**

**South Division intake: 1300 655 795**

**East Division intake: 1300 360 391**

**West Division intake - metropolitan: 1300 664 977**

**West Division intake - rural and regional: 1800 075 599**

**Notify the regulatory authority (including serious incidents, inappropriate conduct, reportable sexual conduct by staff, allegations or incidents of physical or sexual abuse)**

**Notify the Victorian Social Services Regulator of reportable conduct**

