

CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 2

PURPOSE

This policy will provide a clear set of guidelines and procedures to ensure:

- all children attending Black Rock Pre School are provided with a safe environment
- all reasonable steps are taken by the Approved Provider, educators and staff to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children attending the service
- timely and effective intervention for children and young people who may be at risk of abuse or neglect.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Black Rock Pre School has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that all children are safe in their care, and will provide training, resources, information and guidance to support this. Black Rock Pre School is committed to:

- ensuring that the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the service is protected at all times while also promoting their learning and development
- fulfilling its duty of care (refer to *Definitions*) obligations under the law by protecting children from any reasonable, foreseeable risk of injury or harm
- ensuring that people caring for children at the service act in the best interests of the child, and take all reasonable steps to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing at all times
- supporting the rights of all children to feel safe, and be safe, at all times
- developing and maintaining a culture in which children feel valued, respected and cared for
- encouraging active participation from parents/guardians and families at the service, and ensuring that best practice is based on a partnership approach and shared responsibility for children's health, safety, wellbeing and development
- promoting children's development and wellbeing.
- promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety of children with a disability.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Responsible Person, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Black Rock Pre School, including during offsite excursions and activities.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

“Every child has the right to live a full and productive life. It is up to all of us to ensure our children grow up in environments that build confidence, friendship, security and happiness, irrespective of a person’s family circumstances and background” (*Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people* – refer to *Sources*). The protection of children, one of the most vulnerable groups in society, is a shared community responsibility and involves ensuring that all children are safe, their needs are met and the possibility of child abuse is minimised.

The *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (CYFA) provides the legislative basis for the provision of services to vulnerable children, young people and their families, and places children’s best interests at the heart of decision-making and service delivery. Under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*, the Approved Provider must ensure that all educators and staff are familiar with current policies and procedures with regard to child protection, including state and territory legislative responsibilities and their obligations under these laws (Regulation 84).

Early childhood educators, in daily contact with children and their families, are well placed to observe when a child appears to be at risk of harm arising from abuse or neglect. Services have a duty of care (refer to *Definitions*) to act immediately to protect and preserve the safety and wellbeing of the children in their care. Any person who believes, on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection may report their concerns to Child Protection (refer to *Definitions*) (*Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people* – refer to *Sources*).

The *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* require that approved services protect children from any harm and hazards, and to adequately supervise children at all times. Adult supervision is a key factor in creating and maintaining child safe environments. Active supervision together with risk minimisation strategies can prevent or reduce the risk of injury to children.

Risk minimisation strategies, supported by clear policies and procedures for specific areas of child safety, will help ensure the environment and practices at the service are child safe. Policies and procedures must be developed in relation to all matters specified in Regulation 168(2), including emergency and evacuation, water safety, sun protection, delivery and collection of children, and incident, injury, trauma and illness. Risks in the child’s physical environment can be minimised by ensuring the safety of buildings, grounds, equipment, materials and furniture used at the service, and the safe storage and use of dangerous substances such as cleaning products and chemicals.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic), as amended 2011
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic), as amended 2012
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic), as amended 2011
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* (Vic): Sections 165, 166, 167
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* (Vic): Regulations 84, 85, 86, 99, 100, 101, 102, 168(2)(h)
- *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth), as amended 2008 and 2011

- *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety*
 - Standard 2.2: Each child is protected
 - Concept & Descriptor 2.2.1: At all times, reasonable precaution and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
 - Concept & descriptor – 2.2.2: Plans to effectively managing incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented
 - Concept & descriptor – 2.2.3 – Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse and neglect.
- *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 3: Physical Environment*
 - Standard 3.1: The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service
 - Concept & Descriptor 3.1.1: Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, furniture, equipment, facilities and resources are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child
 - Concept & Descriptor 3.1.2: Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained
- *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 7: Governance & Leadership*
 - Concept & Descriptor 7.1.2 Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of the quality service.
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*
- *Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)*
- *Working with Children Regulations 2006 (Vic)*
- <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards>

4. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Abuser: A person who mistreats and/or harms a child or young person.

Abuse: (In the context of this policy) refers to physical and/or emotional mistreatment, and/or lack of care of the child. Examples include sexual abuse, the witnessing of family violence and any non-accidental injury to a child.

Bullying: Repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons¹. Bullying occurs when one or more people deliberately and repeatedly upset or hurt another person, damage their property, reputation or social acceptance².

Child: In Victoria, under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*, a child or young person is a person under 18 years of age.

Child abuse: An act or omission by an adult that endangers or impairs a child's physical and/or emotional health and development. Child abuse can be a single incident but often takes place over time. Abuse, neglect and maltreatment (refer to *Definitions*) are generic terms used to describe situations in which a child may need protection. Child abuse includes any and all of the following:

- **Physical abuse:** When a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from an injury inflicted by a parent/guardian, caregiver or other adult. The injury may be inflicted intentionally, or be the consequence of

¹ www.bullyingnoway.gov.au

² <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/health/Pages/bully.aspx>

physical punishment or the physically aggressive treatment of a child. Physical injury and significant harm to a child can also result from neglect by a parent/guardian, caregiver or other adult. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures, poisoning, internal injuries, shaking injuries or strangulation.

- **Sexual abuse:** When a person uses power or authority over a child, or inducements such as money or special attention, to involve the child in sexual activity. It includes a wide range of sexual behaviour from inappropriate touching/fondling of a child or exposing a child to pornography, to having sex with a child³.
- **Emotional and psychological abuse:** Involves continuing behaviour by adults towards children, which erodes social competence or self-esteem over time⁴. It occurs when a person engages in inappropriate behaviours, such as rejecting, ignoring, threatening or verbally abusing a child, or allowing others to do so (Office of the Child Safety Commissioner (OCSC), Victoria).
- **Racial, cultural and religious abuse:** Conduct that demonstrates contempt, ridicule, hatred or negativity towards a child because of their race, culture or religion (OCSC).
- **Neglect:** Refer to definition below.
- **Exposure to domestic/family violence:** When children and young people witness or experience the chronic, repeated domination, coercion, intimidation and victimisation of one person by another through physical, sexual and/or emotional means within intimate relationships (adapted from the Australian Medical Association definition).

Child FIRST: A Victorian community-based intake and referral service linked with Family Services. Child FIRST ensures that vulnerable children, young people and their families are effectively linked to relevant services, including Child Protection (<https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/making-referral-child-first>)

Child sex offender: Someone who sexually abuses children, and who may or may not have prior convictions.

Child protection: The term used to describe the whole-of-community approach to the prevention of harm to children. It includes strategic action for early intervention, for the protection of those considered most vulnerable and for responses to all forms of abuse.

Child Protection Service (also referred to as Child Protection): The statutory child protection service provided by the Victorian Department of Human Services, to protect children and young people at risk of abuse and neglect. This service also works closely with Family Services (including Child FIRST) to support the assessment and engagement of vulnerable children and families in community-based services (<https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/children-youth-and-families>).

Code of conduct: A set of rules or practices that establish a standard of behaviour to be followed by individuals and organisations. A code of conduct defines how individuals should behave towards each other, and towards other organisations and individuals in the community (refer to *Code of Conduct Policy*).

Disclosure: (In the context of this policy) refers to a statement that a child or young person makes to another person that describes or reveals abuse.

Domestic/family violence: The repeated use of violent, threatening, coercive or controlling behaviour by an individual against a family member(s) or someone with who they have or have had an intimate relationship, including carers.

Duty of care: A common law concept that refers to the responsibilities of organisations to provide people with an adequate level of protection against harm and all reasonable foreseeable risk of injury. In the context of this policy, duty of care refers to the responsibility of education and care services to provide children with an adequate level of care and protection against foreseeable harm and injury.

³ Office of the Child Safety Commissioner, Victoria

⁴<http://www.cryp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/index.htm>

Maltreatment: (In the context of this policy) refers to physical and/or emotional mistreatment, and/or lack of care of the child. Examples include sexual abuse, the witnessing of family violence and any non-accidental injury to a child.

Mandatory reporting: The legal obligation of certain professionals and community members to report when they believe, on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection from harm.

A broad range of professional groups are identified in the CYFA as 'mandatory reporters'. Mandated staff members must make a report to Child Protection as soon as is practicable after forming a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is in need of protection from significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse, and the child's parents/guardians are unwilling or unable to protect the child (*Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people* – refer to *Sources*).

To have reasonable grounds to believe a child is in need of protection, a mandatory reporter should believe both that there is risk of significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse, and that the parents/guardians are unwilling or unable to protect the child (Sections 162(c)(d) and 184 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (amended in 2011)). Section 182 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (amended in 2011) lists those who are mandated to report.

Mandatory reporters must report the abuse/neglect to:

- police, by calling 000, if the offence requires immediate police attention, or
- Child Protection authorities⁵, if they suspect, on reasonable grounds, that a child is suffering abuse or neglect, or wish to discuss their concerns about a child or young person.

Neglect: The failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed (Victorian Department of Human Services).

Negligence: Doing, or failing to do something that a reasonable person would, or would not do in a certain situation, and which causes another person damage, injury or loss as a result.

Notifiable complaint: A complaint that alleges a breach of the Act or Regulation, or alleges that the health, safety or wellbeing of a child at the service may have been compromised. Any complaint of this nature must be reported by the Approved Provider to the secretary of DHHS within 24 hours of the complaint being made (Section 174(2)(b), Regulation 176(2)(b)). If the Approved Provider is unsure whether the matter is a notifiable complaint, it is good practice to contact DHHS for confirmation. Written reports to DHHS must include:

- details of the event or incident
- the name of the person who initially made the complaint
- if appropriate, the name of the child concerned and the condition of the child, including a medical or incident report (where relevant)
- contact details of a nominated member of the Grievances Subcommittee/investigator
- any other relevant information.

Written notification of complaints must be submitted using the appropriate forms, which can be found on the ACECQA website: www.acecqa.gov.au

Offender: A person who mistreats and/or harms a child or young person.

Perpetrator: A person who mistreats and/or harms a child or young person.

Reasonable grounds: A person may form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection after becoming aware that the child or young person's health, safety or wellbeing is at risk and the child's parents/guardians are unwilling or unable to protect them. There may be reasonable grounds for forming such a belief if:

⁵ Child Protection Crisis Line: toll free on 13 12 78, or a regional DHS office.

- a child or young person states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- a child or young person states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be referring to themselves)
- someone who knows the child or young person states that the child or young person has been physically or sexually abused
- a child shows signs of being physically or sexually abused (see details in Appendix 2 of *Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people* – refer to *Sources*)
- the person is aware of persistent family violence or parental substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability that is impacting on the child or young person's safety, stability or development
- the person observes signs or indicators of abuse, including non-accidental or unexplained injury, persistent neglect, poor care or lack of appropriate supervision
- a child's/young person's actions or behaviour may place them at risk of significant harm and the parents/guardians are unwilling or unable to protect the child.

Voluntary (non-mandated) notification: A notification to the Child Protection Service by a person who believes that a child is in need of protection. Section 183 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (amended in 2011) states that any person who believes, on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection, may notify a protective intervener of that belief and of the reasonable grounds that the belief is based on. Under this part of the Act, notifications are made out of moral obligation, rather than legislative obligation. The person making the notification is not expected to prove the abuse, and the law protects the anonymity of the person making the notification.

Young person: In Victoria, under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*, a child or young person is a person under 18 years of age.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic), amended in 2011: www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/cohrara2006433/
- Childsafety Australia: <http://www.childsafety.org.au>
- *Choose With Care: Building child safe organisations* – an information and training program: www.childwise.net
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD): www.education.vic.gov.au/ecsmangement/educareservices/csprotocols.htm
- Victorian Department of Human Services: www.dhs.vic.gov.au
- Office of the Commission for Children and Young People: <http://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au>
- *Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people* – A joint protocol of the Department of Human Services Child Protection, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Licensed Children's Services and Victorian Schools: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/.../protectionprotocol.aspx
- *Safeguarding Children* accreditation program, Australian Childhood Foundation: www.childhood.org.au
- Service Agreement Information Kit for Funded Organisations: <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/facs/bdb/fmu/service-agreement/1.introduction>
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: www.unicef.org/crc
- *What is Child Abuse?*: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/child-protection/what-is-child-abuse
- Working with Children (WWC) Check: www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/

Service policies

- *Administration of First Aid Policy*
- *Anaphylaxis Policy*
- *Asthma Policy*
- *Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy*
- *Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy*
- *Diabetes Policy*
- *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*
- *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*
- *Excursions and Service Events Policy*
- *Hygiene Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Interactions with Children Policy*
- *Nutrition and Active Play Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*
- *Staffing Policy*
- *Sun Protection Policy*
- *Water Safety Policy*

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

In relation to child protection matters:

- ensuring that the Nominated Supervisor and staff members at the service who work with children are advised of current child protection legislation, its application, and any obligations that they may have under that law (Regulation 84)
- identifying the potential for child abuse at Black Rock Pre School, and developing and implementing effective prevention strategies in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor and educators/staff (refer to Attachment 1 – Child protection risk assessment and Attachment 4 – Child safety review checklist)
- ensuring recruitment and induction processes for educators, staff and contractors are in line with this policy (refer to Attachment 5 – Guidelines for the recruitment of staff and volunteers)
- screening all educators, staff, volunteers and students, including undertaking criminal history checks (if required), Working with Children Checks (except for individuals under the age of 18, parent/guardian on duty, registered teachers or police officers), reference checks and interviews (refer to *Staffing Policy*)
- ensuring that where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the service premises
- ensuring procedures for reporting and responding to suspected child abuse or neglect are promoted across the service and regularly reviewed in partnership with staff and parents/guardians, and where appropriate contractors, volunteers, students and children (refer to Attachment 4: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse)
- ensuring clear procedures are in place for reporting suspected child abuse and management of complaints (refer to Attachment 3 and the *Complaints and Grievances Policy*)
- ensuring educators, staff, volunteers and students undertake appropriate training and education on child protection, including recognising the signs and symptoms of child abuse (refer to *Definitions*), knowing how to respond, and understanding processes for reporting and managing concerns/incidents (refer to Attachment 3 – Incident/concern management and reporting guidelines)
- ensuring all staff, volunteers & students are aware of their duties required for the reportable conduct scheme and a clear procedure is in place for reporting concerns about a colleague's inappropriate conduct towards a child either during or outside working hours
- offering support to the child and their family, and to educators and staff in response to concerns or reports relating to the health, safety and wellbeing of a child at Black Rock Pre School
- developing co-operative relationships with appropriate services and/or professionals (including Child FIRST) in the best interests of children and their families

- identifying and implementing appropriate practices to support the principles of a child safe organisation, in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor and educators/staff at the service (refer to Attachment 2 – Child safe organisations and the *Safeguarding Children* accreditation program (refer to *Sources*))
- notifying DEECD, in writing, within 24 hours of becoming aware of a notifiable complaint (refer to *Definitions*) or allegation regarding the health, safety and/or welfare of a child at Black Rock Pre School
- notifying the Commission for Children and Young People of the investigation findings and any disciplinary action taken (or the reasons no action was taken)
- maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*).

In relation to providing a child safe environment at the service:

- ensuring children are adequately supervised and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times (refer to *Interactions with Children Policy*)
- ensuring parents/guardians have completed the enrolment form including details of authorised nominees, and permission forms for excursions and administration of medication (refer to *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy, Excursions and Service Events Policy* and *Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy*)
- ensuring the physical environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children (refer to the *Service policies* section of this policy including *Risk Register in Occupational Health and Safety Policy*)
- conducting risk assessments for excursions and considering children's safety when leaving the service premises
- ensuring all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards (refer to *Service policies* section of this policy including *Risk Register in Occupational Health and Safety Policy*)
- implementing and practising emergency and evacuation procedures (refer to *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*)
- ensuring there are appropriate procedures in place for the safe delivery and collection of children (refer to *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*)
- ensuring that the Nominated Supervisor, educators and all staff at the service who work with children are aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances
- implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, contractors and parents/guardians
- identifying and providing appropriate resources and training to assist educators, staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers and students to implement this policy (refer to *Sources*)
- protecting the rights of children and families, and encouraging their participation in decision-making
- ensuring the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, contractors, volunteers and students are kept informed of any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.

The Nominated and Responsible person are responsible for:

In relation to child protection matters:

- ensuring that they are aware of current child protection legislation, its application and any obligations that they may have under that law
- keeping up to date and complying with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy
- identifying the potential for and signs of child abuse at Black Rock Pre School, and developing and implementing effective prevention strategies in consultation with the Approved Provider and educators/staff (refer to Attachment 1 – Child protection risk assessment and Attachment 4 – Child safety review checklist)
- ensuring that where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the service premises
- ensuring processes for responding to and reporting are followed when there are significant concerns for the safety, health or wellbeing of a child at the service (refer to Attachment 4 – Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse)

- identifying and implementing appropriate practices to support the principles of a child safe organisation in consultation with the Approved Provider and educators at the service (refer to Attachment 2 – Child safe organisations and the *Safeguarding Children* accreditation program (refer to *Sources*))
- co-operating with other services and/or professionals in the best interests of children and their families
- ensuring that families are made aware of support services available to them (such as Child FIRST), and of the assistance these services can provide
- implementing the procedures for reporting suspected child abuse and management of complaints (refer to Attachment 3 and the *Complaints and Grievances Policy*)
- implementing the procedures for reporting any concerns about a colleagues behaviour towards a child (refer to attachment 6)
- notifying the Approved Provider immediately on becoming aware of a concern, complaint or allegation regarding the health, safety and welfare of a child at Black Rock Pre School
- offering support to the child and their family, and to educators and staff in response to concerns or reports relating to the health, safety and wellbeing of a child at Black Rock Pre School
- implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with the Approved Provider, educators, staff, contractors and parents/guardians
- maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*).

In relation to providing a child safe environment at the service:

- ensuring that all educators and staff who work with children are aware of this policy, and are supported to implement it in the service
- protecting the rights of children and families, and encouraging their participation in decision-making at the service
- ensuring that all children are adequately supervised at all times (refer to *Interactions with Children Policy*)
- ensuring learning environments are established that provide sufficient space, and include carefully chosen and well-maintained resources and equipment that will help enhance the quality of children’s learning and experiences
- organising/facilitating regular safety checks of the following:
 - emergency equipment
 - playgrounds and fixed equipment in outdoor environments
 - cleaning services
 - horticultural maintenance
 - pest control
- ensuring that all contractors/visitors sign in to the visitor’s log book
- ensuring the physical environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children (refer to the *Service policies* section of this policy including *Risk Register in Occupational Health and Safety Policy*)
- conducting risk assessments for excursions and considering children’s safety when leaving the service premises
- ensuring all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards (refer to the *Service policies* section of this policy including *Risk Register in Occupational Health and Safety Policy*)
- implementing and practising emergency and evacuation procedures (refer to *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*)
- ensuring there are appropriate procedures in place for the safe delivery and collection of children (refer to *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*)
- ensuring that all educators and staff at the service who work with children are aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances

- implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, contractors and parents/guardians
- identifying and providing appropriate resources and training to assist educators, staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers and students to implement this policy (refer to *Sources*)
- keeping up to date and complying with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.

All staff are responsible for:

- keeping up to date and complying with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy
- contributing to an organisational culture of child safety
- identifying the potential for child abuse at [Service Name], and developing and implementing effective prevention strategies in consultation with the Approved Provider and Person with Management or Control and the Nominated Supervisor and Person in day to day Charge
- fulfilling their legal responsibilities, including mandatory reporting (refer to Definitions) and duty of care obligations (refer to Definitions) (refer to Attachment 4 – Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse)
- following processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse (Attachment 4: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse)
- undertaking appropriate training on child protection, including recognising the signs and symptoms of child abuse (refer to Definitions), knowing how to respond, and understanding responsibilities and processes for reporting (refer to Attachment 4 – Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse)
- supporting the maintenance of Child Safe Standards in [Service Name] in consultation with the Approved Provider and Person with Management or Control and Nominated Supervisor and Person in day to day Charge at the service
- notifying the Nominated Supervisor , Person in day to day Charge, the Approved Provider or the Person with Management or Control immediately on becoming aware of any concerns, complaints or allegations regarding the safety, health and welfare of a child at Black Rock Pre-School
- offering support to the child and their family in response to concerns or reports relating to the safety, health and wellbeing of a child at Black Rock Pre-School
- co-operating with other services and/or professionals (including Child FIRST) in the best interests of children and their families
- informing families of support services available to them (such as Child FIRST), and of the assistance these services can provide
- conducting activities so that no child is left alone (or is out of sight) with a contractor, visitor, volunteer, student or parent/guardian at the service
- following the [Service Name]'s processes where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child
- maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to Privacy and Confidentiality Policy)
- contributing to a review of this policy in consultation with the Approved Provider, Person with Management or Control, Nominated Supervisor and Person in day to day Charge
- educating and empowering children to talk about events and situations that make them feel uncomfortable
- ensuring that children at the service are not subjected to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances
- using appropriate resources and undertaking training to assist with the implementation of this policy (refer to Sources)
- abiding by the service's Code of Conduct Policy and Interactions with Children Policy.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading and complying with this policy
- reporting any concerns, including in relation to potential for child abuse, to the Nominated Supervisor
- abiding by the service's *Code of Conduct*.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness, particularly in relation to identifying and responding to child safety concerns
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures (Regulation 172(2)).

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Child protection risk assessment
- Attachment 2: Child safe organisations
- Attachment 3: Incident/concern management and reporting guidelines
- Attachment 4: Child safety review checklist
- Attachment 5: Guidelines for the recruitment of staff and volunteers
- Attachment 6: Seven Standards and Self-Audit Toolkit to create and maintain a child safe organisation.

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by BRPS Committee of Management and updated by executive committee in June 2019 / June 2020.

REVIEW DATE: June 2022

ATTACHMENT 1

Child protection risk assessment

A child protection risk assessment process helps in the identification of the potential for child abuse in the service, and enables appropriate strategies to be developed to minimise risk.

It is important to create awareness among employees, contractors, visitors and volunteers of possible risks to children from abuse, and how to implement a range of strategies to protect children from these risks. The following table provides some examples of risks to which strategies could be implemented.

| Risk factors | Level of risk to children | Strategies to reduce risk | Evaluation |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| e.g. Appointment of a sex offender | High | Recruitment processes | Recruitment processes have been developed that include running all relevant criminal history and working with children related checks. |
| Opportunities for a child to be isolated within the program/premises | | | |
| Opportunities for a child to be taken away from the program/premises | | | |
| Close physical contact with an adult other than an educator | | | |
| Physical environment | | | |
| High staff turnover | | | |
| Limited staff turnover (with little outside scrutiny of the program) | | | |
| Unauthorised access by other people to the service (such as strangers or non-custodial parents) | | | |
| Staff not recognising signs of abusive behaviour | | | |
| Staff not raising concerns/suspicions of abuse | | | |
| Low levels of awareness of child protection issues | | | |
| Low levels of commitment to preventing abuse by management/staff | | | |
| Lack of appropriate incident management procedures | | | |
| Access to multimedia and information technology | | | |

ATTACHMENT 2

Child safe organisations⁶

This table provides some examples of practices that may be implemented to support the principles of a child safe organisation.

| Child safe principle | Practices |
|--|---|
| The organisation welcomes children, their parents/guardians and families | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators, staff, volunteers and students readily interact with children in an age-appropriate and respectful way • Children are treated as individuals: educators and volunteers strive to understand each child's particular interests and needs • Educators, staff, students and volunteers listen to children and encourage their participation |
| The organisation recognises that children are vulnerable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators, staff, students and volunteers accept it is their role to protect children involved with their organisation • Educators, staff, students and volunteers accept there is a difference in power between a child and an adult • The service maintains appropriate educator-to-child ratios • Policies are in place to minimise risk involved in one-to-one situations between a child and an adult • Equipment and activities are appropriate for the ability and age of the children • Children are supported and comforted in an appropriate way, consistent with the child's wishes • Information about children is treated confidentially |
| The organisation recognises and responds to children with additional needs, including disabilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service is accessible to all children • Educators, staff, students and volunteers relate to all children in a respectful and developmentally-appropriate manner • Policies are in place to guide the physical and psychological care requirements of all children |
| The organisation actively encourages the participation of Aboriginal children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators, staff, students, volunteers and other children acknowledge and show respect for Aboriginal culture • Policies acknowledge that an Aboriginal child's cultural identity is fundamental to their overall wellbeing |
| The organisation recognises, and responds to, the particular needs of children from diverse cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural diversity is welcomed and celebrated • Activities offered are representative of the cultural and religious mix of the local community • Educators, staff, students, volunteers and other children acknowledge and show respect for diversity |

⁶ Attachment 2 is based on principles for creating child safe organisations, as developed by the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner, Victoria.

| Child safe principle | Practices |
|--|--|
| The organisation encourages children to participate in decision-making | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are asked their views, and these views are respected and taken into consideration in decision-making • Children are involved in discussing appropriate behaviour |
| The organisation carefully recruits and manages its employees, contractors and volunteers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service has processes on staff and volunteer recruitment and management, covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – recruitment processes, including skills and qualifications required – background-checking and screening processes for all employees, contractors and volunteers – Working with Children Checks and police checks • The service has a <i>Code of Conduct</i> that outlines acceptable behaviour by educators, staff, students, volunteers and contractors • There is a clear and accessible complaints procedure for use by children, parents/guardians and employees • Parents/guardians can access the service policies on request |
| The organisation ensures that its commitment to child safety is clear and shared by all | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child protection policy (such as this <i>Child Safe Environment Policy</i>) is in place and accessible • Educators, staff, students, volunteers, contractors and parents/guardians are aware of the service's child protection policy |
| The organisation ensures employees, contractors and volunteers are informed about child safety and receive training, where appropriate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service has offers staff development that includes areas of child development, child protection, risk management and safety |

ATTACHMENT 3

Incident/concern management and reporting guidelines

Individuals working with children or young people have a duty of care to support and protect them. Where there is a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child/young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm, adults in contact with or working with that child/young person are ethically bound to act to maintain their safety and wellbeing. For some professionals, there is also a legal obligation to report the concern to the appropriate authorities.

Acting on a belief that child abuse has occurred, or is occurring, can be the first important step in stopping the abuse and protecting the child from further harm.

It is a Child Protection worker's role to investigate and prove significant harm, so other professionals need only provide reasonable grounds for their belief.

General guidelines

- The best interests of the child should always be the primary consideration, with due regard to confidentiality and fairness to the person against who the allegation is made.
- Children should be encouraged to approach any person in the service to express concerns about their treatment, and should be made to feel confident that they will be taken seriously.
- Employees and volunteers must be clear about who they are expected/permitted to approach when expressing concerns.
- Any investigation undertaken by the service must ensure procedural fairness and natural justice for a person suspected of abusing a child.
- Records must be kept about any child safety concern or complaint, and stored in accordance with the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*. These records must contain information about the action taken, including any internal investigation and any reports made to statutory authorities or professional bodies.
- Everyone at the service must be made aware of the need to report serious matters involving child protection to external authorities.
- Privacy must be maintained, and information must only be disclosed on a need-to-know basis.
- Instances of physical and sexual abuse of children are crimes and must be reported to the police. If a child discloses any such abuse, the service must listen, respond and report to both the police and child protection authorities.
- A report to the appropriate authorities can be made even if educators/staff and others working with children at the service do not have all the necessary information.
- Permission is not required from parents/guardians of a child where abuse is suspected, and parents/guardians do not need to be notified that a report has been made.

Forming a professional judgement

Forming an objective and professional judgement can be based on:

- warning signs (or indicators) of harm or potential harm, that have been observed or inferred
- knowledge of child development
- knowledge of cultural backgrounds
- knowledge of any difficulties experienced or support currently being received by a family
- consultation with colleagues and other professionals
- professional obligations and duty of care responsibilities
- established service protocols
- individual service procedures
- legal requirements, such as mandatory reporting.

Gathering information

| Action | Details |
|--|---|
| Make notes | Record your observations, and date and sign the entries |
| Continue to observe | Record your observations, and date and sign the entries |
| Consult colleagues | Access support and advice from your colleagues, compare notes and brainstorm possible strategies to address areas of concern |
| Develop action plans based on service procedures | Understand and consult the policies and procedures of Black Rock Pre School when determining what action to take |
| Talk to other agencies about helping the family | Collaborate with or engage community health services, local government services, Child FIRST, regional Department of Human Services/Child Protection officers and disability services. You may wish to instigate a case meeting |
| Talk to the child | Do this with respect for the child or young person's need for privacy and confidentiality |
| Talk to the parents/guardians | Only do this when it will not jeopardise the safety of the child or young person |

Signs or indicators of harm

- Physical signs of abuse or neglect may include, but are not limited to, bruises, burns, sprains, bites, cuts, fractures, frequent hunger, malnutrition, poor hygiene and inappropriate clothing.
- Behavioural signs of abuse (physical, sexual and emotional) or neglect may include, but are not limited to, wariness or distrust of adults, fear of parents/guardians and of going home, fear when other children cry/shout, excessive friendliness to strangers, being very passive and/or compliant, having/claiming to have headaches and/or stomach pains, displaying sexual behaviour that is unusual for the child's age, frequent rocking, sucking and biting, having difficulty sleeping, being withdrawn, aggressive and/or demanding, being highly anxious, having delayed speech, acting like a much younger child, and often being tired and falling asleep.
- Disclosures by the child concerned, or by other parties.

Reporting

- There are two types of notifications to be made in relation to significant concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child: a referral to Child FIRST (Family Services) or a report to Child Protection.
- To report concerns that are life threatening, ring Victoria Police on 000.
- To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit, call the nearest DHS office in your region during business hours. To report concerns after hours or on weekends, call the Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78 (24 hours, 7 days a week and toll free within Victoria). Note: this is an emergency service for weekends and after hours only, and cases reported to the Child Protection Crisis Line will be referred to the relevant DHS office on the following working day

- Provide the following information:
 - the child's name, age and address
 - the reason for believing that the injury or behaviour is the result of abuse or neglect
 - the reason why the call is being made at this point in time
 - an assessment of immediate danger to the child/ren (the person making the report may be questioned regarding knowledge of the current location of the alleged abuser/s)
 - a description of the injury or behaviour observed
 - the current location of the child
 - knowledge of other services that support or are involved with the family
 - any other information about the family
 - any specific details that will help the child, such as cultural background, need for an interpreter or disability support requirements.
- A notification should still be made, even if the notifier does not have all the necessary information.

Making a report to Child FIRST

A report to **Child FIRST** should be considered if, after taking into account the available information, the staff member forms a view that raising their concerns will have a low-to-moderate impact on the child, and that the immediate safety of the child will not be compromised. This may include circumstances when there are:

- significant parenting problems that may be affecting the child's development
- family conflict, including family breakdown
- families under pressure, due to a family member's physical or mental illness, substance misuse, disability or bereavement
- young, isolated and/or unsupported families
- families experiencing significant social or economic disadvantage that may adversely impact on a child's care or development.

Child FIRST provides a consolidated intake service to Family Services within sub-regional catchments. Child FIRST ensures that vulnerable children, young people and their families are linked effectively into relevant services, and this may be the best way to connect children, young people and their families with the services they need.

Making a report to Child Protection

A report to **Child Protection** should be considered if, after taking into account all of the available information, the staff member forms a view that the child is in need of protection because:

- the harm or risk of harm has a serious impact on the child's immediate safety, stability and/or development
- the harm or risk of harm is persistent and entrenched, and is likely to have a serious impact on the child's safety, stability and/or development
- the child's parents/guardians are unwilling or unable to protect the child or young person from harm.

Upon receipt of a credible report, Child Protection will seek further information, often from professionals who may already be involved with the child or family, to determine whether further action is required. In determining what steps to take, Child Protection will also consider any concerns previously reported with regard to the child or young person. In most circumstances, Child Protection will inform the notifier of the outcome of investigations.

In considering a duty of care to report concerns of child abuse and/or neglect, it is important to remember that:

- it is not necessary to prove that abuse has taken place, only to provide reasonable grounds for the belief
- permission from parents/guardians or caregivers is not required to make a notification, nor do they need to be informed that a notification is being or has been made
- if a notification is made in good faith, the notifier cannot be held legally liable for any consequences, regardless of the outcome of the notification
- the identity of the notifier will remain confidential unless the notifier chooses to inform the child and/or family, or if the notifier consents in writing to the disclosure of their identity, or if the court decides that this information must be disclosed
- the notifier may have an ongoing role, including:
 - acting as a support person in interviews with the child or young person
 - attending a case conference
 - participating in case-planning meetings
 - continuing to monitor the child's behaviour and their interactions with others
 - observing/monitoring the conditions of a protective court order that may relate to access or contact with a parent/guardian
 - liaising with other professionals and child protection officers in relation to a child or young person's wellbeing
 - providing written reports for case-planning meetings or court proceedings in relation to the child's wellbeing or progress.

ATTACHMENT 4
Child safety review checklist⁷

This checklist will assist organisations to identify risks and issues in relation to the protection of children, and the requirements for appropriate amendments to be made to a service's policy and practices, or training and support for staff.

| Child Safe Standard 1 Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, through effective leadership arrangements | Review and Assessment | | Action Plan | Action Plan implementation |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| | What does your organisation have in place to meet the Standard? | Is the Standard met or is further work needed? | What needs to be done to meet the Standard? | Who is responsible, timeframe and review date? |
| Do you have appropriate governance arrangements in place? | | | | |
| Is your organisation's commitment to child safety modelled by your leadership? | | | | |
| Do you welcome all children and acknowledge that some children are particularly vulnerable? | | | | |
| Do you recognise, respect and promote the belief that cultural identity is fundamental to a child's safety and wellbeing, and provide training for staff on this? | | | | |
| Do you encourage children with special needs and from different backgrounds to participate, and do they participate? | | | | |
| Do you raise awareness about child abuse? | | | | |
| Is it clear that discrimination is not tolerated in your organisation? | | | | |
| Child Safe Standard 2 | Review and Assessment | | Action Plan | Action Plan implementation |

⁷ Attachment 4 is based on a checklist created by the Commission for Children and Young People, checklist can be downloaded at <http://www.cryp.vic.gov.au>, www.cryp.vic.gov.au/downloads/Checklist-Child-Safety-Review-and-Action-Plan.docx

| A Child Safety Policy or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety | What does your organisation have in place to meet the Standard? | Is the Standard met or is further work needed? | What needs to be done to meet the Standard? | Who is responsible, timeframe and review date? |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Is there a clear and public commitment to child safety in the form of a Child Safety Policy or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety that all staff members know about and are required to uphold? | | | | |
| Does the Child Safety Policy specifically address the risks that have been identified in your risk assessment? | | | | |
| Do you undertake regular Child Safety Reviews to inform your policy? | | | | |
| Are children consulted about how safe they feel and what ideas they might have to promote safety in your organisation? | | | | |
| Does your Child Safety Policy promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and the safety of children with a disability? | | | | |
| Do your organisation's policies include requirements relating to Failure to Disclose and Failure to Protect legislative requirements? For more information go to http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/betrayal+of+trust+implementation | | | | |
| <u>Child Safe Standard 3</u> A Code of Conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children | Review and Assessment | | Action Plan | Action Plan implementation |
| | What does your organisation have in place to meet the Standard? | Is the Standard met or is further work needed? | What needs to be done to meet the Standard? | Who is responsible, timeframe and review date? |
| Is there a Code of Conduct that explains acceptable and unacceptable behaviour of staff, volunteers and children? | | | | |
| Is the Code of Conduct well known by your organisation's staff, volunteers, children and families and are they required to comply | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| with it? | | | | |
| Do your policies clearly explain how concerns regarding the Code of Conduct can be raised and how breaches of the Code of Conduct will be responded to? | | | | |
| Have you considered if additional Codes of Conduct are required (such as those applying to parents or children)? | | | | |
| <u>Child Safe Standard 4</u> Screening, supervision, training and other human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel | Review and Assessment | | Action Plan | Action Plan implementation |
| | What does your organisation have in place to meet the Standard? | Is the Standard met or is further work needed? | What needs to be done to meet the Standard? | Who is responsible, timeframe and review date? |
| Do you have clear duty and position statements (job descriptions)? | | | | |
| Have you determined which employee or volunteer positions require a Working with Children Check and ensured those checks have been undertaken? | | | | |
| Do you have documented recruitment procedures including interview processes, referee checks, Working with Children Checks and other screening requirements? | | | | |
| Do you have a staff development strategy to maintain and develop skills and capabilities, including understanding the risk of harm to children, the different types of harm, how to identify child abuse and relevant legislative requirements? | | | | |
| Do you have robust staff and volunteer performance management strategies in place? | | | | |
| <u>Child Safe Standard 5</u> Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse | Review and Assessment | | Action Plan | Action Plan implementation |
| | What does your organisation have in | Is the Standard met or is further work | What needs to be done to meet | Who is responsible, timeframe and |

| | | | | | | place to meet the Standard? | needed? | the Standard? | review date? |
|---|--|-------------------|---|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---------|---------------|--------------|
| | Child safe standard question | Yes, describe how | No or only partly, describe what needs to be done | Person responsible for any action required | Timeline and review date | | | | |
| Clear and public commitment to child safety | Is there a child protection policy (such as this <i>Child Safe Environment Policy</i>) for the service? | | | | | | | | |
| | Have employees, contractors and volunteers read and understood the policy? | | | | | | | | |
| | Are parents/guardians made aware of this policy on enrolment of their child at the service? | | | | | | | | |
| Children's rights to safety and participation | Are children welcomed, consulted and respected at the service? | | | | | | | | |
| | Are the indoor and outdoor environments physically safe? | | | | | | | | |
| | Is a safety assessment conducted for all activities? | | | | | | | | |
| | Do service programs stimulate children and meet their physical, | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | emotional, intellectual, social and recreational needs? | | | | | | |
| | Are children with additional needs and from different backgrounds encouraged to participate? If so, do they actually participate? | | | | | | |
| Employment of staff and volunteers | Are there adequate screening procedures for staff, volunteers and students on placement? | | | | | | |
| Support for staff and volunteers | Is there a code of conduct policy that explains the acceptable and unacceptable behaviours of parents/guardians, volunteers and students at the service? | | | | | | |
| | Are employees aware of the risk of harm to children and the different types of harm (refer to <i>Definitions</i>)? | | | | | | |
| Reporting a child safety concern | Do staff understand and feel confident about the process for reporting and acting on concerns about child safety? | | | | | | |
| | Have staff identified any other support, assistance and resources they feel they need to assist in | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|---|--|---|
| | providing a child safe environment? | | | | | | |
| Do you have a process for reporting and acting on disclosures or concerns about child safety? | | | | | | | |
| Are your staff and volunteers aware of their responsibility to report concerns of harm? | | | | | | | |
| Do you have policies and procedures concerning record keeping requirements, confidentiality and privacy? | | | | | | | |
| Do you have a complaints process that is accessible for children and families? | | | | | | | |
| Do you have child friendly processes in place to ensure children know who to talk to if they feel unsafe or have a concern? | | | | | | | |
| <u>Child Safe Standard 6</u> | | | | Review and Assessment | | Action Plan | Action Plan implementation |
| Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse | | | | What does your organisation have in place to meet the Standard? | Is the Standard met or is further work needed? | What needs to be done to meet the Standard? | Who is responsible, timeframe and review date? |
| Do you have a strategy in place to identify and reduce or remove the risk of child abuse in your organisation (a risk management plan)? | | | | | | | |
| Is undertaking, monitoring and reviewing the risk management plan the designated responsibility of a specific staff member? | | | | | | | |
| When thinking about the potential risks in your organisation, do you specifically consider the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and the safety of children with a disability? | | | | | | | |
| <u>Child Safe Standard 7</u> | | | | Review and Assessment | | Action Plan | Action Plan implementation |
| Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children | | | | What does your organisation have in | Is the Standard met or is further work | What needs to be done to meet | Who is responsible, timeframe and |

| | place to meet the Standard? | needed? | the Standard? | review date? |
|--|-----------------------------|---------|---------------|--------------|
| Do you consult with children about decisions that affect them? | | | | |
| Do you create opportunities for participation that incorporate planning, preparation, action and feedback? | | | | |
| Do you inform children of their rights and tell them how to raise any concerns? | | | | |
| Do you provide information in child friendly and accessible ways? | | | | |

ATTACHMENT 5

Guidelines for the recruitment of staff and volunteers

The processes for the recruitment and selection of employees, contractors and volunteers demonstrate our commitment to maximising the safety of children and deterring unsuitable and inappropriate persons from attempting to work at Black Rock Pre School. Black Rock Pre School is committed to the following processes.

Preparation for recruitment

- An explicit statement of our commitment to child safety is included in all advertising promotion for the organisation.
- Job advertisements clearly state our commitment to child safety.
- Job descriptions include a statement about our commitment to maintaining a child safe environment and clearly outline responsibilities and accountability.
- The selection process includes:
 - consideration of a Working with Children Check (and a criminal history record check, where appropriate)
 - confirmation of identity, which involves sighting an original birth certificate or extract, a driver's licence or a passport
 - verification of qualifications
 - thorough reference checks: at least two referees are contacted (including the current or most recent employer) in person or via telephone and all referees must have observed the applicant working with children first-hand.

Interview process

- At least three people are on the interview panel including, where possible, a gender mix and a person external to the service or someone with HR/interviewing experience.
- Questions are behavioural-based and ask the interviewee to provide examples of their past behaviour in specific situations relevant to the job being applied for.
- Questions regarding relationships with children, professional boundaries, resilience and motivation, teamwork, accountability and ethics are values-based.
- Questions are based on key selection criteria.
- Candidates are asked about their attitudes, aspirations and motivations.
- More detail is asked for when answers seem incomplete.

Ongoing management

- Information provided to the employee on commencing work at the service includes the *Child Safe Environment Policy, Code of Conduct Policy, Complaints and Grievances Policy* and *Staffing Policy*.
- The letter of offer includes a statement about what is expected of the staff member in terms of commitment and responsibilities for child safety.

- Orientation and induction covers information about values, attitudes, expectations and workplace practices in relation to maintaining a child safe environment.
- Regular meetings are held between employees, volunteers and the Approved Provider.
- A mentoring or buddy system between employees is in place.
- Training and education with regard to child safety is provided for all employees, contractors and volunteers.
- Resources and support are provided for all employees, contractors and volunteers to ensure a child safe environment.
- Employees, contractors, volunteers and visitors are treated with respect.

ATTACHMENT 6

Seven Standards for Child Safe Organisation

STANDARD 1

Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements

DESCRIPTION

All staff and volunteers in organisations providing services to children need to recognise the importance of keeping children safe. Under this standard, organisations need to establish new ways or build on existing systems to embed or improve on a culture of child safety throughout all levels of their organisation.

RATIONALE

Preventing child abuse and responding to allegations is everyone's business. The child safe standards aim to drive cultural change in organisations so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice. To engage this cultural change, organisations need to:

- help leaders and managers create an organisational culture that protects children from abuse
- ensure the organisation's policies and practices reflect a commitment to child safety
- ensure leadership is aware of allegations and substantiated cases of abuse and responds in ways that protect children from abuse
- ensure staff and volunteers know and understand the organisation's commitment to child safety
- commit to continuous improvement through regular reviews and updating policies and practices, and being open to scrutiny.

HOW COULD YOUR ORGANISATION IMPLEMENT THIS STANDARD?

Examples of how your organisation could implement this standard include the following:

- Ensure strategic direction, vision and mission includes child safety as a key goal.
- Have a section on child safety in the organisation's annual report.
- Have a child safety representative or champion who is appropriately trained and supported.
- Provide induction and training in recognising and responding to child abuse for leadership, relevant management, staff and volunteers, including what to do if an allegation is made or a concern raised or staff observe abusive behaviour towards a child.
- Build responsibility for embedding an organisational culture of safety into performance arrangements for senior staff.
- Promote to staff, volunteers, children and families a confidential reporting culture for suspected abuse by ensuring the organisation's leaders take responsibility for incidents at all levels.

- Include priorities and actions in operational plans that nurture and affirm the involvement in all children in the organisation's activities, and in particular Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability.
- Provide culturally safe environments for Aboriginal children, for example by having a cultural safety charter, or developing cultural safety or support plans in partnership with Aboriginal children, families and communities.
- Provide a physical environment that is visually inclusive and welcoming for Aboriginal peoples and culture, such as by displaying symbols that indicate support and respect for Aboriginal peoples (although symbols in isolation would not be sufficient).
- Display information from local Aboriginal services, such as pamphlets for community events.
- Encourage and promote environments where the past is acknowledged and Aboriginal cultural diversity is respected, such as by including an Acknowledgement of Country at each meeting or event.
- Provide culturally safe environments for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. For example, this could include gathering information about cultural and linguistic backgrounds and needs of children who access the organisation's services, developing cultural safety plans, or having a cultural safety charter.
- Create an environment supportive of children with a disability, for example, by being aware of the different support needs of children with a disability accessing the organisation.
- Maintain adequate record keeping of child safety issues and responses of any incidents, for example in an Excel spreadsheet or 'log book' that is appropriately stored to protect the privacy of children.
- Partner with families and communities to build a culture of child safety, for example by partnering with other local service providers or businesses to promote child safety at local events.
- Develop working partnerships with local Aboriginal community controlled organisations, community leaders, families and children, in order to gather feedback and advice on organisational child safety policies and procedures.
- Partner with culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities to build a cultural safe environment. For example, this could include gathering feedback and advice on organisational child safety policies and procedures from culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and appropriately acknowledge and discuss cultural days of significance with staff, volunteers and children to build cultural understanding and awareness of diversity.
- Partner with communities and children with experience of disability. For example, this could include gathering feedback and advice on organisational child safety policies and procedures from communities and children with a disability.
- Institute child safety policies and procedures and include improvements to child safety policies and procedures as a regular agenda item at relevant leadership, staff and volunteer meetings.
- Include child safety as a regular newsletter item.
- Promote child safety as an ethical imperative that is everyone's responsibility. For example, child safety could be included in all position descriptions and documents on roles and responsibilities for board members, staff and volunteers.
- Have systems to regularly review and improve child safety policies and practices, particularly following any incidents.

Successfully implementing this standard should result in organisations in which:

- there are clear and transparent arrangements for leadership to be made aware of child safety issues
- policies and practices prioritise child safety and promote shared responsibility – not just at a leadership level – by outlining all staff and volunteer responsibilities
- policies and procedures include the steps staff, volunteers, children or their families should take if they have concerns about the organisation’s leadership in regard to child safety
- child safety is a core part of public and internal messaging
- a culture exists where staff, volunteers, children and families feel comfortable and supported when talking about any child safety concerns.
- a culture exists of supporting cultural safety for Aboriginal children, and the organisations working in partnership with Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal community controlled organisations to improve safety for Aboriginal children
- a culture exists of supporting cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- a culture exists of supporting safety for children with a disability.

STANDARD 2

6. A CHILD SAFE POLICY OR STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

DESCRIPTION

Organisations need to have a publicly accessible child safe policy or public statement of commitment to child safety, with an overarching set of principles guiding the development of policies and procedures to protect children from abuse.

A child safe policy is an overarching document that provides key elements of an organisation's approach to becoming child safe. It sets out the processes for reporting and responding to concerns and allegations (or clearly refers people to where these processes can be found), and refers to the code of conduct which should provide specific guidelines on appropriate behaviour with children (see Standard 3 over page).

A statement of commitment to child safety should be included as part of a child safe policy. This statement affirms the organisation's commitment to child safety by clearly stating that the organisation has zero tolerance for child abuse, is committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe, and actively works to empower children.

A child safe policy is appropriate for organisations that have a higher level of responsibility for children, however, can still be used by other organisations. Smaller organisations with limited responsibility for children may choose to implement a statement of commitment.

Implementation of the principles in the policy or statement will influence organisational culture and create consistent policies and procedures within and across organisations that provide services for children.

RATIONALE

Child safe policies or statements influence organisational culture by providing an overarching set of principles that guide the development of other organisational policies and procedures that aim to protect children from abuse. Public statements or policies on child safety help raise awareness about the importance of child safety in the organisation and the community.

HOW COULD YOUR ORGANISATION IMPLEMENT THIS STANDARD?

Examples of how your organisation could implement this standard include the following:

- Develop a new (or review an existing) child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety, including a statement or description of:
 - what constitutes child abuse
 - zero tolerance of child abuse
 - commitment to children's safety and best interests
 - prevention and management of child abuse risks, including risks presented by physical and online environments
 - roles and responsibilities of personnel involved in protecting children, including the duty of care of the board, management, staff and volunteers
 - the organisation's commitment to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children

- the organisation’s commitment to the cultural safety of culturally and/or linguistically diverse children
- the organisation’s commitment to the safety of children with a disability.
- The child safety statement or policy could also include:
 - details of both children’s rights and adults’ obligations in ensuring child safety, for example by reference to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*
 - a detailed description of the systems for promoting a safe environment, including through the early identification and response to risks of abuse in physical and online environments
 - inclusive language and culturally appropriate photographs and artwork
 - contact details for people to access information in relation to child safety, such as the organisation’s Child Safety Champion.
- Communicate the statement or policy publicly. For example, on websites, newsletters, annual reports, mission or vision statements, and recruitment advertisements and welcome packs.
- Communicate the statement or policy in child friendly language and design.
- Communicate the public statement or policy in community languages, including Aboriginal languages, where appropriate.
- Communicate the public statement or policy in accessible methods for people with a disability.
- Ensure board members, staff and volunteers are aware of the organisation’s child safe policy and its key provisions. For example include child safety material in staff induction information and welcome packs.

Successfully implementing this standard should result in organisations in which:

- the organisation has a child safe policy or statement of commitment
- the organisation has made public their commitment to child safety
- all board members, staff and volunteers are aware of the organisation’s commitment to child safety and their duty of care requirements
- all staff and volunteers can easily access and understand the organisation’s commitment to child safety
- the organisation’s commitment to child safety includes a commitment to the safety of Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability.

STANDARD 3

7. A CODE OF CONDUCT THAT ESTABLISHES CLEAR EXPECTATIONS FOR APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR WITH CHILDREN

DESCRIPTION

Organisations are required to develop or review codes of conduct and ensure they provide all staff and volunteers with a set of clear principles about how they should behave with children. Where applicable, organisations can reference professional codes of conduct that clearly outline appropriate behaviour with children.

RATIONALE

Codes of conduct establish clear behavioural expectations and boundaries for personnel interacting with children. While many organisations have codes of conduct incorporating child safety, they can vary in content and quality, and often do not provide clear explanation about how their codes of conduct are translated into practice.

HOW COULD YOUR ORGANISATION IMPLEMENT THIS STANDARD?

Examples of how your organisation could implement this standard include the following:

- Ensure existing or new codes of conduct include:
 - clear and specific standards of conduct for working with children in different situations relevant to the organisation, including, for example, an outline of the organisation's online policy (including downloading of inappropriate material and online communication with children such as on Facebook), and boundaries for physical contact in sports coaching
 - clear explanation of appropriate relationships with children for staff, volunteers and families, for example, when it is appropriate for there to be physical contact
 - instruction on how adults should respond to any risks adults may pose to children, or that children may pose to each other, in both physical and online environments
 - guidance about conduct that is not consistent with the code, the organisation's procedures for handling any breaches of the code and consequences for people who breach the code
 - information on when and how the code will be reviewed.
 - recognition of the needs of Aboriginal children and culturally appropriate behaviour and relationships for personnel and children, for example, providing recognition of the importance of Aboriginal children's relationships with their extended family and community including Elders
 - recognition of the needs of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and culturally appropriate behaviour and relationships for personnel and children, for example, appreciating the tendency of people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities to mistrust authority figures and human service providers
 - recognition of the needs of children with a disability and appropriate behaviour and relationships for personnel and children, for example, appropriate ways to physically and emotionally assist a child with a disability

- recognition of any differences in what is considered acceptable behaviour (for example personal care for children with a disability and supervision).
- Ask staff, volunteers and families to sign the code of conduct.
- A code of conduct for children in accessible language outlining expected behaviour of children, including zero tolerance of abuse, which children can sign.
- Ensure all personnel are aware of the code of conduct.
- Build ownership and commitment to the code of conduct, for example by having staff, volunteers, families and children contribute to the development of the code of conduct, including by providing feedback on draft codes of conduct.

Successfully implementing this standard should result in organisations in which:

- appropriate behaviour with children is clearly defined, accessible and understood by staff, volunteers, families and children
- steps staff should take if they identify child safety risks are clearly outlined
- staff, volunteers, families and children understand culturally safe behaviour and relationships with Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- staff, volunteers, families and children understand safe behaviour and relationships with children with a disability
- children and families from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds can access and understand the code of conduct
- efforts have been made to make the code of conduct accessible to children with a disability.

STANDARD 4

8. SCREENING, SUPERVISION, TRAINING AND OTHER HUMAN RESOURCES PRACTICES THAT REDUCE THE RISK OF CHILD ABUSE BY NEW AND EXISTING PERSONNEL

DESCRIPTION

Organisations need to ensure that newly recruited and existing staff and volunteers understand the importance of child safety, are aware of the relevant policies and procedures, and are trained to minimise the risk of child abuse. This should be done by engaging various recruitment tools, and providing staff and volunteers with appropriate training and supervision to minimise the risk of child abuse.

It is important to note that the child safe standards are not intended to alter organisations' existing regulatory obligations in relation to the Working with Children Check.

RATIONALE

The Working with Children Check is actively used by organisations and is an effective screening tool when hiring new staff and volunteers, and as an effective monitoring tool on an ongoing basis for relevant personnel. However, organisations can over-rely on the Working with Children Check at the expense of other essential recruitment processes such as reference checks, as well as ongoing support, supervision and training, all critical to managing and reducing the risk of child abuse.

HOW COULD YOUR ORGANISATION IMPLEMENT THIS STANDARD?

Examples of how your organisation could implement this standard include the following:

- Design and adhere to recruitment and selection processes that focus on:
 - factors that may indicate a risk to child safety, such reluctance to undergo a Working with Children Check or to provide evidence of a Working with Children Check
 - understanding of child safety
 - understanding of and respect for Aboriginal culture
 - understanding of and respect for cultural and / or linguistic diversity
 - understanding of and respect for the needs of children with a disability
 - declaration of prior conduct, including of any disciplinary action taken against them by an employer, any finding of improper or unprofessional conduct by them by any court or tribunal of any kind, and/or any investigations they have been subject to by an employer, law enforcement agency, any integrity body, or similar in Australia or in another country
 - undertaking face-to-face interviews
 - police record checks (including personal identification checks)
 - checking referees and qualifications

- use of probation periods
- references to the organisation’s commitment to child safety in recruitment advertisements.
- Regularly assess organisational child safety training needs, for example through questionnaires, or as part of regular performance review processes.
- Ensure staff and volunteers understand the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal peoples, for example by encouraging awareness of and ability to talk about Aboriginal history and stories.
- Support staff to build resilience and cope with child abuse incidences, for example through training and counselling.
- Regularly provide information, training and education for board members, staff and volunteers about child safety on a needs basis, including:
 - what child abuse is
 - how to identify and reduce child abuse risks
 - understanding and appreciating Aboriginal culture and other cultures and languages they may engage with in their role
 - the importance of ensuring culturally safe environments for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and how to promote this
 - the importance of ensuring safe environments for children with a disability, and how to promote this
 - what constitutes inappropriate behaviour between children, such as inappropriate sexualised play, bullying and fighting
 - what is inappropriate behaviour between children and adults, with reference to the code of conduct.
- Induction processes to inform new staff and volunteers about child safety policies and processes, including the code of conduct.
- Provide ongoing training, support, supervision and performance management for all personnel. For example, ask specific questions about understanding of child safety protocols during performance review processes.
- Provide all personnel with training on how to ‘ask the question’ to children of all cultures and appropriate follow-up actions.⁸
- Use culturally inclusive recruitment practices, for example by gaining advice from Aboriginal, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability on position descriptions and selection criteria to increase the appeal of a position to these groups.
- Specifically welcome applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.
- Ensure interview questions are asked which aim to uncover applicants’ understanding of child safety.
- During interviews, emphasise the culture of valuing child safety and the expectations of staff responsibilities, to underscore its importance to the organisation.

Successfully implementing this standard should result in organisations in which:

- interviews, police record checks (including identity checks), reference checks and Working with Children Checks (where necessary)⁹ are undertaken for staff and volunteers

⁸ Asking the question refers to asking whether people are Aboriginal.

⁹ The child safe standards are not intended to expand the existing categories of employees and volunteers requiring a Working With Children Check. For more information on who requires a Working With Children Check, visit the [Working With Children website < www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/ >](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/)

- recruitment processes select appropriate staff and volunteers, and discourage inappropriate staff entering the organisation
- relevant staff and volunteers are trained in child safety, and understand and practice appropriate behaviour
- relevant staff and volunteers are aware of the risk of child abuse, how to identify inappropriate behaviours in other adults, indicators of abuse in children and how to respond
- staff and volunteers are aware of the organisation's commitment to child safety and their duty of care requirements
- staff and volunteers can easily access and understand the organisation's commitment to child safety and relevant policies
- staff and volunteers know how to ensure the cultural safety of and engage safely with Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- staff and volunteers know how to ensure the safety of and engage safely with children with a disability.

STANDARD 5

9. PROCESSES FOR RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

DESCRIPTION

Organisations are required to develop and implement clear policies and procedures to ensure:

- a supportive environment for children, personnel or families who report allegations of abuse or child safety concerns
- staff, volunteers, families and children know how to report abuse allegations, and feel comfortable doing so
- clear policies and procedures for notifying authorities, including the police, of suspected child abuse that comply with all legal requirements.

RATIONALE

Organisational policies for reporting and responding to suspected child abuse should be clear and comprehensive to encourage staff, volunteers, families and children to report any suspected child abuse through appropriate internal channels, such as the organisation's Child Safety Officer / Champion. Leadership needs to be made aware of any allegations of abuse or child safety concerns, and the police and/or child protection must be notified if child abuse is suspected.

Organisations must be supportive to children, families and staff who have reported or witnessed abuse or have a child safety concern.

HOW COULD YOUR ORGANISATION IMPLEMENT THIS STANDARD?

Examples of how your organisation could implement this standard include the following:

Reporting

- Comply with all legal requirements to report child abuse to appropriate authorities, including the police by calling 000 when it is suspected that a child's safety is at immediate risk.
- Ensure processes for reporting suspected child abuse are appropriate, clear and robust, and that children and families feel comfortable following them. This includes:
 - step by step guides for staff outlining when and to whom a report must be made
 - requirements for accurate recording of relevant information and actions taken
 - clear criteria for assessing how and when to report to leadership and authorities (the police and/or child protection), which comply with all legal requirements
 - instituting strategies to make people feel safe and comfortable reporting suspected abuse, for example by designating a person, such as a Child Safety Officer / Champion, for staff and children to contact to discuss a suspected abuse or child safety concern.
- Publicise and make accessible for families and children avenues for reporting incidents or concerns. For example, information could be included in welcome packs and/or on the organisation's website.

- Train relevant staff and volunteers in how to report suspected child abuse, and ensure they can identify signs of children at risk of abuse.
- Institute a feedback process for staff, volunteers, children and families on organisational policies and procedures for reporting abuse, recognising particular needs of Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.
- Establish and provide information on policies and procedures in relevant community languages, including Aboriginal languages, where relevant.
- Ensure reporting policies and procedures are accessible to children with a disability and/or their families where necessary, such as providing information on policies and procedures in relevant modalities, such as braille and assistive technologies.
- Utilise inclusive language, photography and/or artwork in communications about reporting processes.

Responding

- Ensure children are safe, and that procedures for responding to alleged abuse are fair and focus on child safety, for example by suspending the alleged perpetrator or providing them with alternate duties pending investigation.
- Provide support and comfort to a child reporting abuse or safety concerns, and never blame or interrogate a child.
- Contact parents / carers as appropriate.

Ensure processes for responding to suspected child abuse explicitly include culturally appropriate responses where suspected abuse involves an Aboriginal child. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal children, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisations to review policies and procedures.

- Provide ongoing support or make referrals for support to alleged victims, their families and affected staff, such as helping them understand their rights and the process that will be followed in responding to allegations, and assistance in accessing counselling or other support as required.
- Provide contact details for internal and/or external expertise so that staff have access to advice when managing child safety incidents, including expertise relating to culturally and/or linguistically diverse children, and children with a disability.
- Undertake timely reviews of organisational child safe policies and procedures to be followed if child abuse occurs.
- Review organisational responses following an incident to help drive continuous improvement.

Successfully implementing this standard should result in organisations in which:

- all legal requirements for reporting suspected child abuse are complied with
- staff and volunteers are aware of actions they should take in the event of an incident or allegation, including the type of contact that should be reported, who is responsible for reporting and to whom the report should be made
- allegations of abuse and safety concerns are appropriately recorded and stored securely to protect privacy
- disciplinary processes, that are clearly defined and understood by all staff and volunteers, are adhered to when necessary
- adequate and suitable steps are taken to ensure children are safe if an allegation of child abuse is reported, for example by suspending a worker or providing them with alternative duties while an investigation is undertaken
- children reporting an allegation of abuse or safety concern are provided with support and comfort
- culturally safe practices are applied if an Aboriginal child is involved in an allegation of abuse

- if an allegation of abuse involves a child from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background, the required steps are taken to ensure the child and child's family are supported to understand the situation, including the use of an interpreter if required
- where an allegation of abuse involves a child with a disability, steps are taken to ensure the child and their family understand the situation and are supported.

STANDARD 6

10. STRATEGIES TO IDENTIFY AND REDUCE OR REMOVE THE RISK OF ABUSE

DESCRIPTION

Organisations need to adopt a risk management approach by identifying and considering their child safety risk(s) based on a range of factors including the nature of their activities with children, physical and online environments and the characteristics of children to whom they provide services. This covers both 'business as usual' risks and risks posed by specific activities such as excursions and overnight trips. Where risks are identified, organisations are required to institute measures to reduce or remove them.

RATIONALE

Organisations that have an active approach to their duty of care in protecting children tend to have a risk management approach and a commitment to continuous improvement. Additionally, implementation of a risk management approach is part of organisations' recognition of their legal responsibilities to ensure the safety of children.

HOW COULD YOUR ORGANISATION IMPLEMENT THIS STANDARD?

Examples of how your organisation could implement this standard include the following:

- Ensure clear and accessible processes for evaluating risks posed by situations and activities appropriate to the organisation, its size and resources, physical and online environments, and the characteristics of the children to whom it provides services.
- Developing, recording and communicating clear processes for removing risks to children (for example, rules on online communications that could be included in the code of conduct or child safe policy, removing staff or volunteers who may pose a risk).
- Provide relevant staff and volunteers with training in identifying child abuse risks, for example blocked-off/out-of-sight spaces (especially rooms with doors that can be locked), overnight stays, and opportunities for physical contact, such as sports coaching and personal care.
- Engage methods for continual improvement in how risks are managed by learning from past lessons, including policy review and staff training.
- A risk management approach driven through endorsement and ownership by management, including responsibility for risk identification and response in position descriptions.
- Ensure supervision requirements for staff and volunteers who work with children.
- Institute processes for periodic review of risk management approaches and/or processes and following any incidents.
- Recognise and adapt to the needs of particular children and communities, including Aboriginal children, culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and children with a disability. For example, acknowledgement that greater staff or volunteer to child ratios may be needed for some children with a disability.
- Recognise and address risks to Aboriginal children which might exist because of their experiences, for example if a child does not feel safe identifying as Aboriginal, or if there is an inadequate response to self-identification.
- Recognise and address risks to children with a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background, which might exist because of their experiences, for example increased communication with families may be necessary to build trust and understanding of organisational activities.
- Recognise and address risks for children with a disability, for example communication barriers when telling an adult they feel unsafe.
- Have a central reporting and advisory contact for staff to raise concerns and get advice about what to do if they need to report suspected abuse, for example a Child Safety Officer.

- Include statements about shared responsibility for management of risks in all position descriptions.
- Have a consistent risk management approach across all of the organisations' offices and other sites.
- Include discussion about apparent risks or 'near misses' in team meetings and areas for improvement.
- Roster staff with appropriate experience and qualifications to manage high risk environments.

Successfully implementing this standard should result in organisations in which:

- situational risks are considered and understood by all personnel
- steps are put in place to reduce risks where possible
- risk management approaches are regularly reflected on and improved
- specific risks to Aboriginal children are identified, assessed and mitigated
- specific risks to children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background are identified, assessed and mitigated
- specific risks to children with a disability are identified, assessed and mitigated.

STANDARD 7

11. STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE THE PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF CHILDREN

DESCRIPTION

Organisations need to ensure children feel safe and comfortable in reporting concerns or allegations of abuse. Organisations should have simple and accessible processes that help children understand what to do if they want to report abuse, inappropriate behaviour or concerns for their safety. All personnel need to have an awareness of children's rights and adults' responsibilities regarding child abuse.

RATIONALE

Children often do not report abuse because they feel uncomfortable or they do not know how to raise their concerns or allegations of abuse. Some organisations do not have simple and accessible processes assisting children to understand their rights and how to report concerns regarding their safety.

HOW COULD YOUR ORGANISATION IMPLEMENT THIS STANDARD?

Examples of how your organisation could implement this standard include the following:

- Provide children with child-appropriate and accessible information about what child abuse is, their rights to make decisions about their body and their privacy, that no one has a right to injure them, and how they can raise concerns about abuse. For example, information could be included in welcome packs, information sessions and posters, as well as on websites and social media.
- Ensure information and processes for reporting concerns are accessible to all children, for example by having policies and procedures that are able to be accessed and understood by children with a disability.
- Ensure information and processes for reporting concerns are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal children. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal children, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisation to review information and processes.
- Consider access and culturally appropriate language, photographs and artwork for Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability when drafting communications materials.
- Translate organisational information (including information about children's rights, child safe policies, statements of commitment and reporting and response procedures) into relevant community languages, including relevant Aboriginal languages.
- Gather feedback from children, for example through surveys, focus groups, story time and social media, about whether they would feel safe and taken seriously if they were to raise concerns, and implement improvements based on this feedback.
- Enable children to express their views and make suggestions on what child safety means to them, and on child safe policies, reporting and response procedures, and acknowledge and act upon these where possible. For example, views could be gathered through suggestion boxes, feedback sessions, emails or online (via wikis or other social media).
- Ensure services are accessible for people with a disability, for example provide appropriate communication aids such as hearing loops.
- Train relevant staff and volunteers on methods of empowering children and encouraging children's participation.
- Ensure Aboriginal children are accepted when identifying as Aboriginal, and that staff and volunteers understand appropriate responses to children identifying as Aboriginal.
- Encourage participation and empowerment of children in other organisational activities, such as organisational planning and decision making.
- Raise awareness in the community about children's rights, for example through staff conversations with families and communications such as websites and newsletters.

Successfully implementing this standard should result in organisations in which:

- reporting procedures for when a child feels unsafe are accessible for all children
- children understand what child abuse is, and their rights (age appropriate)
- children understand how to report an allegation of abuse or concern for their safety to the organisation, a trusted adult and external bodies (for example, the police)
- children feel safe, empowered and taken seriously if they raise concerns
- children feel empowered to contribute to the organisation's understanding and treatment of child safety
- children's reports of concern are responded to appropriately
- staff understand how to empower children and encourage their participation.

APPENDIX A – SELF-AUDIT TOOL

This self-audit tool is designed to help organisations assess their progress in meeting the child safe standards and becoming a child safe organisation.

For further information or to seek clarity on the standards or what your organisation needs to do to meet them, please contact the Department of Health and Human Services:

[Department of Health and Human Services website](#) <

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans.-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/children.-youth-and-family-services/creating-child-safe-organisations

>.

Email: childsafestandards@dhhs.vic.gov.au

Phone: 9096 0000 or 1300 650 172

DISCLAIMER: This tool provides general guidance only on the child safe standards. The department does not guarantee that the examples provided in this document are sufficient for the purposes of an organisation's compliance with existing regulatory or government funding requirements.

12. THE CHILD SAFE STANDARDS SELF-AUDIT TOOL

Name (person completing audit):

Position:

Contact details:

Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements

| Activity | In place | Partially in place | Not in place | Action required | Timeframe for actions |
|---|----------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Child safety is a core part of public and internal messaging. | | | | | |
| Policies and practices exist that prioritise child safety and promote shared responsibility – not just at a leadership level – by outlining all staff responsibilities. | | | | | |
| A culture exists of supporting cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and the safety of children with a disability. | | | | | |
| Policies include the steps staff, volunteers, children or their families should take if they have concerns about the organisation's leadership in regard to child safety. | | | | | |
| A culture exists in which staff, volunteers, children and families feel comfortable and supported when talking about any child safety concerns. | | | | | |

Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety

| Activity | In place | Partially in place | Not in place | Action required | Timeframe for actions |
|---|----------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| The organisation has a child safe policy or statement of commitment, which is accessible to the public. | | | | | |
| The policy or statement of commitment includes the organisation's commitment to Aboriginal cultural safety, culturally and/or linguistically diverse cultural safety and the safety of children with a disability respectively. | | | | | |
| All staff and volunteers are aware of the organisation's commitment to child safety and their duty of care requirements. | | | | | |

Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children

| Activity | In place | Partially in place | Not in place | Action required | Timeframe for actions |
|---|----------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Appropriate safe behaviour with children is clearly defined in a code of conduct which is accessible and understood by staff, volunteers, families and children. | | | | | |
| Staff, volunteers, families and children understand safe behaviour and relationships with Aboriginal children, culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and children with a disability respectively. | | | | | |
| Procedures for dealing with identified child safety risks or breaches of the code of conduct are clearly communicated and understood. | | | | | |

Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel

| Activity | In place | Partially in place | Not in place | Action required | Timeframe for actions |
|---|----------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Interviews, reference checks and Working With Children Checks (where necessary) ¹⁰ are undertaken for staff and volunteers. | | | | | |
| Recruitment processes select appropriate staff and volunteers, and discourage inappropriate staff entering the organisation. | | | | | |
| The organisation actively encourages applications from Aboriginal peoples and people from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background. | | | | | |
| Staff and volunteers are trained in child safety, and understand and practice appropriate behaviour, including with Aboriginal children, culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and children with a disability respectively. | | | | | |

¹⁰ The child safe standards are not intended to expand the existing categories of employees and volunteers requiring a Working with Children Check.

Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

| Activity | In place | Partially in place | Not in place | Action required | Timeframe for actions |
|--|----------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Staff and volunteers are aware of actions they should take in the event of an incident or allegation, including the type of contact that should be reported, who is responsible for reporting and to whom the report should be made. | | | | | |
| If child abuse alleged/suspected, all legal requirements for reporting to authorities complied with (eg police and/or child protection). | | | | | |
| Disciplinary processes, that are clearly defined and understood by all staff and volunteers, are adhered to when necessary. | | | | | |
| The organisation understands that if an allegation of abuse concerns an Aboriginal child, culturally and/or linguistically diverse child or child with a disability, particular measures should be taken to support the child. | | | | | |
| All breaches of child safe policies and procedures are appropriately managed, including adhering to all mandatory requirements (e.g. professional codes of conduct) and other matters of law, and suspending (where necessary to ensure alleged victims' safety) staff or volunteers while allegations are investigated. | | | | | |

Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove the risk of abuse

| Activity | In place | Partially in place | Not in place | Action required | Timeframe for actions |
|---|----------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Situational risks are considered and understood by all personnel. | | | | | |
| Risk management approaches are regularly reflected on and improved. | | | | | |

Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

| Activity | In place | Partially in place | Not in place | Action required | Timeframe for actions |
|--|----------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Reporting procedures are accessible for all children. | | | | | |
| Children understand how to report an allegation of abuse or concern for their safety to the organisation and external bodies (for example, the police and/or child protection). | | | | | |
| Children feel safe, empowered and taken seriously if they raise concerns. | | | | | |
| Measures are taken to promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and the safety of children with a disability. | | | | | |

Reportable Conduct Scheme

In the event of an allegation made against a member of staff, either during or after working hours, the following procedure applies:

IF A CHILD IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER, THEN CALL 000

- 1) Either refer the allegation yourself or refer the allegation to the operations director at:
director@blackrockpreschool.com.au
- 2) If the allegation is made against the operations director, either refer the allegation yourself or refer to the president at: president@blackrockpreschool.com.au
- 3) The president or operations director will decide, in accordance with legislation & duty of care, whether the allegation needs to be reported to the Police, Child protection or/& The Commission for Children and Young People or/& ACECQA
- 4) The contact details for CYPP, the Commission for Children and Young People are:
tel: (03) 8601 5281
email: childsafestandards@ccyp.vic.gov.au
This needs to be made within 3 days
- 5) The CYPP will allocate a case officer.
- 6) All procedures to be followed can be found at the following location:
<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/resources/reportable-conduct-scheme-information-sheets/#TOC-3>

If you have serious concerns that a child is in immediate danger, you need to contact the police immediately – 000 & wait for their advice

- If you have serious concerns that a child is in immediate danger, you need to contact the police immediately – 000 & wait for their advice
- If you have concerns about a the welfare of a child, you need to report to the Child Protection within 24 hours & follow their advice
- If you have concerns that there is a breach in regulation or/& legislation this needs to be reported to the regulatory body through the ACECQA website within 24 hours and follow their advice

- The Victorian Institute of Teaching need to be notified, if the source of the suspected harm is from an early childhood teacher
- If you have concerns about the conduct of a professional employed at your centre, either during or after working hours, this needs to be reported to the CYPP (Commission for children and young people) within 3 working days & follow their advice