

CHILD SAFE POLICY

Our child safe policy is publicly available on our website and in induction packs for new personnel to help raise awareness about the importance of child safety in organisation and to demonstrate our commitment to protecting children from abuse.

Our commitment to child safety

Our organisation is committed to the safety and empowerment of all children meeting the Victorian Government's Child Safe Standards.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Our staff understands the requirement to report any suspected or observed child abuse as follows:

- **Immediate risk:** request Victoria Police attendance
- **Non-urgent risk:**
 - **If transport:** report allegations/suspensions to a mandated health professional
 - **If no transport:** report to DHHS Child Protection Crisis Line.

Our children

This policy is intended to provide a safe patient transport to all children in particular aboriginal children, children with a disability or from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Our staff

All of our staff must agree to abide by our **code of conduct (ref HR01)** which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

Training and supervision

Our organisation is committed to regularly training and educating our staff on child abuse risks. We support our staff through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse and promote the cultural safety of aboriginal children, children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

All our employees are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our **FM28 incident reporting** form including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

Risk management

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise risks. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children through ongoing staff training and supervision.

The risks and controls of transport of children are registered in our **MS62 Hazards Register**.

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly.

Reportable conduct as defined in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005(VIC), Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015(VIC) and Wrongs Amendment (Organisational Child Abuse) Act 2017 includes offences such as: grooming, sexual offence, sexual misconduct, physical violence, significant emotional or psychological harm and significant neglect.

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.



D Dawson
Chief Executive Officer
30 July 2021