CHILD PROTECTION POLICY - VIC

Our Service is committed to providing a child safe environment where children's safety and wellbeing is supported and children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. Our Service embeds the Victorian Child Safe Standards and promotes a culture of safety and wellbeing to minimise the risk of child abuse, neglect or harm, while promoting children's sense of security and belonging. We will ensure all employees, students and volunteers understand the meaning, importance and benefits of providing a child safe environment and, critically, understand their reporting obligations and requirements. Our Service adheres to and aligns with legislative and regulatory requirements related to taking images or videos of children.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

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

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
S. 2A	Paramount consideration—safety, rights and best interests of children
S. 4	How functions to be exercised
S. 5	Definitions: "serious incident"
S. 51	Conditions on service approval
S. 162A	Child protection training
S. 162B	Child safety training
S. 165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
S. 166	Offence to use inappropriate discipline

S. 166A	Offences relating to inappropriate conduct
S. 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazard
S. 172	Offence to fail to display prescribed information
S. 174	Offence to fail to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority
S. 174B	Offence for approved provider to fail to notify Regulatory Authority of any reportable sexual conduct committed by relevant staff members
Part 6A	Devices In Education And Care Services
S. 188	Offence to engage person to whom prohibition notice applies
S. 188A	Offence to give false or misleading information to approved provider about prohibition notice
S. 269B	National Early Childhood Worker Register
S. 269E	Approved provider must give information to the National Authority for the National Early Childhood Worker Register
12	Meaning of serious incident
84	Awareness of child protection law
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
87	Incident, injury, trauma and illness record
115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
128B	Child protection training
128D	Foundation child safety training
128E	Advanced child safety training
145	Staff record
149	Volunteers and students
154A	National Early Childhood Worker Register
154B	Approved provider must give information to the National Authority for the National Early Childhood Worker Register
155	Interactions with children
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
175	Prescribed information to be notified to Regulatory Authority
176	Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority

176B	Nominated supervisor, staff member or volunteer must notify approved provider of changes
176C	Approved providers must notify Regulatory Authority of changes
181	Confidentiality of records kept by approved provider
358	Working with children check—nominated supervisors, staff members and volunteers
366A	Reportable sexual conduct notified to Regulatory Authority

RELATED LEGISLATION

Crimes Act 1958 *(including the Failure to Disclose and Failure to Protect offences)*	*Family Law Act 1975* *(Cth)*
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 *(including Reportable Conduct Scheme)*	*Family Violence Protection Act 2008*
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005	*Children's Services Regulations 2020*
Children's Services Act 1996	*Worker Screening Act 2020*
Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012	

RELATED POLICIES

Behaviour Guidance Policy	Recruitment Policy
Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy	Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy
Code of Conduct Policy	Respect for Children Policy
Dealing with Complaints Policy	Responsible Person Policy
Family Communication Policy	Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Policy
Health and Safety Policy	Social Media Policy
Interactions with Children, Families and Staff Policy	Staffing Arrangements Policy
Nappy Change and Toileting Policy	Student, Volunteer and Visitors Policy
Privacy and Confidentiality Policy	Supervision Policy
Protected Disclosures (Whistleblower) Policy	Work Health and Safety Policy

PURPOSE

All educators, staff, visitors and volunteers are committed to identifying possible risks and indicators of harm to children and young people at the Service. We understand our duty of care to protect children from abuse and neglect and will adhere to our moral and legislative obligations at all times.

We believe that children's safety, rights, and best interests are the paramount consideration in all Service operations, decisions and functions. Our Service ensures that child safety, wellbeing and best interests take

priority over all other considerations, including financial interests or other obligations of management, and are embedded in our daily practices, policies and procedures.

We implement effective strategies to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children. Our Service will act in the best interest of each child, supporting them to develop to their full potential in a secure and child safe environment. We understand our statutory duty of care to comply with both the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme to build our capacity as an organisation to prevent and respond to allegations of child abuse.

Keeping children safe: a shared responsibility.

SCOPE

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

DEFINITIONS

For additional definitions and key terms used within this policy, refer to *Key Terms – Policies and Procedures*.

Child/children refers to both children and young people under the age of 18 years.

Child abuse is any act, or failure to act, that harms or places a child or young person at risk of harm to their physical, psychological or emotional health, wellbeing or development. Child abuse may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents over time and can occur within organisations as well as within families, particularly where power, authority, isolation or poor supervision increase risk to children.

Child abuse, neglect and harm: The Victorian (VIC) Government identifies the following as abuse, neglect and harm:

- physical child abuse
- child sexual abuse
- grooming
- emotional child abuse
- neglect
- family violence
- children exhibiting inappropriate sexual behaviour

There are common physical and behavioural signs that may indicate abuse or neglect, known as indicators. The presence of a single indicator does not necessarily mean abuse or neglect has occurred; however, a single indicator can be as significant as the presence of several indicators. Each indicator should be considered in the context of other indicators and the child's individual circumstances.

Educators and staff are best placed to identify signs and behaviours that may indicate that a child has been subjected to abuse. Understanding the signs of child abuse is critical in supporting children's safety and wellbeing. Further information about recognising signs and indicators of child abuse is available through the VIC Government's guidance on identifying signs of child abuse in early childhood.

Concerning or harmful sexual behaviours displayed by a child: Children's sexual development includes curiosity about their bodies and sexual identity. While some behaviours may be part of normal, age-appropriate development, other behaviours may be outside typical developmental expectations and require an immediate response in line with child protection and mandatory reporting obligations. For further information, see pages 56-57 of the NQF Child Safe Culture Guide (ACECQA, 2025).

Duty of care: refers to the legal responsibility to adequately protect children in care from harm. This common law concept applies to all staff members within any VIC early childhood service and is usually expressed as "*a duty to take reasonable steps to protect children from injury that is reasonably foreseeable.*" Victoria State Government – Understand your obligations to protect children (2026).

Failure to disclose and failure to protect: Failure to disclose or take action in relation to suspected child sexual abuse can constitute a criminal offence. The law requires any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in VIC, by an adult against a child under 16 years of age, to disclose that information to VIC Police.

Forming a reasonable belief (belief on reasonable grounds): A person forms a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection, or their safety or wellbeing is at risk when they are more likely to accept rather than reject their suspicion and the belief is formed through disclosures, observations or other information. Proof is not required to support the person's claim.

Reasonable grounds for forming a belief may include where:

- a child states they have been abused or they know someone who has been, or is being, abused

- someone advises that a child has been abused, is being abused, or is at risk of abuse
- child's behaviour, actions or injuries indicate a risk of harm or abuse
- persistent neglect, inadequate care or supervision, family violence, parental substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability is impacting on the child's safety, stability or development
- you observe signs or indicators of abuse.

Staff should make sufficient enquiries to clarify their concerns and form a reasonable belief. However, it is not their role to investigate child protection concerns or criminal offences. The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection or VIC Police will determine what is to be investigated.

Inappropriate conduct to a child: Is any behaviour that a reasonable person would consider to be inappropriate in an education and care service, taking into account the child's age, development, safety, wellbeing and the context of the interaction.

Mandatory reporting: The legal requirement for certain professional groups to report a reasonable belief of child physical or sexual abuse to DFFH Child Protection.

Mandatory reporters: in Victoria, are people who deliver the following services, wholly or partly, to children as part of their paid or professional work:

- registered medical practitioners
- nurses, including midwives
- Victorian police officers
- registered teachers, including early childhood teachers and school principals
- out of home care workers (excluding voluntary foster and kinship carers)
- early childhood workers
- youth justice workers
- registered psychologists
- school counsellors
- people in religious ministry.

Reportable conduct: requires the head of an approved education and care service (e.g., kindergartens and after school services) and children's service (e.g., occasional care) to notify the Social Services

Regulator (SSR) and the regulatory authority of reportable allegations involving workers or volunteers, and to investigate and respond to those allegations (see *Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy*).

Victorian Child Safe Standards: The 11 Standards aim to protect children and young people, by requiring organisations to put policies and processes in place to prevent, respond to and report child abuse and harm concerns and allegations. They aim to make keeping children and young people a key focus of organisations in Victoria (see *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*).

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK

All staff, volunteers and students must hold a current and valid Working with Children Check (WWCC) (unless exempt) before commencing work at any approved education and care service. The Service must verify the status of each WWCC before the person commences at the Service and maintain a WWCC register for all workers and volunteers engaged in child-related work, recording relevant details including the name, WWCC number, card type, expiry date and other required information.

The WWCC Unit may immediately suspend or cancel a person's WWCC if there is information suggesting a risk to children. Individuals excluded from child-related work in other states/territories will be automatically excluded from working in Victoria.

All staff, volunteers and students must notify the approved provider in writing of any changes to their WWCC status, their teacher registration or fit and proper status within 24 hours of becoming aware of the change. The approved provider must notify the Victorian Early Childhood Regulatory Authority (VECRA) within 24 hours of becoming aware of any changes, including negative notices or changes to teacher registration.

The National Continuous Checking Capability (NCCC) will be used to support real-time monitoring of worker criminal history across all jurisdictions. [scheduled to begin in 2026]

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service has zero tolerance for any abuse, neglect or harm against a child and endorses high quality practices in relation to protecting children. Educators have an important role in supporting children and young people and identifying any concerns that may jeopardise their safety, welfare, or wellbeing, guided by child safety principles and the best interests of the child as the paramount consideration, including:

- a duty of care to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to prevent harm to children

- obligations are met under child protection legislation
- obligations are met under work, health and safety legislation.

TRAINING AND AWARENESS

Our Service promotes a culture of child safety and wellbeing within the Service. The approved provider will ensure all prescribed personnel, i.e., all persons with management or control, nominated supervisors, persons in day-to-day charge, other staff, volunteers, and students:

- complete national child safety training (before or within 14 days of commencing work at the Service or working directly with children, including the foundation training and advanced training (where applicable), and renew training every 2 years
- are aware of the current child protection law
- understand how to apply child protection law within our Service, and can demonstrate that understanding
- are aware of their obligations, including their responsibilities as mandatory reporters
- are aware that neglecting to report child protection concerns may be deemed a criminal offence.

In addition, the approved provider will ensure each nominated supervisor and each person in day-to-day charge, staff and volunteers who work directly with children:

- successfully completes approved child protection training, i.e., Victoria's child protection training module, Protecting Children - Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations Early Childhood, within the required timeframes and renews this training every 12 months
- provides evidence of the completion of approved child protection training.

The Service will refer to the current Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) approved child safety and protection training requirements to ensure compliance with the applicable state or territory requirements. The approved provider will ensure all records relating to child safety and child protection training, including date of completion and renewal date, are recorded via the *Training Register.* Records will be kept for 3 years after a person's engagement with the Service ends.

REPORTING AND NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

THE APPROVED PROVIDER/ NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL:

Dial 000 if a child is at immediate risk and VIC Police or medical assistance is required.

- report allegations, disclosures or concerns of child abuse, neglect, harm or inappropriate conduct to relevant authorities, including VIC Police, DFFH Child Protection, VECRA and the Social Services Regulator (SSR), where required
- follow the Four Critical Actions to take to respond to an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse
    - responding to an emergency
    - reporting to authorities
    - contact parents or carers
    - provide ongoing support
- notify VECRA via the NQA IT System (within 24 hours) of:
    - any incident or allegation where it is reasonably believed that physical and/or sexual abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring while the child is being educated and cared for by the Service
    - any complaints alleging that a serious incident has occurred or is occurring at the Service
    - any serious incident, including (but not limited to):
        - physical or sexual abuse of a child where emergency services attended the Service
    - any reportable sexual conduct by a nominated supervisor, educator, staff member, student or volunteer against, with or in the presence of, a child
    - any circumstances that pose a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child, including:
        - harmful behaviour of a child that poses a risk to other people while being educated and cared for by the Service
        - any incident or allegation of conduct by an approved provider, nominated supervisor, staff member or volunteer that a reasonable person would consider to be inappropriate at the Service, including inappropriate conduct towards a child or between adults in the presence of a child
    - any change to a person's WWCC or any relevant risk information related to child safety.
- report any suspected cases of online abuse to the relevant authorities, including the eSafety Commissioner and VIC Police, in accordance with legal requirements and child protection obligations
- ensure documentation is completed to assist in making reports to relevant authorities, including the *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record* in the first instance, and any other records required by relevant authorities
- notify the SSR within three (3) business days of becoming aware of reportable

conduct, involving an employee or volunteer, and ensure to take appropriate actions and investigate the matters

- develop a 24-hour reporting procedure to ensure that any matter notifiable to the VECRA is reported within the required timeframe, including incidents that occur or are reported outside operational hours (e.g., weekends or public holidays).

EDUCATORS WILL:

- contact the VIC Police on 000 if there is an immediate danger to a child, where it is safe to do so, take reasonable steps to protect the child until emergency services arrive
- understand their mandatory reporting obligations and report concerns that a child is at risk of physical or sexual abuse to the approved provider or nominated supervisor, child protection or other appropriate authority
- listen to and acknowledge a child's disclosure, taking their concerns seriously and engaging the appropriate authorities
- follow the Four Critical Actions to take to respond to an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse
    - responding to an emergency
    - reporting to authorities
    - contact parents or carers
    - provide ongoing support
- report concerns directly to Victoria Police where there is an immediate threat to a child's safety or where a crime is suspected, including allegations of assault, sexual abuse or grooming
- report all child safety concerns, incidents, allegations and complaints to the approved provider or nominated supervisor
- prepare accurate, objective and timely records, recording exactly what happened, conversations that took place and what was observed to pass on to the relevant authorities to support any investigation
- NOT investigate allegations or suspicions of abuse or neglect, but collect only enough information to clarify concerns and make a report to Victoria Police, child protection or other appropriate authority
- understand that allegations or concerns relating to their own conduct will be managed in the same way as allegations made against any other people
- identify and report any concerns, allegations, suspicions, observations or disclosures of reportable conduct, including conduct by a staff member, volunteer, contractor or student that may place a child at risk of harm, to the approved provider in accordance with Service procedures and VECRA within 24 hours

- report allegations, disclosures or concerns of child abuse, neglect, harm or inappropriate conduct to relevant authorities, including Victoria Police, DFFH Child Protection, VECRA and the SSR, where required
- share information with other professionals working with children as part of the information sharing and family violence reform schemes (see *Child Information Sharing and Family Violence Policy*)
- refer families to appropriate support agencies where concerns do not require a report to child protection but indicate that a child or family would benefit from additional support. Referral pathways may include the Orange Door or other relevant services. Family consent will be sought (where appropriate) before making referrals
- seek appropriate support for their own wellbeing following child protection concerns, disclosures, allegations or reports, while maintaining confidentiality and professional responsibilities.

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is important that all allegations and notifications remain confidential until investigated by the appropriate authorities. The individual who makes the notification should not inform the suspected perpetrator (if known) nor attempt to investigate any allegation themselves. This ensures the matter can be investigated without contamination of evidence or pre-rehearsed statements by the appropriate authorities.

Our Service is committed to providing support to children, families, educators or staff who have made a report regarding child protection, with a focus on upholding strict confidentiality throughout the process. Our primary concern is the wellbeing and safety of the child, and we will work closely with relevant authorities, professionals, and support networks to ensure that the child's best interests are met throughout the process. Our dedicated support system will assist educators and staff in navigating this challenging process while safeguarding their privacy and professional wellbeing.

PROTECTION FOR REPORTERS

A person who makes a report about concerns for a child's safety or wellbeing in good faith may be protected from liability and detrimental action for making or proposing to make a report under amendments to the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005.* The identity of the reporter is protected by law from being disclosed, except in certain exceptional circumstances.

These protections are outlined within our *Protected Disclosures (Whistleblower) Policy,* which supports

and protects individuals who report concerns in good faith about child safety, compliance with the National Law, or Service operations. Child protection reports are generally exempt from release because they contain confidential and protected information.

SHARING OF INFORMATION

The Service recognises that timely and appropriate information sharing is essential to promoting children's safety and wellbeing. Information may be shared with authorised organisations in accordance with the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS), Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS), Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework, and other applicable legislation. For further information, refer to the *Child Information Sharing and Family Violence Reforms Policy*.

THE APPROVED PROVIDER/MANAGEMENT/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL ENSURE:

Governance, Child Safety and Compliance

- that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and Education and Care Services National Regulations are met, and children's safety, rights and best interests are prioritised at all times
- families are aware of this *Child Protection Policy* and relevant procedures and are advised on how and where the policy can be accessed
- all children being educated and cared for by the Service are adequately supervised
- a range of strategies are used to provide effective supervision, including using attendance records to ensure children are accounted for (e.g., head counts)
- that they do not subject a child to inappropriate conduct or inappropriate discipline and ensure that no child being educated and cared for by the Service is subjected to inappropriate conduct or inappropriate discipline by any staff member, student or volunteer
- any allegations, concerns or suspicions of inappropriate conduct are investigated and reported to VECRA in accordance with the *Management of Inappropriate Conduct Procedure*
- that the premises, including toilets and nappy change facilities, are designed and maintained to facilitate clear supervision of children while maintaining their rights and dignity
- all training completed by staff, students, volunteers and persons with management or control is recorded on the *Training Register*.

All employees, volunteers, students and visitors (where applicable):

- have knowledge of and adhere to child safety policies, including the *Child Information Sharing and Family Violence Reforms*, *Child Protection, Child Safety and Wellbeing, Code of*

Conduct, Reportable Conduct Scheme and Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Policies

- have knowledge of and adhere to legislative requirements and not use, or have access to, any personal electronic devices, including mobile phones or smart watches used to take images or videos when educating and caring for children at the Service
- only use electronic devices supplied by the Service for taking images or videos of children enrolled at the Service
- are never left alone with a child while at the Service under any circumstances (best practice for staff and educators, mandatory for volunteers, students and visitors).
- are required to participate in a comprehensive induction, training and ongoing supervision to promote and foster a child safe culture and ensure they understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility, and they adhere to the VIC Child Safe Standards
- are provided with support to adhere to a zero-tolerance stance against child abuse
- are provided with current information and reporting procedures for the Reportable Conduct Scheme
- provided with training and information about the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS), Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS), and the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework
- are supported and empowered to make a report to DFFH, Child Protection, VIC Police or seek a referral to Orange Door by having clear procedures in place
- are provided with regular training and resources about the different ways children may express concerns, distress and disclose harm, as well as the process for responding to disclosures from children, including a complaint that alleges a child is exhibiting sexual behaviours that may be harmful to the child or another child
- are provided with regular training and resources about trauma-informed care, effective supervision and monitoring, appropriate and inappropriate discipline and online abuse
- are informed of appropriate positive and consistent approaches to guide behaviour and ensure no child is subjected to any form of corporal punishment or discipline that is unreasonable in the circumstances
- are advised that it is an offence to subject a child to inappropriate conduct which includes behaviour that is inconsistent with professional standards; is likely to cause emotional, psychological or physical harm to children or has violent or sexual connotations
- are informed that if they observe, suspect or receive any allegations or disclosures that a staff member or volunteer is engaging in or has engaged in inappropriate conduct, they

must notify VECRA, approved provider and nominated supervisor as soon as practicable, and no later than within 24 hours

- are provided with access to all relevant legislation, regulations, standards and other resources to help meet their mandatory reporting obligations
- are required to participate in regular performance reviews.

Recruitment, Screening and Workforce Requirements

- a thorough recruitment process is implemented to employ people who are committed to children's safety and ensure applicants demonstrate behaviours and values consistent with the Service's Code of Conduct, Statement of Philosophy and child safety policies and procedures (see *Recruitment Policy*)
- the recruitment process includes pre-employment screening, background checks, reference checks and prohibition checks
- all prospective applicants are required to complete a prohibition notice declaration to acknowledge they do not hold any prohibition notices or negative notices that would prevent them from working with children
- all staff, volunteers' and students' WWCCs are validated and checked prior to their employment or engagement BEFORE the person begins working or interacting with children
- WWCC for visitors who come into direct contact with children are validated and recorded (records should include WWCC number and expiry date)
- a record is kept and updated with the number of each WWCC number and expiry date, status (current/suspended/cancelled) and staff and educators are reminded to renew their WWCC at least 3 months prior to expiry, see *WWCC Register*
- a person is immediately removed from child-related work if their WWCC is suspended, cancelled or under reassessment
- all WWCC applicants engaged at the Service are aware that false or misleading information can result in cancellation of their WWCC and prosecution
- staff, student and volunteer records are maintained as per the *Record Keeping and Retention Policy* and entered into the National Early Childhood Worker Register
- staff, students and volunteers notify the approved provider in writing within 24 hours of becoming aware of any changes to their WWCC status, their teacher registration or fit and proper status (including show cause notices, suspension notices, supervision notices, disciplinary notices/orders or prohibition notices)

- staff, students and volunteers are advised that it is an offence to provide false or misleading information in relation to their identity, qualifications, WWCC, or any matter relevant to their suitability to work with children

Reporting, Records and Continuous Improvement

- a *Child Protection Risk Assessment* is completed and reviewed annually
- a *Child Protection Concerns Register* is completed to record child protection concerns, disclosures, or suspicions of child abuse or neglect [best practice]
- the Service cooperates and complies with any directions or orders issued by VECRA regarding a show cause, suspension or supervision notice provided to a student, volunteer or visitor, including immediately preventing the person from engagement with children
- child safety is emphasised throughout the Service with regular discussions at team meetings and with children and families
- regular assessment of staff understanding of child safety policies and procedures through quizzes/surveys
- educators are provided with reporting procedures and professional standards to safeguard children and protect the integrity of educators, staff and volunteers
- records of abuse or suspected abuse are kept confidential, stored securely, and accessible only to authorised personnel, in line with our *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*
- records relating to child sexual abuse that has occurred or is alleged to have occurred are kept for at least 45 years [best practice]
- complaint handling processes are child-focused and provide support and guidance for children to identify who they can talk to if they are feeling unsafe (*See Dealing with Complaints Policy*)
- following any critical incident, children, staff and families are provided with access to appropriate support services they may need, including counselling, debriefing and community services
- critical reflection is undertaken with staff and educators following any critical incident to inform changes to policies, procedures, practices (including supervision arrangements), and risk assessments.
- staff, student and volunteer records are maintained as per the *Record Keeping and Retention Policy* and entered into the National Early Childhood Worker Register
- information on all employees in the Service who have direct contact with children as part of their usual duties is recorded in the Workforce Register in Arrival and update this information quarterly

STAFF, EDUCATORS, VOLUNTEERS, STUDENTS AND VISITORS WILL: (where applicable)

- comply with and understand *Child Information Sharing and Family Violence Reforms*, *Child Protection, Child Safety and Wellbeing, Code of Conduct, Reportable Conduct Scheme, and Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Policies* and relevant procedures
- participate in a comprehensive induction and orientation program, including an understanding of child protection legislation and reporting obligations
- support and promote a child safe culture within the Service by complying with the VIC Child Safe Standards
- adhere to the Service's zero-tolerance stance against child abuse
- complete mandatory national child safety training within the required timeframes and renew it every 2 years
- complete approved child protection training, Victoria's child protection training module, Protecting Children - Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations Early Childhood, within the required timeframes and renew it every 12 months
- understand their mandatory reporting obligations and responsibilities, and be aware that neglecting to report child protection concerns may be deemed a criminal offence
- participate in regular training on child protection, including recognising and responding to children's expressions of concern, distress and disclosures of harm, indicators of abuse or neglect, grooming behaviours, child sexual abuse prevention, and harmful sexual behaviours displayed by young children. Training should also include the process for responding to disclosures from children, including a complaint that alleges a child is exhibiting sexual behaviours that may be harmful to the child or another child (refer to guidance below)
- participate in regular training about trauma-informed care, effective supervision and monitoring, appropriate and inappropriate discipline and online abuse
- participate in training about the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS), Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS), and the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework
- not use any personal electronic devices, including mobile phones or smart watches used to take images or video of children at the Service
- implement consistent, appropriate interactions with children
- foster a culture of openness, respect and cultural safety where children and young people feel secure and valued
- allow children to be part of decision-making processes where appropriate

- provide ongoing monitoring and follow-up for children's health and wellbeing
- use appropriate, positive and consistent approaches to guide behaviour and ensure no child is subjected to any form of corporal punishment, inappropriate conduct or inappropriate discipline
- notify the approved provider and nominated supervisor as soon as practicable, and no later than 24 hours, if they observe, suspect or receive an allegation or disclosure that a staff member or volunteer is engaging in or has engaged in inappropriate conduct.

DOCUMENTING A DISCLOSURE

A DISCLOSURE OF HARM (GENERAL)

A disclosure of harm emerges when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened or is likely to happen. Disclosures may be received from a child, family, staff member, volunteer or another person.

WHEN RECEIVING A DISCLOSURE FROM A CHILD, THE PERSON RECEIVING THE DISCLOSURE WILL:

- give the child or young person their full attention
- remain calm and find a suitable place to talk where the child feels comfortable and can be heard
- not make promises that cannot be kept. For example, never promise confidentiality or that the information will not be shared.
- explain to the child or young person what you plan to do next, and what is required
- reassure the child or young person that they have done the right thing in revealing the information or speaking up, and that it will be necessary to tell those who can help keep them safe
- let the child or young person take their time and use their own words
- only ask enough questions to clarify the concern for reporting purposes as further questioning could cause distress, confusion or interfere with any later enquiries
- tell the child or young person that the abuse or harm is not their fault
- support culturally and linguistically diverse children and children with additional needs to express themselves in their preferred way
- not attempt to investigate or mediate an outcome between the parties involved
- not confront the alleged perpetrator
- document the disclosure as soon as possible so the details are accurately captured, including:
    - time, date and place of the disclosure
    - 'word for word' record of what was said and what happened, including anything they (the staff member/educator) said, and any actions taken

- date of record and signature.

Adapted from: Australian Institute of Family Studies (2025), *Responding to children and young people's disclosures of abuse*.

CONCERNING OR HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS DISPLAYED BY A CHILD

Children's sexual development includes curiosity about their bodies and sexual identity. While some behaviours may be age and developmentally appropriate, behaviours that are harmful, coercive, persistent, exploitative or outside typical developmental expectations will be responded to immediately in accordance with supervision, child protection and mandatory reporting obligations.

Educators and staff will:

- engage in professional learning to promote a consistent and appropriate approach to identifying and responding to harmful sexual behaviours in children. This may include consideration of:
  - age and developmental capacity of the child/children
  - reasons why a child may display harmful sexual behaviours
  - behavioural history of the child
  - how the behaviour impacts other children
  - risk the behaviour poses to others
  - vulnerability of the child displaying harmful sexual behaviours, including whether they have experienced abuse or trauma, have been exposed to sexually explicit material, have attachment difficulties, or have developmental delays that may affect their understanding of appropriate boundaries and consent.
- respond to concerns about any sexual behaviour that may be harmful to the child or another child promptly (see *Child Protection Notification Procedure*)
- recognise that a child displaying harmful sexual behaviour may themselves be a victim of abuse, and respond to all such behaviour with this possibility in mind, ensuring the child's needs are assessed and addressed alongside any necessary notification
- follow guidance from the Traffic Lights Framework [or similar program] to manage the concern or complaint
  - RED - signals sexual behaviours which indicate immediate intervention and action
  - ORANGE - signals sexual behaviours that may be concerning and for educators to take notice and gather information and assess appropriate action
  - GREEN - signals sexual behaviours that are expected and age-appropriate for children's development
- provide appropriate supervision and take immediate action to ensure children's safety and wellbeing

- respond to any child displaying harmful or problem sexual behaviours in a manner that is respectful, trauma-informed and appropriate to the child's age and developmental stage
- work in partnership with families and relevant agencies where required
- support all children involved in a respectful and non-stigmatising manner
- document and report all concerns in accordance with child protection and mandatory reporting obligations
- conduct an environmental audit to identify any indoor or outdoor areas that may not offer clear lines of sight for supervision, including enclosed spaces such as cubby houses, play corners and bathroom areas.

EDUCATING CHILDREN ABOUT PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOURS

Our educational program will support children to learn about their rights, develop protective behaviours, and encourage them to express their views, feelings and concerns. A risk assessment will be conducted prior to the delivery of any child protection education program to ensure it is age-appropriate and supports children's wellbeing.

Children will be supported to learn:

- about safe and unsafe behaviour in both physical and online environments
- about appropriate and inappropriate contact in an age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate way
- about body safety, including using correct names for private body parts, recognising inappropriate touch and respecting personal space and boundaries
- appropriate interactions with other children, including respecting personal space, body boundaries, consent, privacy and the right of others to feel safe and comfortable
- that no other child is allowed to touch your private body parts and you are not allowed to touch another child's private parts
- what to do if another child asks them to engage in sexual behaviour or touches them without consent
- about their right to feel safe and respected at all times
- to say '*no*' to anything that makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable, and seek help from trusted adults
- strategies to help them recognise and respond to situations that may make them feel unsafe or uncomfortable
- to identify and express feelings when they feel safe, unsafe, worried or uncomfortable
- identify trusted educators, adults and friends who can support them

- the difference between 'safe and unsafe secrets', and that there is no secret that cannot be shared with a trusted adult
- that educators are available to listen and support them if they have any concerns
- to tell a trusted adult about any behaviour, activity or person that makes them feel unsafe or worried
- to recognise and express their feelings verbally and non-verbally
- strategies to help them regulate emotions and seek support when needed.

BREACH OF THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

A breach is any action or inaction by an individual within the Service, including staff, educators, students, volunteers and visitors who fail to comply with any part of this policy. The rights and best interests of children are paramount, and breaches will be treated seriously.

Any allegations of criminal offences against children, including sexual offences, must be reported to the VIC Police and relevant authorities immediately. Any person who reports a breach or concern in good faith will be protected against retaliation under the *Protected Disclosures (Whistleblower) Policy.*

All breaches will be recorded and outcomes documented in accordance with record keeping requirements. A breach may include (but is not limited to):

- failure to report suspected child abuse, neglect, or risk of harm
- engaging in or failing to prevent inappropriate conduct or inappropriate discipline towards a child
- breaching confidentiality about a child protection matter
- failing to maintain a valid WWCC, where required
- not following the Service's *Code of Conduct Policy*, supervision or reporting procedures
- any action or inaction that places a child at risk of harm.

MANAGING A BREACH OF THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Management will respond to any breaches of this policy in a fair, unbiased and supportive manner by:

- liaising with the DFFH Child Protection, the SSR, VIC Police and VECRA, as appropriate, to ensure evidence is not destroyed or compromised
- not conducting an internal investigation while DFFH Child Protection, the SSR or VIC Police are conducting an investigation
- following directions from the DFFH Child Protection, VECRA, the SSR and VIC Police, which may include immediately preventing the educator or staff member who is the subject of allegations from working with children or young people until authorities conclude their investigation
- complying with all VECRA requirements regarding notifications and compliance actions

- displaying the Service's compliance history and any compliance actions under review by VECRA for families to view.

Management may undertake an internal investigation if DFFH Child Protection or the VIC Police are **not** conducting their own investigation or if their action has concluded. Management will:

- give the educator, staff member, student or volunteer the opportunity to provide their version of events and respond to the concerns
- document the details of the breach, including the information provided by all parties
- record the outcome clearly, factually and without bias
- maintain confidentiality in accordance with Service policy and legal obligations
- reach a decision based on fair consideration of all evidence and available information.

OUTCOME OF A BREACH OF THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Staff members or educators who fail to adhere to this policy may be in breach of their terms of employment. Visitors, students or volunteers who fail to comply with this policy may face termination of their engagement.

Depending on the nature of the breach, outcomes may include:

- disciplinary procedures, including termination of employment, if required
- reinforcing the relevant element of the child protection policy and procedure not followed
- providing closer supervision
- providing further education and training
- restorative processes where appropriate and consistent with legal obligations
- reviewing current policies and procedures and developing new policies and procedures if necessary
- external regulatory or enforcement action, including compliance actions, fines, conditions placed on service approval, changes to the quality rating or a suspension of rating or other measures, including Service closure.

SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS AND STAFF

The approved provider, management and nominated supervisor will ensure:

- educators and staff who are involved in making a mandatory report, responding to a disclosure of abuse or neglect, or managing a notification involving concerning or harmful sexual behaviours displayed by a child are offered timely and appropriate support

- a confidential debrief is provided to any educator or staff member following their involvement in a child protection notification
- educators and staff are provided with access to professional support, including the Service's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), where needed
- the wellbeing of educators and staff involved in child protection matters is monitored on an ongoing basis following a notification
- educators and staff feel safe and supported to raise concerns about their own wellbeing without fear of judgement or reprisal
- the support provided to educators and staff involved in child protection matters remains confidential.

CHILD PROTECTION RESOURCES

Australian Human Rights Commission. Child safe organisations

Emerging Minds. Supporting children who have experienced trauma

Kids Helpline

Lifeline

NAPCAN - Prevent Child Abuse & Neglect

Raising Children Network. Safeguarding children and child sexual abuse

Sexual Assault Services Victoria. Child Sexual Abuse in Early Childhood Education and Care Settings

Stop It Now! A child or young person's sexual behaviour

The Orange Door

Victorian Government. Guidance and resources to help early childhood services prevent, identify and respond to child safety concerns

Victorian Government. Family Violence Information Sharing and Child Information Sharing

Victorian Government. Identify signs of child abuse in early childhood

Victorian Government. Understanding your obligations to protect children

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our *Child Protection Policy* will be evaluated and reviewed on an annual basis or earlier if there are changes to legislation, ACECQA guidance or any incident related to our policy. Feedback will be requested from children, families, staff, educators and management. All families will be notified 14 days before any policy change that may have a significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the Service or the family's ability to utilise the Service.

RELATED RESOURCES

Child Protection Concerns Register Child Protection Educational Program Risk Assessment Child Protection Observation Record Child Protection Notification Procedure Child Protection Report Form	Child Protection Risk Assessment Inappropriate Conduct Risk Assessment Management of Inappropriate Conduct Procedure Reportable Conduct Report Form Training Register

SOURCES

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2025). *Embedding the National Child Safe Principles*
Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2026). *Guide to the National Quality Framework*
Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2025). *NQF Child Safe Culture Guide.*
Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (n.d.). *Reporting requirements about children*
Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2026). Safe use of devices in education and care services
Australian Government Department of Education. (2022). *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. V2.0, 2022*
Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2023). *Mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect*
Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2025). *Responding to children and young people's disclosures of abuse*
Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2023). *What is child abuse and neglect?*
Commission for Children and Young People. *Reportable Conduct Scheme*.
Early Childhood Australia. (2016). *Code of Ethics*.
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
Victorian Government. *PROTECT for early childhood.*
Victorian Government. *Creating child safe organisations*.
Victorian Government. *Child Information Sharing Scheme*.
Victorian Government. *MARAM Practice Guides and Resources*.
Victorian Government. *Working with Children Check*.

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY	[NAME] Amy Flockhart	[POSITION] office admin	[DATE] 04/08/2026
POLICY REVIEWED	AUGUST 2026	NEXT REVIEW DATE	AUGUST 2027
VERSION NUMBER	V11.08.26		

MODIFICATIONS	• annual policy review
	• revised roles, responsibilities and legislative obligations
	• introduced and improved headings and the overall structure – reorganising points as needed
	• removed duplicated and outdated content
	• removed reportable conduct as separate policy exists
	• added new sections, including
	  ○ concerning or harmful sexual behaviours displayed by a child
	  ○ support for educators and staff
	• updated content for accuracy, clarity and consistency		

	• all references and sources checked for currency and updated as required
PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS	
FEBRUARY 2026	• updated policy to include child safety reforms for Education and Care Services National Law - WWCC requirements strengthened, mandatory National child safety training, inappropriate conduct offences, and additional requirements for approved providers to notify the regulatory authority • NEW updated policy to reflect changes to the new Social Services Regulator, replacing the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) • sources checked for currency and updated as required