



Child Safe Policy

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Purpose

This policy addresses Victoria’s compulsory Child Safe Standards that recognise vulnerable and at-risk children. This policy is drawn from the Ministerial Order. 870 – Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools, this order forms part of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 section 4.3.1. and the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 including the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015. This policy aims to provide an outcome focused organisational culture and response to child safety.

**Note new National Standards will apply to FLC from 1 July 2022, policy is currently being update to incorporate new standards, until such point the current standards apply as does this policy.*

Objective

To inform, staff, volunteers, Board of Management, students, parents and community members of Foundations Learning Centres commitment to children’s safety.



Policy

Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

Foundation Learning Centre is committed to providing a safe and harassment free learning environment for all students, young people and children. The Child Safety Standards and Practices are embedded heavily in FLC's culture from a Board level right through to students, community members and stakeholders across a range of effective communication and training platforms. Child Safety is addressed as a high priority from recruitment of staff and into the day to day operations on an ongoing basis.

Foundation Learning Centre has a zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to empowering the safety of children.

All management, staff, educators, volunteers and the Board of Management are responsible for the Duty of Care for all students and play a critical role in upholding the organisations Child Safe Standards.

We want children and young people to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children and young people, as well as our staff and volunteers.

We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children and young people.

Our organisational values and culture aim for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers, children and young people) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing training to:

- develop their skills to protect children and young people from abuse
- promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and young people,
- promote the cultural safety of children and young people from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds
- promote the safety of children and young people with a disability

Foundation Learning Centre promotes community participation, we value diversity and inclusiveness and pride ourselves on providing a space where all individuals can feel safe to engage, learn and build connections.

Actions to support ongoing Child Safety

1. Child Safety is a standard agenda item on all internal staff, operational and leadership monthly meetings – minutes are stored electronically
2. Child Safety is a standard agenda item on all Board of management meetings monthly – minutes are stored electronically
3. The CEO reports on Child Safety as a standing item within the risk management section of the monthly Board communication
4. Staff and Board participate in regular and ongoing online and face to face training around the topic of Child Safety. FLC quarterly PD days feature interactive training opportunities for staff and Board on CSS.
5. Child Safety is embedded into the staff induction and onboarding procedures
6. FLC's Child Safety Champions meet fortnightly to discuss, document and review any Child Safety Matters with actions and potential risks reported to the CEO
7. Child Safety Officers conduct PD Session throughout the year during all staff PD days, attendance records are maintained electronically
8. FLC conduct performance reviews every six months, Child Safe is monitored as part of these reviews.
9. FLC's students are educated about CCS



Statement of commitment to child safety

Our organisation is committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early, removing and reducing these risks.

This policy guides staff and volunteers on how to behave with children and young people in our organisation.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently in accordance with our organisational policies and procedures. Foundation Learning Centre has policies and procedures which address:

- Failure to Disclose Offence
- Failure to Protect or Grooming Offence

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are concerned about a child's or young person's safety, which we follow rigorously.

Our organisation has robust recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

Our organisation is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We support and respect all children and young people, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and young people, the cultural safety of children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and to providing a safe environment for children and young people with a disability.

Code of Conduct

FLC has a Code of Conduct – Child Safe this document outlines the staff obligations in place to reduce the risk of child abuse by existing personnel. All staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our [Code of Conduct](#) which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children and young people. We take into consideration any contributions made from staff, volunteers, families, children and young people in regard to the ongoing development of FLC's [Code of Conduct](#). Our policy is publicly available on our website and our organisation is committed to child safety. This policy must be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct – Child Safe and Child Safety Statement

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

Screening, Recruitment and Employment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children and young people. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations. All position descriptions outline the organisations commitment and expectations to child safety and the level of responsibility and supervision associated with the position.

We encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information.

We carry out reference checks prior to appointing new persons and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. All recruitment documentation including but not limited to reference checks and copies of qualifications, working with children checks and police checks are stored securely for evidence and compliance.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Training and Supervision

All staff and volunteers and Board of Management are inducted into the organisation (*refer to induction policy and induction document*) and provided with appropriate information regarding the



child safety standards. Part of a new employee and board member induction is the completion of the department of education's **Protecting Children - Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations**. This supports staff to understand the nature and signs of abuse, including the definition of harm and the types of child abuse.

Training and supervision is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children and young people from abuse. This includes checking that their behaviour towards children and young people is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's *Code of Conduct* to understand appropriate behaviour further). 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. All staff are to complete online mandatory reporting training and understand processes and their duty of care.

All staff hold a "Duty of Care", training is provided across all levels of the organisation including; BOM, Management, Administration Staff, Early Childhood Staff, Educators and Volunteers. Child safe matters are regularly discussed within meetings and training provided during quarterly Professional Development days. This training results in an inclusive approach to organisational culture and sets a behavioural attitude when working with children.

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, unless there is a risk to someone's safety, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents, children or young people. 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.

Fair Procedures for Personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is our primary concern. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be fair, thorough, transparent, and evidence based.

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

All reports of child abuse or child related misconduct involving staff, volunteers and participants of Foundation Learning Centre are to be reported to authorities as per the Procedure for responding to and reporting of incidents, disclosures and suspicion of abuse involving staff, volunteers and participants of Foundation Learning Centre.

Additionally, all reports of child abuse or child related misconduct involving staff, volunteers and participants of Foundation Learning Centre are to be reported as per the Reportable Conduct Scheme through the Commission for Children and Young People

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children, young people and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Responding and Reporting

Legislative Responsibilities

In line with the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, Part 5A Child Safe, Reportable conduct scheme and the mandatory reporting obligations set out in the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005, Section 184 and report allegations of child abuse. Our organisation aims to prevent, respond and report and takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. 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. (*further information refer to Procedures for responding to and reporting incidents*)
- **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. (*further information refer to Procedures for responding to and reporting incidents*)



- **Failure to protect under the Grooming Offence:** Understanding the vulnerabilities and identifying the risk of online activity, through education and curriculum, conversations, presentations and monitoring online access (*further information refer to Procedures for responding to and reporting incidents*)
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties. (*further information refer to Mandatory Reporting Policy/Procedure*)

Foundation Learning Centre has two Child Safety Officers (*as referenced in the Child Safety Statement*), all staff and volunteers are trained in the complaints handling process and understand the obligation to take all concerns that are raised with serious intent and provide a culturally safe environment. Any reportable obligations are to be immediately directed to one of the child safe officers.

Under the Reportable Conduct Scheme Head of the Organisation MUST notify the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) of any and all allegations of reportable conduct involving employees or volunteers. For Foundation Learning Centre the CEO is the Head of the Organisation and therefore also responsible for reporting. All reports are to be made within three days the head of the organisation is required to report all reportable allegations, no matter where it occurs.

Identifying

Staff and volunteers are trained to recognise and identify the indicators of the five forms of abuse in students and children of all cultures. They are instructed on how to implement the wellbeing policy and inform the appropriate welfare staff members.

Our Staff and Volunteers are trained and aware of the signs of abuse, covering the areas of:

- Grooming
- Physical Abuse
- Serious Emotional Abuse
- Physical Harm
- Serious Neglect

Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

Our organisation, including all staff and volunteers uphold a duty of care and takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse, are a victim and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

Foundation Learning Centre engages the services of external organisation and Victoria Police for presentation embedded into curriculum to ensure students are aware and understand when and how they can report child abuse.

Students can at any point during their time at FLC access and approach the wellbeing team or our Child Safe Officers.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

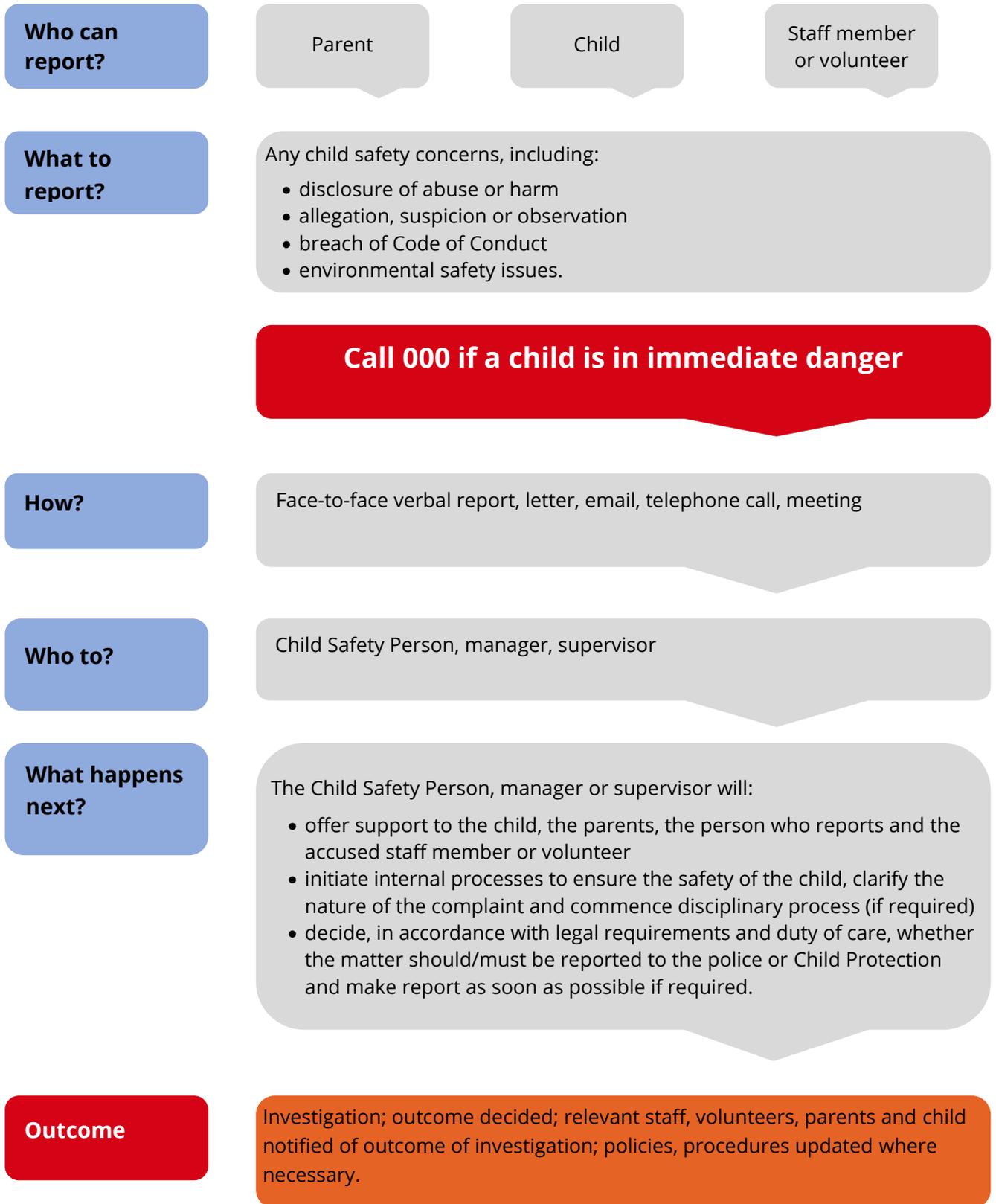
If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred, then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child or young person 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

**Also see FLC's Mandatory Reporting Policy and Duty of Care Policy and Code of Conduct*



Flowchart: CHILD SAFETY REPORTING PROCESS





Risk Management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children and young people when a risk is identified (*see information about failure to protect above and Mandatory reporting Policy and Procedure*). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children and young people.

The risks of online environment is embedded into educational curriculum provided to students and discussed with students in a safe and open classroom setting.

Students and staff are exposed to information delivered by external experts in the field and provided with question time opportunities. (*Also refer to our Harassment, bullying including cyber bullying and victimisation policy*)

Staff must sign and adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#), which incorporates use of devices in and online environment.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess and take steps to minimise child abuse risks. This includes reviewing and acting on risks posed by physical environments, where applicable. (Refer to Camps and excursion policy)

Regular Review

This policy will be reviewed annually in accordance with the Victorian Standards and following significant incidents or reports. During this process an analysis of level of concern and likelihood will be addressed including the risks of online grooming, (*refer to Child Safe Risk Management document*). We encourage contributions from families, children and young people at any time. Where possible we endeavour to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe

This policy was created in line with all child safe standards, Victorian standards.

The policy is available to staff and volunteers on the novacore system and is accessible on Foundation Learning Centres website.

The Board of Management oversee the best practice model and ensure this policy is developed with stakeholder consultation.

Our Child Safe Officers (*as referenced in the Child Safety Statement*) provide leadership, training and education to staff, volunteers and students and ensure that staff are following the policy and procedure guidelines.

Children and young people

This policy is intended to empower children and young people who are vital and active participants in our organisation. Children need people they can trust to be available, accessible and respectfully when addressing a child's safety. When developing policies and procedures will take into consideration the opinions of children and young people and use their opinions to develop child protection policies and procedures.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular, we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally
- Promote the safety and empowerment of LGBTIQ+ children and young people

Our students are to be advised how to access sexual abuse prevention programs

Students are provided with a safe space in which they can communicate and express their views in order to raise awareness or their concerns.



For more information on the Child Safe Standards visit <http://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au/> or see A GUIDE FOR CREATING A CHILD SAFE ORGANISATION

Related documents

Procedure for reporting suspected child abuse

Procedure for reporting suspected child abuse within FLC

Child Safety Statement

Code of Conduct – Child Safe

Mandatory Reporting Policy

Camps and Excursion Policy and procedure

Harassment, bullying (including cyber bullying) and victimisation policy