

Foundation Learning Centre's Child Safe Policy

This policy addresses the Child Safe Standards set out by the Royal Commission and the ten key National Principles with the addition of the three key principles from the Victorian 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. (Registration Application or Registered schools) This policy aims to provide an outcome focused organisational culture and response to child safety.

Standard 1 – Child safety and wellbeing embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

Our Commitment to Child Safety

Our organisation is committed to child safety.

All management, staff, educators, volunteers and the Board of Management are responsible for the Duty of Care for all students and the Child Safe Standards of the centre.

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.

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.

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.

1.1 Our policy is publicly available on our website and our organisation is committed to child safety.

1.2 Training is provided across all levels of the organisation including; BOM, Management, Administration Staff, Early Childhood Staff, Educators and Volunteers. This training results in an inclusive approach to organisational culture and sets a behavioural attitude when working with children.

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

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

All of our 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 regards to the ongoing development of FLC's *Code of Conduct*.

1.5 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.

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

Standard 2 – Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

Our Children and Young People

2.1 This policy is intended to empower children and young people who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We will take into consideration the opinions of children and young people and use their opinions to develop child protection policies and procedures.

2.2 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

2.3 Students are to be advised how to access sexual abuse prevention programs

2.4 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

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

Standard 3 – Families and communities are informed and involved

3.1 Welfare communicate with parents/caregivers to provide information that is agreed upon and when appropriate families will participate in decision making process.

3.2 Welfare staff or the General Manager Youth will engage in conversations with families and external organisations who may need to be informed in relation to student safety.

3.3 Families and the community are welcomed to contribute to policies and procedures. FLC encourages families to provide feedback on any organisational policy or procedure.

3.4 As referenced in the Ministerial Order 870. Section 9 our Child Safety Code of Conduct promotes safety in the education environment, is written in the best interest of the staff and the needs of students and is publicly available on our website.

Standard 4 - Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account

Our organisational culture aims 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

Standard 5 – People working with children are suitable and supported

Recruitment

5.1, 5.2 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.

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 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

5.3, 5.4 All staff are inducted into the organisation (refer to induction policy and induction document) and provided with appropriate information regarding the child safety standards. 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.

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.

Privacy

Standard 6 – Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused

Legislative Responsibilities

6.1, 6.2, 6.3 In line with the mandatory reporting obligations set out in the 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.
- **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.

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.

Standard 7 – Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skill and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.

Identifying

7.1 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.

Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

7.2, 7.3 Our organisation 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.

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



Standard 8 – Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur

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). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children and young people.

8.1 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.

8.2 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.

Standard 9 – Implementation of the child safe standards is continuously reviewed and improved

Regular Review

9.1, 9.2 This policy will be reviewed annually in accordance with the RC Standards and the National Principles as well as the Victorian Standards and following significant incidents. 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.

Standard 10 – Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe

10.1 This policy was created in line with all child safe standards, the national principles for child safe organisations and the Victorian standards.

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

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

10.4 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.

Related documents

Procedure for reporting suspected child abuse

Procedure for reporting suspected child abuse within Foundation Learning Centre

Child Safety Statement

Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct