

POLICY/PROCEDURE NAME & REVIEW PROCESS	<p>VICTORIA-CHILD PROTECTION POLICY</p> <p>This policy and procedure have been created to provide all stakeholders with clear guidelines and transparency to our practices and procedures.</p> <p>We welcome feedback and input from all stakeholders at any time, and this policy is subject to review based on feedback or due date of annual review.</p>
NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD	<p>QUALITY AREA 2- CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND SAFETY</p> <p>2.2 Safety</p> <p>2.2.1 Supervision</p> <p>2.2.2 Incident and emergency management</p> <p>2.2.3 – Child protection</p>
NATIONAL LAW AND REGULATIONS	<p>84- Awareness of child protection</p> <p>155- Interactions with children</p> <p>168 (2) (ha) – Safe use of digital technologies and online environments</p> <p>170-Policies and procedures to be followed</p> <p>171-Policies and procedures to be kept available</p> <p>172- Notification of change to policies or procedure</p> <p>175 (c)(d)(e)-Prescribed information to be notified to the Regulatory Authority</p> <p>176- Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority</p> <p>Section 166 A- Offences relating to inappropriate conduct.</p>
RELATED POLICIES and RECORDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child Protection Incident Record. ▪ Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. ▪ Code of Conduct Declaration Record. ▪ Code of Conduct Policy. ▪ Child Injury on Arrival Record. ▪ National Model Code Policy. ▪ Safe Use of Digital Technology and Online Environments Policy. ▪ Staff Schedule Record. ▪ Victoria Child Protection Reporting Procedure
SCOPE OF POLICY	<p>This policy applies to all children, educators, staff, families, management, students, volunteers, and visitors at our service.</p>
AIM OF POLICY	<p>To ensure that our service has strong guidelines, procedures, and practices in place regarding child protection. Our aim is to ensure a child-safe environment through strong, documented and consistently applied guidelines, procedures and practices that set out how to recognise, respond to, and report child protection concerns for all children attending our service.</p> <p>Children will be supported to understand their rights, feel safe to speak up about concerns, and be actively involved in decisions affecting their safety and wellbeing in developmentally appropriate ways. Our aim is to provide a clear policy, implement the policy, support practices relating to the policy, train staff regarding the policy and maintain and update the compliance of the policy for all our stakeholders.</p> <p>Through the implementation of our policies and procedures, we aim to meet National Law & National Regulations, National Quality Standards, Child Safe Standards and National Principles. We will promote cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, safety for children with disability, and inclusion for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.</p>
SERVICE IMPLEMENTATION	<p>Implementation</p> <p>The safety, wellbeing, rights and best interests of children are the paramount consideration in all aspects of the operation and delivery of education and care at the service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This principle applies to all individuals involved in the provision of early childhood education and care, including the Approved Provider, persons with management or control, the Nominated Supervisor, responsible persons, educators, staff, students, volunteers and contractors. ▪ The service acknowledges that the safety, wellbeing and rights of children must always prevail above all other interests, and all persons involved in the service are required to act in a manner that prioritises and protects children at all times. ▪ Management acknowledges recent amendments to the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations which strengthen requirements relating to child safe environments, child protection training, governance and accountability.

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The Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor are responsible for promoting and maintaining a culture of child safety and wellbeing within the service.

They will ensure the following:

Leadership, Governance and Child Safe Culture

- Ensure compliance with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and relevant Child Safe Standards in each state or territory.
- Ensure that there are systems in place to protect children from abuse, ensure that all allegations of abuse are taken very seriously and that they are responded to consistently in line with the **child protection policy** (state specific) and **child safety and wellbeing policy** (state specific) and all procedures.
- Ensure that all management, employees of the service are aware of their roles and responsibilities in regard to identifying and responding to every child at risk of abuse or neglect and as such are aware of the existence and application of the current child protection law and any obligations that they may have under that law. Management will be diligent on providing further information due to regulatory changes through staff training, staff meetings and by regularly auditing staff schedule record to ensure compliance to regulation. Ensure that all employees maintain child protection training at least annually.
- Ensure that child safety and wellbeing is a regular agenda on the staff meeting schedule.
- Adequate supervision will be embedded practice in our service in order to ensure that the children are protected from harm and hazard. Management will monitor and audit these practices on a regular basis. Risk assessments will be in place for all areas that require a higher level of supervision.
- Management will take all precautions to ensure that employees aren't left on their own or are in situations of high stress with inadequate support.

Promotion of a Child Safe Culture

- We will ensure that management and employees promote cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, inclusive of the safety and inclusion of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and provide a safe and inclusive environment for children with disability. We will achieve this by implementing inclusive practices that respect and value the cultural identity, language, abilities and experiences of all children and families. Employees will promote respectful relationships, incorporate diverse perspectives within the program, and work collaboratively with families and relevant professionals to support each child's participation, wellbeing and sense of belonging. These practices align with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, which support environments where children feel safe, respected, valued and empowered.

Visitors, contractors, consultants, maintenance, external providers and incursion providers

must adhere to the following and will be monitored by approved provider and /or nominated supervisor. Approved Provider and nominated supervisor will take reasonable steps to ensure that all third-party providers understand and comply with the service's child safe practices and expectations while attending the service.

- All visitors must report to management on arrival and sign the student volunteer visitor attendance record.
- Contractors and visitors will be supervised by a staff member at all times when present in areas accessible to children unless they hold a valid Working With Children Check and have been authorised by management.
- Visitors and contractors must not be left alone with children or assume responsibility for the supervision of children at any time.
- Management will ensure appropriate risk assessments are undertaken prior to incursions, excursions or external programs conducted at the service.
- Full identification, confirmation of WWCC and purpose of visit must be confirmed prior to entry into children's environments.
- Where relevant, evidence of appropriate clearances, qualifications or insurances will be verified prior to engagement.

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- Educators will maintain active supervision of children during incursions and external programs to ensure children remain safe at all times.

Digital and Online Safety

Definition of Devices

For the purpose of this policy, a device refers to any electronic equipment capable of capturing, storing, receiving or transmitting images or video recordings, regardless of whether those functions are currently enabled or disabled.

Devices that fall within this definition may include, but are not limited to:

- Mobile phones or smartphones
- Smartwatches that are capable of receiving, storing or transmitting images, even where a camera is not present.
- Tablets or similar handheld devices
- Laptop or desktop computers
- Digital cameras or video recording devices
- Wearable technology such as smart glasses or camera-enabled glasses
- USB storage devices
- Memory cards
- External or portable hard drives

Personal Devices- is any device owned, controlled or brought to the service by an individual, including educators, staff, students, volunteers, contractors or visitors, which is capable of capturing, storing or transmitting images or video recordings.

Personal devices include but are not limited to the devices listed above and do not include devices supplied or formally authorised by the service for operational purposes.

Service-Supplied Devices

A service-supplied device refers to any device that:

- Has been provided by the Approved Provider for use within the service,
- It is used specifically for the purpose of capturing, storing or transmitting images or video recordings as part of the delivery of education and care, and
- It has been configured and secured in accordance with the service’s policies relating to child safety, privacy and device security.
- Service-supplied devices must only be used for activities related to the provision of education and care and must not be used for personal purposes.
- Service-supplied devices must remain under the control of the service and may only be removed from the premises where authorised by the Approved Provider for legitimate service purposes.
- Devices supplied by the service are allocated for use within that particular service and should not be shared between different services. However, where a device is used for administrative, governance or operational purposes that do not involve the direct supervision or care of children, it may be used across multiple services operated by the same Approved Provider, provided that such use is authorised and clearly documented within service policies and procedures.

Examples of this may include:

An Approved Provider using a device across multiple services they operate.

A manager responsible for several services using a device to conduct compliance reviews or operational oversight.

Optical Surveillance Devices

Management recognises that optical surveillance devices include any device capable of capturing images or video recordings within the service environment. This may include, but is not limited to, closed-circuit television (CCTV), digital cameras, smartphones, tablets, wearable devices such as smart glasses or body-worn cameras, and any other device capable of recording images or video.

The use of optical surveillance devices within the service will only occur for legitimate operational, safety, or security purposes and must comply with privacy and child safety requirements.

Where surveillance systems such as CCTV are used, management will ensure that:

- Families, staff, and visitors are informed of the presence of surveillance devices.
- Signage will inform families of the presence of cameras throughout the service.
- Surveillance is used only for safety, security, and operational purposes.

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- Recordings are stored securely and access is restricted to authorised persons.
- Recordings are managed in accordance with privacy legislation and in line with the **camera surveillance policy**.
- Any unauthorised recording of children, educators, or service activities is strictly prohibited and may be treated as a breach of policy and professional conduct.

Appropriate Use of Technology

Technology will only be used to support learning, communication with families, or service administration.

- Management will regularly review emerging technologies to ensure that new digital devices do not pose a risk to children’s privacy, safety, or wellbeing.
- Management will implement and monitor safe practices regarding the use of digital technologies within the service environment as per the **safe use of digital technology and online environments policy** ensuring that all employees are adhering to the appropriate use of service supplied technology, personal technology and online social and service platforms used for educational documentation or communication with families.
- Ensure that where optical surveillance devices are used within the service, closed-circuit television (CCTV), they will be used only to support supervision and the safety of children and staff as per the **camera surveillance policy**. Employees, families and contractors will be advised that no personal optical surveillance technology is to be used in the service.
- Surveillance devices will not be used in private areas such as bathrooms, nappy change areas or sleep areas where children’s privacy must be maintained. The use of surveillance technology will comply with privacy legislation and service policies.
- CCTV cameras may be installed in childrens rooms for safety and security purposes. Where these rooms are also used for rest or sleep periods, cameras will be positioned and used in a way that protects children’s privacy and dignity in accordance with regulation 155- interactions with children and will not replace the requirement for active supervision under **regulation 122**. Cameras will not be directed at sleeping children or positioned directly above cots or beds, and footage will only be accessed for legitimate safety or incident-management purposes.

External Providers

For the protection, safety, privacy and wellbeing of children, **Visitors, contractors, consultants, maintenance, external providers and incursion providers** must comply with the service’s requirements regarding the use of mobile phones, laptops, tablets and other electronic devices while on the premises. The Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor will ensure that all visitors are informed of these expectations prior to commencing work or activities at the service.

- Visitors must not use mobile phones, cameras or recording devices to photograph, film or record children at the service.
- Contractors and visitors must not use personal digital devices in areas where children are present unless authorised by the Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider.
- Where contractors require the use of laptops or electronic devices for work purposes e.g. maintenance, IT support, service audits, they must do so in a manner that does not compromise the supervision, safety or privacy of children.
- Any use of recording devices, surveillance equipment or technology capable of capturing images or audio must be approved by management prior to use.
- Visitors must follow all service policies relating to privacy, child protection and the safe use of digital technology while on the premises.
- The use of wearable recording devices or technology capable of capturing images, video or audio -such as smart glasses, body cameras, smart watches with recording capability or similar devices is not permitted within the service unless expressly authorised by the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor for approved service purposes.

Child Participation

- Ensure a zero tolerance for child abuse, and we will actively work to listen to and empower children to have a voice. Ensure children are supported to express their views and participate in decisions affecting their wellbeing. Educators will listen to children respectfully, encourage children to speak up if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable and support children to develop an understanding of personal safety and trusted adults.

Safe Recruitment and Screening

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- Ensure that employee recruitment is thoroughly conducted according to the **staff recruitment policy**. All aspects of employing staff are followed recorded and that no corners are cut when onboarding staff. All employees must have a WWCC are in place prior to starting at the service and all aspects of validating and continual checking by management of WWCC are conducted according to state specific requirements.

Must include, but are not limited to:

- Including child safe criteria in job advertisements and position descriptions.
- Ensuring staff (including volunteers, students and other staff) have a verified WWCC through the state applicable portal or online website.
- Verifying through the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQA ITS) if an individual is a prohibited person (Section 188), or subject to a suspension or supervision notice under Section 178(4)(c)(i).
- Verifying qualifications including early childhood education and first aid, assessing their legitimacy by carefully reviewing certificates and transcripts. Check for spelling errors, consistency, Registered Training Organisation (RTO) validation and ensure the qualification is ACECQA-approved.
- Validating qualifications through reliable sources and systems. This may involve confirming training details via the applicant’s USI portal or checking the National Training Register to ensure the RTO was operating at the time of issue and not subject to any actions by the Australian Skills Quality Authority -ASQA.
- Requesting a National Police Check, i.e., a national criminal history check as an additional screening measure to complement the legislation of WWCC.
- Include scenario-based questions in interviews to assess the individual’s child-safe commitment and knowledge.
- Collect at least 2 verbal reference checks from previous employers, including the most recent, to verify the applicant’s work history and experience, and confirm their conduct, integrity and suitability to work with children. Reference checks should include specific enquiries about: any reportable allegations, prior allegations or concerns related to child safety or misconduct, the person’s knowledge of the child safe standards, including their understanding of mandatory reporting obligations.
- Keep a written record of verbal reference checks.
- Ongoing monitoring and supervision during but not limited to the induction period.

Code of Conduct and Professional Boundaries

- Ensure all employees, volunteers and students comply with the service **code of conduct policy** and that there is a signed **code of conduct declaration record** in place for all employees, Employees will maintain appropriate professional boundaries when interacting with children. Any behaviour that is inconsistent with child safe practices will be addressed immediately in accordance with service policies and procedures.

Family and Community Engagement

- Ensure that we work together with families to promote a culture of child safety and wellbeing. Display posters and information for employees and families throughout the service. Display **child safe standards poster**, child **safe standards public commitment poster code of ethics** and **United nations convention on the rights of the child** throughout the service.

Reporting and Complaints Procedures

- Ensure that children, families and employees are aware of how to raise concerns regarding child safety. All complaints or concerns relating to the safety or wellbeing of a child will be taken seriously and managed promptly in accordance with the **dealing with complaints policy** and will be followed up accordingly by management.

Keeping children safe is everyone’s responsibility. It is our obligation to ensure that staff who work with children in the service have clear guidelines and practices that reflect this responsibility.

Mandatory Child Safety Training

All educators, staff members, volunteers and students engaged in the provision of early childhood education and care are required to complete mandatory national child safety training to support the protection and wellbeing of children within education and care services.

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The National Child Safety Foundation training modules will be available through the Gecko learning platform from 27 February 2026, with Advanced training modules scheduled to become available from July 2026.

The Foundation training modules must be completed no later than **27 August 2026** by all persons involved in the operation or delivery of education and care, including:

- Persons with management or control of the service.
- Nominated supervisors.
- Persons in day-to-day charge.
- Educators, staff members, volunteers and students.

Completion of the national child safety training does not replace existing child protection training requirements that may apply within individual states or territories. Educators and staff must continue to meet any additional training obligations required by their relevant jurisdiction, including mandatory reporting and child protection training.

The service will ensure that staff are supported to complete the required training within the specified timeframes and that records of completed training are maintained as part of the service’s professional development and compliance records.

WWCC

- Educators, staff members and any other persons engaged at the service must notify the Approved Provider in writing if they receive a negative Working with Children Check notice.
- Staff must also notify the Approved Provider if there is any change to their teacher accreditation, registration or professional status. Notification must be provided within 72 hours of the event occurring or within 24 hours of becoming aware of the change, whichever occurs first.
- Where the Approved Provider becomes aware that an educator or staff member has received a negative Working with Children Check notice, or that their teacher accreditation or registration has changed, the Approved Provider must notify the relevant regulatory authority within the required timeframe.

OUTCOMES

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse concluded in December 2017 and resulted in significant national reforms aimed at strengthening child safety within organisations working with children. The results and recommendations for, in particular childcare services is as such, staff and management must actively manage the risks of child abuse offences being committed against children in their care.

This means that staff and management within childcare services will be held accountable for their actions, and they must ensure that they place the safety and welfare of all children primarily.

The development of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles) is a key national reform in response to these recommendations.

The principles have been endorsed by all commonwealth, state, and territory governments.

The National Principles emphasise the importance of culturally safe environments and practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities are more likely to access services that are culturally safe and experience better outcomes in such services.

Keeping children safe is everyone’s responsibility. It is our obligation to ensure that staff who work with children in the service have clear guidelines and practices that reflect this responsibility.

The national framework for protecting Australia’s Children 2009- 2020 have adopted the following.

Outcomes:

- Children live in safe and supportive families and communities.
- Children and families access adequate support to promote safety and intervene early.
- Risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed.
- Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing.
- Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities.
- Child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented, and survivors receive adequate support.

National Principles

National Principles have been adopted by the government in all states and territories across Australia.

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The Child Safe Standards and National Principles for Child Safe Organisations both aim to create environments where children are safe from harm, but they have some key differences in their scope, application, and origin.

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission, endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child

Sexual Abuse.

- Provide a nationally consistent framework for child safety across all Australian states and territories.
- Designed as best-practice guidelines rather than strict legal requirements (though some jurisdictions integrate them into legislation).
- Broader in scope, applying to all organisations engaging with children, including sports clubs, religious groups, schools, and charities.

Child Safe Standards

- Developed at the state and territory level in Australia.
- They vary between states (e.g., Victoria, NSW, and other jurisdictions have their own versions).
- Legally enforceable in some jurisdictions, meaning organisations must comply with them.
- Focus on practical, specific actions to protect children in organisations.
- Often linked to regulatory requirements and audits.

Key Differences

Feature	Child Safe Standards	National Principles
Jurisdiction	State/territory-based	Nationally endorsed
Legal Status	Enforceable in some states	Best-practice guidelines (but may be legislated)
Detail Level	Specific compliance actions	High-level principles
Purpose	Ensure child safety in organisations	Provide a national framework for child safety

Child Safe Standards Victoria

- Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
- Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture.
- Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
- Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
- People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
- Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
- Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
- Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

Indicators

It is not always easy to recognise that a child is being hurt or is at risk, so abuse is often undetected. There are indicators (signs, symptoms, or clues) that when found, either on their own or in various combinations, can point to abuse, neglect, or family violence.

Child abuse and neglect refers to any behaviour or treatment by parents, caregivers, other adults, or older adolescents that results in the actual and/or likelihood of causing physical or emotional harm to a child or young person.

Child abuse and neglect is commonly divided into subtypes:

- Physical abuse

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- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual abuse
- Domestic violence

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse can be caused from punching, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, burning, or throwing the child. Physical abuse may also result from excessive or inappropriate discipline or violence within the family and is considered abuse regardless of whether or not it was intended to hurt the child. Physical abuse may be the result of a single episode or of a series of episodes.

Injuries to a child may vary in severity and range from minor bruising, burns, welts or bite marks, major fractures of the long bones or skull, to its most extreme form, the death of a child.

Physical Abuse Indicators

Behavioural indicators can be displayed by a child or by the alleged abuser.

Indicators do not necessarily prove that a child has been harmed. They alert us that abuse may have occurred and that a child may require help or protection. Sometimes indicators can result from life events that do not involve abuse, such as divorce, accidental injury, the arrival of a new sibling etc. There may be physical indicators that a child is being abused.

Some examples of this are:

- Unexplained bruises, welts, cuts, abrasions.
- Unexplained burns.
- Unexplained fractures or disclosures.

There may also be indicators in a child’s behaviour that could indicate physical abuse.

Some examples of this are:

- Is wary of adults or of a particular individual.
- Is violent to animals or other children.
- Is dressed inappropriately to hide bruises or other injuries.
- May be extremely aggressive or extremely withdrawn.
- Cannot recall how the injuries occurred or gives inconsistent explanations.

There may be indicators in adult behaviour that could indicate physical abuse.

Some examples of this are:

- May be vague about the details of the cause of injury and the account of the injury may change from time to time.
- May blame the accident on a sibling, friend, relative or the injured child.
- Shakes an infant.
- Threats or attempts to injure a child.
- Is aggressive towards a child in front of others.
- May delay in seeking medical attention for a child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse occurs when a child’s emotional, psychological, or social well-being and sense of worth is continually battered.

It can include a pattern of criticising, rejecting, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting, and terrorising a child. It may result from exposure to family violence or involvement in illegal or anti-social activities.

Emotional abuse is always present when other forms of abuse occur.

The effects of this form of abuse are not always immediate or visible. The long-lasting effects of emotional abuse may only become evident as a child becomes older and begins to show difficult or disturbing behaviours or symptoms.

Emotional Indicators

There may be physical indicators that a child is being emotionally abused.

Some examples of this are:

- Bed-wetting or bed soiling that has no medical cause.
- Frequent psychosomatic complaints (e.g., Headaches, nausea, abdominal pains)
- Prolonged vomiting or diarrhoea.
- Has not attained significant developmental milestones.
- Dressed differently from other children in the family.
- Has deprived physical living conditions compared with other children in the family.

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There may also be indicators in a child’s behaviour that could indicate emotional abuse.

Some examples of this are:

- Suffers from severe developmental gaps.
- Severe symptoms of depression, anxiety, withdrawal, or aggression.
- Severe symptoms of self-destructive behaviour- self harm.
- Overly compliant; too well-mannered; too neat and clean.
- Displays attention seeking behaviours or displays extreme inhibition in play.
- When at play, behaviour may model or copy negative behaviour and language used at home.

There may be indicators in adult behaviour that could indicate emotional abuse.

Some examples of this are:

- Constantly calls the child names, labels the child, or publicly humiliates the child.
- Continually threatens the child with physical harm or forces the child to witness physical harm inflicted on a loved one.
- Has unrealistic expectations of the child.
- Involves the child in “adult issues,” such as separation or access issues.

Neglect

Neglect is a pattern of behaviour which occurs over a period of time and results in impaired functioning or development of a child. It is the failure to provide for a child’s basic needs.

Neglect may be:

- Physical - failure to provide necessary basic needs of food, shelter, or warmth.
- Medical - failure to seek, obtain or follow through with medical care for the child.
- Abandonment - leaving a child young person in any situation without arranging necessary care for them and with no intention of returning.
- Neglectful supervision – failure to provide developmentally appropriate or legally required supervision.
- Refusal to assume parental responsibility - unwillingness or inability to provide appropriate care for a child.

Neglect indicators.

There may be physical indicators that a child is being neglected.

Some examples of this are:

- Inappropriately dressed for the weather.
- Extremely dirty or unbathed.
- Inadequately supervised or left alone for unacceptable periods of time.
- Malnourished.
- May have severe nappy rash or other persistent skin disorders or rashes resulting from improper care or lack of hygiene.

There may also be indicators in a child’s behaviour that could indicate neglect.

Some examples of this are:

- Demonstrates severe lack of attachment to other adults.
- Poor attendance at childcare or performance at childcare.
- Poor social skills.
- May steal food.
- Is very demanding of affection or attention.
- Has no understanding of basic hygiene.

There may be indicators in adult behaviour that could indicate neglect.

Some examples of this are:

- Fails to provide for the child’s basic needs, such as housing, nutrition, medical and psychological care.
- Leaves the child home alone.
- Is overwhelmed with own problems and puts own needs ahead of the child’s needs.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse includes acts or behaviours where an adult, older or more powerful person uses a child for a sexual purpose.

While it may involve a stranger, most sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone the child knows and trusts.

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It includes any touching for sexual purpose, fondling of breasts, buttocks, genitals, oral sex, sexual intercourse, an adult exposing themselves to the child, or seeking to have a child touch them for a sexual purpose. It also includes voyeurism, photographing children inappropriately, involving the child in pornographic activities or prostitution or using the internet and phone to initiate sexual conversations with children.

Sexual abuse indicators

There may be physical indicators that a child is being sexually abused.

Some examples of this are:

- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing.
- Bruises, lacerations, redness, swelling or bleeding in genital, vaginal or anal area.
- Blood in urine or faeces.
- Sexually transmitted disease.
- Unusual or excessive itching or pain in the genital or anal area.

There may also be indicators in a child’s behaviour that could indicate sexual abuse.

Some examples of this in young children are:

- Age-inappropriate sexual play with toys, self, others.
- Bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge.
- Comments such as “I’ve got a secret,” or “I don’t like Uncle.”
- Fire lighting by boys.
- Fear of certain places e.g., bedroom or bathroom.

Some examples of this in older children are:

- Eating disorders.
- Promiscuity or prostitution.
- Uses younger children in sexual acts.
- Tries to make self as unattractive as possible.

There may be indicators in adult behaviour that could indicate sexual abuse.

Some examples of this are:

- May be unusually over-protective of a child.
- Is jealous of a child’s relationships with peers or other adults or is controlling of the child.
- May favour the victim over other children.
- Demonstrates physical contact or affection to a child which appears sexual in nature or has sexual overtones.

Domestic Violence

1 in 4 children are exposed to domestic violence. It is important to note that domestic violence impacts on a child’s life. The impact of domestic violence can have long term effects. If family needs assistance advise them to call the Domestic violence line – 1800 811 811 who can assist them further.

Domestic violence can affect children in the following ways but are not limited to:

- Behavioural problems
- Poor academic outcomes.
- Learning difficulties
- Low self-esteem.
- Ongoing anxiety and depression.
- Eating and sleeping disturbances.
- Physical symptoms, such as headaches and stomach aches.
- May be aggressive towards friends.
- Use bullying behaviour or become a target of bullying.

Who is mandated to report?

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

- Family violence.
- Registered medical practitioners.
- Nurses, including midwives.
- Victorian police officers.
- Registered teachers and school principals.
- Out of home care workers (excluding voluntary foster and kinship carers)

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- Early childhood workers.
- Youth justice workers.
- Registered psychologists.
- School counsellors.
- People in religious ministry.

What must be reported?

Mandatory reporting is the legislative requirement for selected classes of people to make a report to child protection and/or Victoria police where they form a reasonable belief, that a child has been or is at risk of significant harm, as a result of physical or sexual abuse, and the child’s parents have not protected or are unlikely to protect the child from that abuse.

It is a criminal offence to fail to report in these circumstances. In Victoria (Vic) mandatory reporting is regulated by the *children youth and families act 2005*.

Reportable

- You have received a disclosure from a child about abuse or neglect.
- You have observed indicators of abuse or neglect.
- You have been made aware of harm via your involvement in the community external to your professional role.

All team members of the service are committed to responding immediately and appropriately to any concerns regarding the safety, wellbeing or protection of children. Where a concern, allegation or incident arises, the service must notify the appropriate authority based on the nature of the concern. Multiple notifications may be required for a single incident. In the event of a disclosure or observation in the service employees must follow the procedure outlined below- see quick reference flowchart printable document at end of policy **Appendix A** for further reference.

PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING

Child Safety Reporting Pathway

- Ensure immediate safety.
- Determine the nature of concern.
- Mandatory reporting.
- Regulatory authority notification.
- Reportable conduct.
- Documentation.

Disclosure of harm procedure.

If an educator suspects child abuse, they must immediately report their suspicions to the nominated supervisor/ approved provider and then the child will be supported through the following procedure: However, if a child is deemed to be at immediate risk the Police must be called immediately.

- Move to a suitable environment, free of distractions.
- Stay calm and patient—let the child speak at their own pace.
- Let the child to use their own words—avoid asking leading questions.
- Don’t quiz the child about details of the abuse.
- Don’t be afraid of saying the “wrong” thing. Listening supportively is more important than what you say.
- Reassure the child that it is OK that they have told you what’s been happening.
- Address any concerns about the child’s safety.
- Reassure the child that he or she is not at fault.
- Respect that the child may only reveal some details.
- Acknowledge the child’s bravery and strength.
- Avoid making promises you can’t keep—manage the child or young person’s expectations.
- Explain to the child or young person that in order for them to be safe you will need to report their experience to someone else.
- Report immediately to your nominated supervisor.
- Keep the child with you if they don’t want to be left alone.
- While everything is fresh in your mind document it on the *child protection incident record* recording their concerns in a non-judgmental and accurate manner as soon as possible -It is recommended that ECEC services use *responding to suspected child abuse template* for all Victorian early childhood services

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- It is important to note that once you have reported this doesn't relieve you of your duty of care for the child.
- Staff must keep confidentiality at all times and follow advice regarding disclosing information to the family as per four critical actions.

Step 1 – Ensure Immediate Safety

If a child disclose abuse or you have been made aware of abuse the first step is to ascertain if the child is in immediate danger.

- Ensure the child is safe.
- Separate the alleged victim and others involved, ensuring all parties are supervised by a service staff member.
- Alert Nominated Supervisor.
- Arrange or attend to child with medical assistance/ first aid if required.
- Remove any immediate risk where possible.
- Call 000 for an ambulance if required.
- Contact police if child is in immediate danger -000.
- Preserve any evidence/the environment/ witnesses must not discuss the incident with others.

Step 2 – Determine the Nature of the Concern

The Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider will determine whether the concern relates to:

- Suspected abuse or neglect by a parent or caregiver.
- An incident or allegation occurring within the service.
- Inappropriate conduct by a staff member or volunteer.

Each situation has different reporting requirements.

Reporting to Authorities

Important: Separate Reporting Obligations

See step 3, 4 and 5 below.

Step 3 – Mandatory Reporting to Child Protection

Where educators form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection, a report must be made to the relevant Child Protection authority.

In Victoria this authority is: Department of Families, Fairness and Housing DFFH-Child Protection

Mandatory reports must be made when a child is believed to be at risk due to:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Exposure to family violence.

Reports must be made as soon as practicable after forming the belief.

- Northern Division intake: 1300 664 977
- South Division Intake: 1300 655 795
- East Division intake: 1300 360 391
- West Division intake- Metropolitan: 1300 664 977
- West Division intake- Rural and regional: 1800 075 599

Step 4 – Notification to the Childcare Regulatory Authority

Under the Education and Care Services National Law, Approved Providers must notify the Regulatory Authority of certain incidents.

Approved Provider must ensure that where a staff member, volunteer, or contractor is suspected of causing harm, posing a risk of harm, or engaging in conduct that may place a child at risk, the Approved Provider will notify the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of becoming aware of the allegation or suspicion, in line with regulatory and reportable conduct requirements.

In Victoria the Regulatory Authority is: Victorian Department of Education

The Approved Provider must notify the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours if:

- An incident involving physical or sexual abuse occurs while the child is being educated and cared for by the service.
- There is an allegation of abuse occurring at the service.
- A serious incident occurs involving a child.

Step 5 – Reportable Conduct Notification

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If the allegation involves a staff member, volunteer, contractor or worker, the service may be required to report the matter under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
 In Victoria the oversight body is the Commission for Children and Young People.
 The Approved Provider must notify the Commission as soon as possible once becoming aware of the allegation.

Reportable conduct may include:

- sexual offences
- sexual misconduct
- physical violence
- significant emotional or psychological harm
- significant neglect.

Step 6 – Document the Incident

All concerns, disclosures and reports must be documented accurately and confidentially on the *child protection incident record*.

Documentation must include:

- Date and time of incident or disclosure.
- Details of the concern
- Actions taken.
- Authorities notified.

Records must be stored securely in accordance with privacy and record keeping requirements.

Step 7 Contacting parents

You must consult with DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/ carers. They may advise:

- Not to contact parents/carers, in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parent/carer to be contacted OR Contact the parents/carers and provide agreed information as soon as possible for licensed and approved services it is a requirement that parents/ carers be notified within 24 hours if the suspected abuse occurred at the service.

Step 8 – Ongoing Monitoring and Support

Following a report, management and staff will:

- Take reasonable steps to make a child feel safe and supported whilst they are attending the service.
- Cooperate with authorities.
- Monitor risks within the environment and implement risk assessment record if required.
- Implement any recommendations made by authorities.
- Ensure that confidentiality is maintained at all times.
- The Approved Provider/ Nominated Supervisor should also consider providing support for children impacted by abuse. E.g., referral to wellbeing professionals.

Please note: If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing you must still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from Child FIRST (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support), or to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police.

Under the Failure to Disclose offence (Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)), any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 must report that belief to Victoria Police, unless a lawful exemption applies.

Protection for Employees

The Child Protection Act 1999 offers the following protections for mandatory reporters when you provide information about a child who may need protection, or an unborn child who may need protection.

- Your identity will not be disclosed unless the disclosure of your identity is permitted under limited exceptions.
- You cannot be held legally liable (for example, for criminal prosecution or a civil suit for defamation or breach of privacy) if you are acting honestly and reasonably.
- You cannot be held professionally liable (for example, for disciplinary action) if you are acting honestly and reasonably.

In the event of an allegation of abuse against a staff member

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Accusations of abuse or suspected abuse against educators, staff members, and volunteers, the nominated supervisor or approved provider will be treated in the same way as allegations against other people.

When an allegation is received, the Approved Provider must immediately ensure the safety of the child and notify the relevant authorities.

The service will cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by Child Protection, Victoria Police, the Regulatory Authority or the Commission for Children and Young People.

The Approved Provider may undertake internal employment management actions where required, however the investigation of alleged abuse may be conducted by the relevant authorities.

- If an accusation is made against a staff member it must be reported immediately to the nominated supervisor or approved provider.
- In the event that the nominated supervisor is involved in the abuse then the report must be made to the approved provider.

Any person involved in the service is a mandatory reporter if they suspect someone involved in the service of abuse of a child then they must follow the procedure as per below:

- It is important that any notification remains confidential, as it is vitally important to remember that no confirmation of any allegation can be made until the matter is investigated.
- At no time should the notifier inform the individual they have made the notification. This is to ensure that the matter can be investigated without prior knowledge and contamination of evidence.
- When an allegation is received, the approved provider needs to conduct an immediate investigation. An employee would be stood down whilst this investigation is conducted.

Whilst the investigation is being conducted it is important to consider the following:

- Record all findings and document on the **child protection incident record** and complete the Protect Child Abuse Recording Template. available treasure chest or online. [EarlyChildhood_ReportingTemplate.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/ReportingTemplate.pdf)
- Take all allegations of abuse seriously and clarify what is being alleged with the person who is making the allegation.
- Assess whether or not a child or young person is at risk of significant harm.

Investigation procedure

Approved provider / nominated supervisor will.

- Interview relevant witnesses and gather relevant documentation.
- Provide a letter of allegation to the accused staff member.
- Provide the employee with the opportunity to provide a response to the allegations either in writing or at interview.
- Inform the employee of the preliminary finding in writing and provide them with a further opportunity to respond or make a further submission prior to the matter moving to final findings.
- Consider any response provided by the employee.
- Decide on disciplinary action, if any, to be taken against the accused.
- The steps outlined above may need to be varied on occasion to meet circumstances. For example, it may be necessary to take different steps based on the advice of the department of communities or crisis care.
- The employee may have an appropriate support person with them during the interview process. Such a person is there for support only and as a witness to the proceedings and not as an advocate or to take an active role.

What information will be provided to the employee?

- That an allegation has been made against them (at the appropriate time in the investigation)
- Of the substance of the allegation or of any preliminary finding and any final finding.

The employee does not automatically have the right to:

- Know or have confirmed the identity of the person who made the allegation.
- Be shown the content of the office of children’s guardian notification form or other investigation material that reveals all information provided by other employees or witnesses.

The employer will ensure that:

- They give the employee a reasonable opportunity to respond before a final decision is made.
- Will always ensure that confidentiality is kept.

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- Records about allegations of reportable conduct against employees will be kept in a secure area.
- No employee may comment to the media about an allegation of reportable conduct.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children - Additional Considerations

Cultural Rights and Identity

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have specific rights to maintain their cultural identity and community connections. These children have the right to grow up with a sense of belonging, stable identity, and knowledge of their place in relation to family, community, land and culture.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP)

All child protection decisions involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children must consider the five core elements of the ATSICPP:

- Prevention - Supporting families and communities to prevent the need for child protection intervention.
- Partnership - Working collaboratively with Aboriginal families and communities.
- Placement - Prioritising placement with Aboriginal families and carers when out-of-home care is necessary.
- Participation - Ensuring Aboriginal families and communities participate in decision-making.
- Connection - Maintaining children's connections to family, community, culture and country.

Practice Requirements

When suspected abuse involves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, staff must:

- Consider the importance of cultural connections when assessing the child's safety and wellbeing.
- Consult with Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) where available.
- Prioritise support and placement decisions that involve Aboriginal families and communities.
- Respect the rights of Aboriginal families and communities in the decision-making process.

Mandatory Reporting- obligations arise under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 Victoria. The legal obligation to report suspected child abuse remains unchanged. All suspected abuse must be reported to child protection authorities immediately, while ensuring these additional cultural considerations are incorporated into the response and ongoing case management.

Each member of the team plays an important role in the implementation of each policies guidelines, and they are outlined as below but not limited to the following:

The Approved Provider

- Will ensure specified systems are in place for preventing, detecting, and responding to reportable allegations or convictions.
- Must ensure systems are in place to track and monitor reportable conduct notifications, investigation progress, and final outcome reporting within legislated timeframes.
- Must as soon as practicable after receiving the reportable allegation/conviction, arrange for it to be investigated/determined.
- Will complete the investigation within a reasonable time, having regard to the principles of procedural fairness and the mandatory considerations.
- Must only provide information about the allegation, the progress of the investigation and the finding and action taken to the alleged victim and their parent/carer if DHHS or the police advise that it is in the best interests of the child to do so.
- Must ensure an appropriate level of confidentiality of information relating to reportable allegations and only disclose information about the allegations in circumstances permitted by the Act or other legislation.
- Will ensure that where a staff member, volunteer, or contractor is suspected of causing harm, posing a risk of harm, or engaging in conduct that may place a child at risk, the approved provider will notify the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of becoming aware of the allegation or suspicion, in line with regulatory and reportable conduct requirements.
- Will ensure that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met.
- Will ensure they take reasonable steps to ensure that the nominated supervisor, educators, staff, and volunteers follow the policy and procedures.

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- Will ensure they provide the nominated supervisor, educators, staff and volunteers the documentation to perform their role, follow policy, procedure, and document according to regulatory and service requirements.
- Will ensure that adequate induction process is provided to all staff to ensure they have time to read and understand policies and procedures and seek further information if unsure.
- Will ensure that the nominated supervisor and staff are equipped with ongoing professional development and training they require to comply with this policy.
- Will encourage feedback from stakeholders regarding the policy’s effectiveness, particularly in relation to identifying and responding to child safety concerns.
- Will ensure the policy is kept up to date with current legislation, research, and best practice.

The Nominated Supervisor

- Will ensure all potential staff are screened prior to employment – confirming previous roles, interviewing previous employees, confirming qualifications, such as sighting original certification.
- Will ensure that all staff engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a relevant Working with Children Check and provide evidence of this check prior to employment.
- Must conduct online requirements for confirming WWCC and maintain a staff schedule that is current and up to date by revising it at least twice annually.
- Must provide staff with a **code of conduct declaration** and a **position description**.
- Will have successfully completed a course in child protection approved by the regulatory authority.
- Will ensure that all staff participate in initial child protection and continually update their knowledge at least annually.
- Will be aware of indicators showing a child may be at risk of harm or significant risk of harm.
- Will be aware of the [Four Critical Actions](#) to follow when responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse.
- Will ensure all employees are provided with training and ongoing supervision to ensure they understand that child safety is everyone’s responsibility, and they adhere to the National Principals for Child Safe Organisations.
- Will participate in annual child protection training and be aware of Child Information Sharing, Family Violence Reforms and Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Management Framework (MARAM)
- Will adhere to and implement the obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations.
- Will ensure they take reasonable steps to ensure that the educators, staff, and volunteers follow the policy and procedures.
- Will ensure they provide the educators, staff and volunteers the documentation to perform their role, follow policy and procedure and ensure they are checking the documentation according to regulatory and service requirements.
- Will ensure that a rigorous recruitment process is completed, and a thorough induction process is provided to all staff to ensure they have time to read and understand policies and procedures and seek further information if unsure.
- Will ensure that the staff are supported with ongoing professional development and training they require to comply with this policy.
- Will encourage feedback from stakeholders and staff regarding the policy’s effectiveness, particularly in relation to identifying and responding to child safety concerns.
- Will ensure the policy is kept up to date with current legislation, research, and best practice.
- Will conduct regular staff meetings to address policy compliance with legislation, policy implementation, changes to policy and or collect feedback for annual review of policy.

Educators

- Will maintain current knowledge of child protection obligations and mandatory reporting responsibilities, and ensure they remain informed about relevant legislation, policies and procedures.
- Will raise any concerns regarding a child’s safety, wellbeing or possible abuse with the Nominated Supervisor or appropriate manager as soon as possible.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will when a concern cannot be raised with a supervisor, or where an educator believes appropriate action has not been taken, seek guidance or make a report to the relevant child protection authority in accordance with legal obligations. Will support children to feel safe and confident to speak with trusted adults within the service if they need help or wish to raise a concern and reassure children that they will be listened to and supported. Will participate in ongoing review and improvement of service policies and procedures, ensuring that practices continue to promote and strengthen child safety. Will ensure that if a parent arrives at the service with a child that has any visible injuries that the educator will ask that the parent completes a <i>child injury on arrival record</i>. Will ensure that they participate in initial child protection and continually update their knowledge at least annually. Will ensure that they understand and commit to mandatory reporting and if in any doubt refer their concerns to the nominated supervisor. Will adhere to and implement the obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations. Will ensure they take reasonable steps to follow the service policy and procedures and seek advice or further support if unsure. Will ensure they complete and document any related records regarding the implementation of this policy and practice requirements of the service. Will attend any ongoing professional development, staff meetings and training they require to comply with this policy and practice requirements of the service. Will provide feedback to the nominated supervisor or approved provider regarding the policy's effectiveness, particularly in relation to identifying and responding to child safety concerns. Will provide feedback regarding policy review when required.
REGULATION IMPLEMENTATION	The following procedures outline and support all stakeholders to understand and implement the regulatory guidelines of this policy.
In regard to Regulation 84- awareness of child protection.	<p>Approved Provider will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that nominated supervisor and all educators and staff at the service are aware of the current child protection law in the provider's jurisdiction and understand their obligations under that law. Ensure that nominated supervisor and all educators and staff are aware that it is an offence under the National Law to subject a child being educated and cared for by an approved service to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable in the circumstances. Be committed to ensuring that nominated supervisor and staff follow all Victorian government procedures to protect children within the service. Ensure that nominated supervisor and staff are aware of their commitment to child protection, their mandatory obligation and ensure there are clear procedures in place for reporting suspected child abuse as per this policy. Ensure nominated supervisor and staff keep up to date and comply with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy. Ensure practices are in place to ensure that all educators, staff, volunteers, and students hold a current Working with Children Check prior to commencement of employment. Ensure the nominated supervisor updates child protection annually. Ensure that no volunteers/students, parents/guardians, and other visitors to the service are left alone individual children or groups of children. Ensure that when the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the service premises. Ensure nominated supervisor, educators, staff, volunteers, and students undertake appropriate training and education on child protection, including recognising the signs and symptoms of child abuse know how to respond, and understand processes for reporting and managing concerns/incidents. Ensure the nominated supervisor understands their obligation of reporting any suspected harm or abuse of a child to the regulatory authority.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the child safe standards and procedures are implemented, the appropriate risk assessments and action plans are completed, and all identified actions are taken to minimise the risks to children’s health and safety. Ensure all staff have undertaken current child protection legislation training, including mandatory reporting requirements and obligations in Victoria. Ensure that there is a plan for training to be undertaken in a suitable timeframe and updated annually.
In regard to Regulation 155- Interactions with children.	<p>Approved Provider will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that staff provide an environment that encourages children to be free to express their opinions through active listening and open-ended questions when engaging with children. Ensure staff will engage in experiences that build self-esteem through gentle encouragement and guidance. Staff will encourage children to become self-sufficient through teaching skills and offering assistance to achieve skills when asked. Ensure staff will encourage positive behaviour through guidance and focussing on the behaviour and not the child. They will show patience and support at all times. Ensure that staff will feel confident to seek support from nominated supervisor when faced with adverse behaviour that they feel is out of their control and is placing children and staff in an unsafe situation. Ensure that all children are treated with respect at all times and ensure that staff are taking into account the abilities of each child based on their age, their family background, their culture, the child’s limitations regarding physical and intellectual development. They will treat all children equally and ensure their dignity and rights always. Ensure that staff are providing opportunities for all children to interact with other children from different age groups and develop relationships with staff members from other rooms.
In regard to regulation 170- Policies and procedures to be followed.	<p>Approved Provider will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all staff and volunteers are made aware of regulatory policies and procedures by ensuring that this forms a part of the induction process. Ensure probationary reviews will be conducted once new staff are appointed at the 3- month and 6-month mark to ensure that they are following policy and procedure and to review and revise regulatory policies. Ensure staff meetings will be conducted on a regular basis to allow for review of policy and procedure and further training and revision of procedural practices in relation to policy and procedure. Ensure annual review and revision of policies and procedures will be conducted, and all educators will be given the opportunity for input.
In regard to Regulation 171- Policies and procedures to be kept available.	<p>Approved Provider will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that policies and procedures are available to all staff and the location and availability will form a part of the induction process. Ensure policies will be available on request for all staff members to have access when required. Ensure policies will be available when required for staff members to download copies and/or print out if required in order to complete assignments or to form part of their research and/ or update their knowledge. Ensure policies will be available for all stakeholders when requested and when updating.
In regard to Regulation 172- Notification of change to policies or procedures	<p>Approved Provider will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure staff meetings will be conducted on a regular basis to allow for review of policy and procedure, provide further training and allow for input if required in relation to policy and procedure. Ensure stakeholders will be invited to provide feedback for policies and procedures at any time, not just on annual review but will also be invited to add feedback at review time or after an event that may require change to policy or procedure. Ensure policies and procedures will be emailed or put on display in the foyer for stakeholders to have the ability to provide feedback. Ensure feedback will be considered from stakeholders and educators and may result in a change in policy.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure policy and procedure may be changed at any time if there has been an incident in the service that has required a change to be implemented for the safety and health of children and or educators. Ensure in the event of a change to a policy after feedback or a situation that occurs, we will provide 14 days' notice to all stakeholders before the change takes effect.
In regard to Regulation 175(c)(d)(e)- Prescribed information to be notified to the Regulatory Authority and Regulation 176	<p>Approved Provider will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that any incident that poses a risk to the health, safety, or wellbeing of a child at the service will be notified to the regulatory authority. (c) Ensure that any incident or allegation of physical or sexual abuse of a child while the child is being educated and cared for by the service must be reported to the regulatory authority. (d) Ensure that any allegations that a child has been physically or sexually abused at the service must be notified within 24 hours to the regulatory authority. (e) Ensure that a full investigation occurs, and all due processes are completed as per this policy. Disciplinary actions will be put in place as a result of the outcome if required if the accused is deemed to be found guilty.
LAW IMPLEMENTATION	<p>The following laws and procedures outline and support all stakeholders to understand and implement the regulatory guidelines of this policy.</p>
In regard to Section 166A- Offences relating to inappropriate conduct.	<p>Approved Provider, nominated Supervisor, Staff and Volunteer</p> <p>An approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that no child is subjected to conduct that a reasonable person would consider to be inappropriate in an education and care service while that child is being educated and cared for by the service. Penalty: \$34 200, in the case of an individual. \$172 000, in any other case.</p> <p>A nominated supervisor of an education and care service must ensure that no child is subjected to conduct that a reasonable person would consider to be inappropriate in an education and care service while that child is being educated and cared for by the service. Penalty: \$34 200.</p> <p>An approved provider of an education and care service must not subject a child being educated or cared for by the service to conduct that a reasonable person would consider to be inappropriate in an education and care service. Penalty: \$34 200.</p> <p>A nominated supervisor of an education and care service must not subject a child being educated or cared for by the service to conduct that a reasonable person would consider to be inappropriate in an education and care service. Penalty: \$34 200.</p> <p>A staff member of an education and care service must not subject a child being educated or cared for by the service to conduct that a reasonable person would consider to be inappropriate in an education and care service. Penalty: \$34 200.</p> <p>A volunteer at an education and care service must not subject a child being educated or cared for by the service to conduct that a reasonable person would consider to be inappropriate in an education and care service. Penalty: \$34 200.</p> <p>For the purposes of subsections (1) to (6), whether or not a reasonable person would consider the conduct to be inappropriate in an education and care service depends on the circumstances. The circumstances may include any of the following—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether the conduct is generally accepted practice in the provision of education and care. Whether the conduct is likely to cause or result in harm (including emotional, psychological or physical harm) or injury to a child or children enrolled at the service. The child's age and stage of development. Whether the conduct is sexual, aggressive or violent and it is immaterial whether the child has consented to being subjected to the conduct or the person subjecting the child to the conduct believes the child has consented to being subjected to the conduct or the person subjecting the child to the conduct is related to the child. <p>For the purposes of this section, filming, recording, taking or otherwise capturing an image of a child is subjecting a child to conduct.</p> <p>For the purposes of this section, the conduct may be constituted by conduct—</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged in on a single occasion or engaged in on a number of occasions over a period of time or that is part of an ongoing pattern. <p>In this section - conduct means an act or an omission to perform an act.</p> <p>Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor must ensure the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They will take all reasonable steps to ensure that employees students, volunteers, contractors and visitors understand their legal and ethical responsibilities when working with children. They will actively monitor and promote compliance with child safe practices and will take appropriate action where conduct does not meet the expected standards. They will ensure that clear policies, procedures and codes of conduct are in place to guide professional behaviour. They will ensure that employees are provided with appropriate induction, training and supervision to support safe and respectful interactions with children. They will ensure that any concerns regarding inappropriate conduct are taken seriously, responded to promptly and reported where required. They will maintain a culture of accountability, transparency and continuous improvement in relation to child safety practices. <p>Staff and Volunteers must ensure the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They will model respectful, calm and supportive interactions with children and promote environments that are emotionally, psychologically and physically safe. They will interact with children in a respectful, calm and supportive manner that promotes children’s dignity, safety and wellbeing. They will ensure their behaviour aligns with the service’s Child Safe Environment Policy, Code of Conduct and professional standards. They will maintain appropriate professional boundaries when working with children such as the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Never physically punish, roughly handle or use force toward a child. Never shout at, intimidate, threaten or humiliate a child. Never use harsh, degrading, sarcastic or abusive language toward a child. Never frighten, coerce or emotionally manipulate a child. Never ignore, isolate or exclude a child in a manner that may cause distress or emotional harm. Never engage in inappropriate physical contact with a child that is not required for care, safety or comfort. Never display behaviour that demeans, belittles or undermines a child’s confidence, dignity or sense of safety. Never bully, tease or single out a child in a way that causes embarrassment or distress. Never engage in behaviour that may place a child at risk of physical, emotional or psychological harm. They will actively identify and respond to any risks to children’s safety or wellbeing. They will immediately report any concerns relating to inappropriate conduct, child abuse or breaches of professional behaviour in accordance with the service’s reporting procedures and legal obligations. <p>They will participate in training, supervision and professional development relating to child protection and child safe practices.</p>
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	<p>We are dedicated to the ongoing improvement of our practices and procedures through the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting regular reviews and updates of this policy with all stakeholders. Actively seeking feedback from children, families, and staff members. Providing targeted skill development and training for staff when areas for improvement are identified or when gaps in policy and procedure implementation are observed.
IN THE EVENT of a BREACH of POLICY and/or PROCEDURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All employees are required to comply with this policy and all associated procedures. Any alleged breach of a policy or procedure will be documented and further investigated by management. If an employee is deemed to be breaching policy and or procedure, disciplinary action will be taken, if the breach is deemed to be serious this could result in immediate termination.

Policy Name	VICTORIA-CHILD PROTECTION POLICY			Policy Version	V.5
Owner	Fishbowl Service Support Pty Ltd				
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breaches involving child safety or harm to a child will result in immediate suspension whilst management undergo an investigation. This could also result in immediate termination. All breaches and investigations will be documented and may be reported to the Regulatory Authority and/ or law enforcement.
KEY TERMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder - a person or group of people who have an interest in a business a person such as an employee or customer. They have a sense of responsibility toward it and an interest in its success. Child – For the purpose of this policy a child refers to a person under the age of 18 years unless otherwise defined by relevant legislation. Child Abuse- “the harming (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person.” Child in need of protection -A child who has suffered significant harm, is suffering significant harm, or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm and does not have a parent able and willing to protect them from harm. Reportable Conduct – Conduct defined under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) including sexual offences, sexual misconduct, physical violence, significant emotional or psychological harm, and significant neglect committed by an employee, volunteer or contractor against a child. Commission for Children and Young People (Victoria) – The independent statutory body responsible for oversight of the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme from 23 February 2026. Working with Children Check (WWCC)- A notification granted to an employee under a working with children law to the effect that: - the employee has been assessed as suitable to work with children and that there has been no information that if the person worked with children the person would pose a risk to the children and confirmation that the person is not prohibited from attempting to obtain, undertake or remain in child-related employment.
WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE FOLLOWING SOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. ACECQA Child Safe Organisations – National Principles Code of Ethics Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Vic). (2026). Mandatory reporting requirements for service providers. https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/mandatory-reporting EarlyChildhood_ReportingTemplate.pdf (education.vic.gov.au) Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. Education and Care Services National Regulations. Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. Guide to the National Quality Framework. https://www.vic.gov.au/about-the-orange-door National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031 National Quality Standard. Royal Commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Victorian Government. (2026). Child protection obligations for early childhood services (PROTECT). https://www.vic.gov.au/child-protection-early-childhood Victorian Government. (2026). Child Safe Standards. https://www.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards

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Service Support Within Reach	Warning -uncontrolled when printed. This document is current at the time of printing and may be subject to change without notice				

Appendix A

Child Safety Reporting Procedure -Victoria

Child Safety Reporting Procedure

If an educator or staff member forms a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is at risk of abuse or neglect, the following procedure must be followed.

Step 1 – Ensure Immediate Safety

If a child is in immediate danger, staff must contact **Victoria Police or Emergency Services on 000** immediately.

The Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider must also be informed as soon as possible.

Step 2 – Respond to the Child

If a child discloses abuse or harm:

- Remain calm and supportive
- Listen carefully and allow the child to speak freely
- Do not ask leading questions
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling someone
- Do not promise confidentiality.

Step 3 – Document the Concern

The staff member must document the concern as soon as possible while the information is fresh on the **child protection incident report**.

Documentation should include:

- Factual observations
- The child’s exact words (where possible)
- Dates, times and location
- Names of any witnesses
- Actions taken.

Step 4 – Inform the Nominated Supervisor / Approved Provider

Educators must immediately notify the Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider of the concern.

The Nominated Supervisor will support the staff member in determining the appropriate reporting pathway.

Step 5– Determine the Type of Concern

Management determines which reporting pathway applies.

A. Suspected abuse by parent / caregiver

Report to: **Department of Families, Fairness and Housing- DFFH -Child Protection**

Report as soon as practicable

B. Incident or allegation occurring at the service.

Notify: **Victorian Department of Education- Regulatory Authority**-Must be notified **within 24 hours**.

Examples include:

- Allegation of abuse at the service
- Serious incident involving a child.
- Physical or sexual abuse while in care.

C. Allegation involving staff, volunteer or contractor.

Report under the **Reportable Conduct Scheme**

Notify: **Commission for Children and Young People**. Notification must occur within 3 business days.

Step 6 – Maintain Confidentiality

- All information relating to child protection concerns must remain strictly confidential.
- Information must only be shared with authorised authorities as required by law.
- Staff must not discuss the matter with families or unauthorised persons.

Step 7 – Continue to Support the Child

- Making a report does not remove the service’s duty of care.
- Educators must continue to provide a safe, supportive and responsive environment for the child.

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