

CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT

POLICY (excluding VIC)

Adopted: 22nd July 2021 – Res No: 156.7.21

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) outline that children and young people have a right to be safe and cared for, no matter where they are or who they are with. Children have the right to be protected from violence, abuse or neglect. When working with children and young people, it is important to understand children's rights and needs.

We are advocates for children and have a strong commitment to child safety and establishing and maintaining a child safe environment. Our Vacation Care Service embeds the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and promotes a culture of safety and wellbeing to minimise the risk of child abuse or harm to children whilst promoting children's sense of security and belonging.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

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

| QUALITY AREA 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN | | |
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| 5.1.1 | Positive educator to child interactions | Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included. |

| EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS AND NATIONAL LAW | |
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| 82 | Tobacco, drug and alcohol-free environment |
| 84 | Awareness of child protection law |
| 102(A-D) | Transportation of children (risk assessments and authorisations) |
| 103 | Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair |

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| 104 | Fencing |
| 105 | Furniture, materials and equipment |
| 106 | Laundry and hygiene facilities |
| 109 | Toilet and hygiene facilities |
| 115 | Facilities designed to facilitate supervision |
| 136 | First aid qualifications |
| 155 | Interactions with children |
| 162 | Health information to be kept in enrolment record |
| 168 (h) | Providing a child safe environment |
| S162 (A) | Persons in day to day charge and nominated supervisors to have child protection training |
| S165 | Offence to inadequately supervise children |
| S167 | Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards |

RELATED POLICIES

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| Arrival and Departure Policy Child Protection Policy Code of Conduct Policy Cyber Safety Excursion Policy Furniture and Equipment Safety Policy Governance Policy Health and Safety Policy Interactions with Children, Families and Staff Policy | Medical Conditions Policy Physical Environment Policy Safe Storage of Hazardous Chemicals Policy Safe Transportation of Children Policy Staffing Arrangements Policy Sun Safe Policy Supervision Policy Technology Policy Water Safety Policy Work, Health and Safety Policy |
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PURPOSE

Our Vacation Care has a legal and ethical responsibility to provide a safe and friendly environment where all children are respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. Children’s safety is paramount, and we aim to take all practical steps to protect children from harm, ensuring a healthy and safe environment. Our Vacation Care Service provides children and staff with an environment free from the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management and visitors of the Vacation Care Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

The National Law requires management to ensure all children being educated and cared for are adequately supervised and every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury. Our focus is to build a child safe environment which is reflected in our Service policies and procedures and understood and practiced by all educators and staff.

'Child safety is everyone's responsibility.' (A guide to the Child Safe Standards. p.26. 2020)

NATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR CHILD SAFE ORGANISATIONS

Our Service is committed to being a child safe organisation and endorses the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, placing the protection of children as a priority of our responsibilities and obligations. The Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission provide guidance for our Service to ensure our policies and procedures, strategies and attitudes, ensure children's safety is paramount.

Our Service has a zero tolerance to child abuse, and we are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We promote diversity and tolerance and aim to form equitable and positive relationships with children. We ensure children participate in decisions affecting them and listen and respect their suggestions and ideas. We respond to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm.

We are dedicated in promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

RECRUITMENT

Our Vacation Care Service maintains a rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening and selection process to ensure the best staff possible based on skills, qualifications, experience and suitability for the position available. All staff are provided with a comprehensive induction process which outlines our Code of Conduct, identifying and responding to child abuse, grievance processes, and work health and safety.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK- POLICE CHECKS

Working in conjunction with the Child Protection Act and National Regulations, the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children is paramount within our Vacation Care Service and community. A Working with Children Check (WWCC) is a requirement for people who work in child-related work. It involves a national criminal history check and a review of findings of workplace misconduct.

Management is responsible for the periodic review and maintenance of up to date records of employees' Working with Children Check, including the Working with Children Check number and the date on which each clearance expires. Once an employee provides their WWCC clearance, management will verify the clearance to ensure that it is valid and current. The WWCC will be placed in the individual's file and continue to be updated as required.

[Primary policy - Staffing Arrangements]

CHILD PROTECTION- REPORTABLE CONDUCT SCHEME

Children and young people always have a right to be safe and protected. To comply with legislation and ensure a child safe environment, educators are provided with training and ongoing supervision to ensure they understand that *child safety is everyone's responsibility*.

Nominated Supervisors, Responsible persons, Coordinators, educators and other staff are mandatory reporters and must make reports if they suspect on reasonable grounds, a child is at risk of significant harm. All staff are provided with up to date training about child protection law and their obligations under this law and to ensure they are confident in following the reporting guidelines within NSW and adhere to our *Child Protection Policy*.

Through continual education and training, educators and staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe. Training gives educators and staff confidence to identify, respond and report child abuse.

Coordinators or responsible persons in day-to-day charge must complete a course in child protection approved by the Regulatory Authority on an annual basis. All staff must refresh their knowledge about mandatory reporting each year.

[Primary policy – Child Protection]

Child protection- Allegations Against Employees

To protect children and ensure their safety, welfare and wellbeing, management is responsive to report allegations or convictions of child abuse and child related misconduct by any staff member or volunteer

or contractor to the Office of the Children’s Guardian (OCG) as part of the *Reportable Conduct Scheme* or reporting authority within NSW.

Our Vacation Care Service will ensure an appropriate level of confidentiality of information relating to the reportable allegations as per the Children’s Guardian Act 2019. We take our legislative responsibilities as part of the Reportable Conduct Scheme seriously and will respond to any reportable allegation or conviction against employees or volunteers that may arise.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT- SAFETY CHECKLISTS

Children’s safety is embedded in our day-to-day practices. We ensure effective and adequate supervision is provided to children at all times. Through conducting risk assessments, we assess and manage risks in the physical environment collaborating with children to develop behaviour guidelines for play including adventurous play to ensure their safety. Educators have a sound understanding of their duty of care and responsibilities in ensuring a child safe environment.

Regular safety checks maintain basic standards of safety within our Vacation Care Service venues. We believe that child safety is a shared responsibility at all levels within our Vacation Care Service. Children are encouraged to speak up about their safety and the safety of their friends by telling an educator if they feel unsafe in a particular situation or environment.

Educators will complete an indoor and outdoor safety checklist to assist and record inspections of the physical environment where foreseeable risks may be evident and cause harm or injury to a child. Any findings that require attention will be either dealt with immediately or submitted into the maintenance book depending on priority. The Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisors must be notified of any areas that need immediate attention within the Service venue.

[Primary policies – Code of Conduct, Supervision, Health and Safety]

STORAGE OF HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

We reduce the risk of harm to children and educators by using eco-friendly products. Our Service will endeavour to provide a safe environment where necessary chemical and hazardous equipment are safely stored away from children and handled appropriately.

Our Vacation Care educators will keep a register of hazardous chemicals used within the service, including Safety Data Sheets (SDS).

[Primary policies – Safe Storage of Hazardous Chemicals, Administration of Medication]

EQUIPMENT, FURNITURE & MAINTENANCE RECORD

There are several factors that can contribute to a hazard, such as a deprived program, insufficient supervision and dilapidated equipment. To ensure a child safe environment free from hazards, we have implemented practices and continue to monitor Service policies and procedures that uphold Australian Safety Standards.

The venue of our Vacation Care Service, and all equipment and furniture used within the service are audited to ensure all aspects are safe, clean and in good repair. We understand that hazards are specific to developmental stages of children. Educators are aware that toys and equipment need to be checked to ensure they are safe and developmentally appropriate for school aged children from Kindergarten to Year 6. Regular checks occur within the Vacation Care Service hours to ensure that all toys, furniture and equipment are in good condition and working order.

[Primary policy – Furniture and Equipment Safety Policy]

RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL

It is a legislative requirement that all services implement a risk management system where they identify and manage hazards and risks within the workplace to ensure a child safe environment. The key principles of risk management include:

1. Identifying all hazards in the workplace
2. Assess the risk of each hazard
3. Control or manage the risk
4. Monitor and improve safety

It is the responsibility of Coordinators or Responsible persons in day-to-day charge to complete a risk assessment where children's safety may be jeopardised and when organising an excursion/incursion.

Children's safety must be incorporated into everyday practice within the Vacation Care service.

Common hazards which may require a risk assessment include:

- cross-infection and infectious disease
- administration of medication
- anaphylaxis procedures and management
- building and equipment (including storage)

- inadequate space for conducting activities and experiences
- hazardous chemicals
- electrical appliances
- food preparation and storage
- environmental influences such as shade, noise etc
- sun safety
- children's behaviours
- water safety
- fire equipment
- pets and/or animals
- inadequate supervision of children
- children's activities and experiences
- Work Health and Safety such as manual handling
- non-compliance risk
- hot drinks
- transportation of children (regular outing and regular transportation)
- excursions

To maintain a child safe environment, we will adhere to our Vacation Care Service policies and procedures and conduct the following checklist: risk assessments, maintenance record and excursion risk assessments.

[Primary policies – Emergency and Evacuation; Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness; Safe Transportation of Children; Sun Safe; Administration of First Aid; Medical Conditions]

EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION PROCEDURES

Management will ensure that copies of the emergency and evacuation floor plan is displayed in prominent positions near each exit of the service premises, including indoor and outdoor learning areas. All staff are familiar with emergency evacuation procedures and regulatory requirements. Rehearsals for emergency and evacuation procedures, including lock downs, are conducted at least once every 3 months.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE AUTHORISATION

Our Vacation Care Service prioritises children’s safety at all times. We will only release children to an authorised person as named on the child’s enrolment form. We request families provide current court orders, and parenting plans to ensure our records are up to date.

National Regulations require our Vacation Care Service to keep a record of children and visitor’s arrival and departures, with the signatures of the person responsible for verifying the accuracy of the record and the identity of the person collecting the child.

Educators will work in collaboration with our *Arrival and Departure Policy* and *Student and Visitors Policy* to ensure children feel safe and secure at all times.

To ensure children’s safety, educators have a clear understanding of their legal obligation to check identification when a person is collecting a child from their residence or venue. To maintain compliance, parents and educators will complete an alternate collection form if they authorise a person who is not on their emergency contact form to pick up their child.

[Primary policies - Arrival and Departure; Student and Visitors]

CODE OF CONDUCT

Management, coordinators, educators, staff, volunteers and students will adhere to our Service’s Code of Conduct Policy. We will:

- provide adequate supervision of children at all times
- take reasonable action to protect children and young people for risk of harm
- ensure the service premise is free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol
- adhere to our *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*
- not discriminate against any child, because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability
- be responsible for their own, and others health and safety
- be a positive role model to children
- respect children’s privacy and dignity at all times
- not put children at risk of abuse- refusing food/play, making threats, exposing children to inappropriate language or material (movies, internet, photos)
- report any allegations of child abuse to the Approved Provider as mandatory reporter
- notify the approved provider and/or the regulatory authority within 24 hours of any serious incident or complaint as per the National Regulations

[Primary policies – Code of Conduct; Privacy and Confidentiality]

ONLINE SAFETY

Our Vacation Care Service is committed to create and maintain a safe online environment with support and collaboration with staff, families and community. Management ensures anti-virus and internet security systems are installed to block access to unsuitable web sites, newsgroups and chat rooms. Our Service ensures backups of important and confidential data is made regularly and either stored securely offline, or online. Software and devices are updated regularly to avoid any breach of confidential information.

Written authorisation is requested as part of the enrolment process for children to have their photo taken and published as part of promotional marketing or on the app program used by the service. The identity of a child is not published on any platform.

Personal mobile phones are not used to take photos or video of children at the Service.

[Primary policies – Cyber Safety; Technology; Privacy and Confidentiality, Code of Conduct]

CONTINUOUS REVIEW

To ensure we maintain a culture of continuous improvement, we will ensure our child safe practices are regularly reviewed, evaluated and improved. We aim to ensure all educators, staff and volunteers understand and effectively implement our policies and procedures to provide a child safe environment at our Vacation Care Service.

We will regularly review and monitor the effectiveness of our Child Safe policies and procedures and invite children, staff members, families and communities to contribute to their development.

Any updates or revisions will be communicated to all stakeholders.

FAMILIES

Our Vacation Care Service ensures families are always welcome and feel comfortable asking questions on how we prioritise child safety. We provide a range of opportunities for consultation and collaboration about decisions about their child's safety whilst at our Service including:

- policy and procedure review
- child protection
- allegations/grievance procedures
- sun safety
- written authorisations- parenting orders
- code of conduct

- inclusivity and supporting children with diverse needs.

SOURCE

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REVIEW

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