



CHILD SAFE POLICY – COMMITMENT

(M)

Mandatory – Quality Area 2

Child Safe Standards

Reference: Our Centre *means* Outlets Co-operative Neighbourhood House LTD

Our commitment to child safety

Outlets Co-operative Neighbourhood House LTD is committed to child safety.

We want children to be safe, happy and empowered.

We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

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

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

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

Our Centre has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

Our Centre is committed to regular training, professional development and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks, harm and respecting emotional and wellbeing values of our children and their families.

We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.

We support the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background. We support and providing a safe environment for children with disability, emotional trauma, behavioural.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

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

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our Centre.

We involve children when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them.

We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our Centre, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children;
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our Centre.

All staff, volunteers, Work/student placements must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

Training and supervision

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

Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.



We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our Centre's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our Centre understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

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

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the Working with Children Check website for further information.

CV, resume past history employment records/training education and references are requested.

References checks will be carried out and will be notified by phone/verbal and/or email.

National Police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people.

*Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision-making process.

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

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored. If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Information

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative responsibilities

Our Centre takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

Failure to disclose: Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.



Failure to protect: People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.

Risk management

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

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

Regular review

This policies, procedures and practices will be reviewed annually or if changes in legislation, feedback from community or if significant incidents occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Ensuring that embedded are the Child Safe Standards to reflect and strengthen our practices.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our Centre takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

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

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

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

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it observing suspicious behaviour.

Supporting Policies:

Child Safe and Environment Policy

Risk Management

Parent Information Handbook

Code of Conduct

Duty of Care

Grievance and Complaints

Child Safe Standards

Recommended Qualification – PD's extra-curricular

CHC50113 Dip Early Chn Education and Care

HLTWHS003 Maintain Work Health and Safety

CHCPRT002 – Supporting the rights and safety of children and young people

Preventing Child Abuse in the ECS- Leadership strategies for Protecting our Children in your Service.

Child Protection-Mandatory Reporting & other obligations ECS

***National Model Code for Taking Images or Videos of Children – including storage/distribution/access**

AUTHORISATION

This policy is adopted by the Approved Provider of Outlets Co-operative Neighbourhood House LTD

REVIEW DATE:

Policy Review This policy will be reviewed annually unless there are any regulatory or legislative requirements and/or any feedback from staff, parents and the community.

Updated: 1 September 2025