

Introduction

The child safe standards require organisations that provide services for children to have a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children. The Foundation House Child Safe Code of Conduct has been developed from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services template.

Purpose

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to provide guidance and direction to staff, volunteers and Board members on appropriate behaviour to help protect children from the risk of abuse.

The Code of Conduct is required to be signed by all staff.

Scope

The Child Safe Code of Conduct applies to all staff, volunteers and Board members at Foundation House.

Procedure details

Within the context of performing their role with Foundation House all staff, contractors (as applicable), volunteers and Board members of VFST are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

All personnel of VFST are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- adhering to VFST's child safe policy at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone with respect
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
- promoting the cultural safety, identification, participation and empowerment of children
- respecting the cultural diversity of children and their families through a zero tolerance to discrimination and acceptance of different beliefs, attitudes and approaches to parenting
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child or where this is to occur it is part of an approved VFST therapeutic or working relationship between a VFST staff member and a client
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to your immediate manager, and ensure, where appropriate, that any allegation is reported to the police or child protection. Any allegation of child abuse is to be reported having regard to the VFST child risk assessment procedure, i.e. having undertaken a risk assessment and formed a "reasonable belief"
- reporting any child safety concerns to VFST's Child Safety Officer, Paul Leary (this is specifically in relation to matters involving staff behaviour and a risk to child safety)

Child Safe Code of Conduct



- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe
- encouraging children to 'have a say', participate and have a meaningful part in decision making about services they receive

Staff and volunteers must not:

- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (*for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children*)
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical
- engage in behaviour that puts children at risk of abuse
- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (*for example, personal social activities*)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability
- have contact with a child or their family outside of our organisation without a manager's or the child safety officer's knowledge and/or consent (for example, no babysitting). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate. It is recognised that Community Liaison Workers (CLWs) may have incidental contact with children in their community as part of their personal role as community leaders
- have undue/inappropriate contact with a child inside or outside of the organisation. This includes oral, written or electronic communications, including via social media, as well as face to face and physical contact
- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse

By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to your immediate Manager or VFST's Child Safety Officer, Paul Leary.

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

Agreement/Approval

I have read, understood and note my responsibilities under this Code of Conduct:

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Please return signed form to Human Resources, either by email HumanResources@foundationhouse.org.au, or hard copy. It will be placed your personnel file.

Child Safe Code of Conduct

Monitoring and review

The Code of Conduct will be reviewed in 12 months or as required by legislative change or in response to a complaint review matter

Roles and responsibilities

| Position | Roles and responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|--|
| CEO | Overall responsibility for ensuring Child Safe Standards are in place and being adhered to. |
| Manager HR & Ops | Procedure owner with responsibility for review of the Code of Conduct. Child Safety Officer responsible for managing complaints of a breach of this Code of Conduct and allegations/complaints of behaviour/conduct by staff, volunteers or Board members that places a child at risk. |
| Managers/Coordinators | Responsible for ensuring staff undertake their work in accordance with this Code of Conduct and that any Child Safe complaints are actioned appropriately. |
| Staff/Board Members/Volunteers | Responsible for adhering to the Code of Conduct in their work activity with Children. |

Definitions and abbreviations

| Term | Meaning |
|----------------------------|--|
| Child | A person who is under the age of 18 years |
| Child Safety | means measures to protect children from abuse. (<i>Child safe standards</i>) |
| Child abuse | Means any act committed against a child involving physical violence, sexual offences, serious emotional or psychological abuse, serious neglect. (<i>see Child Safe Standards</i>) |
| Cultural safety | Means an environment which is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for children; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their cultural or linguistic identity, of who they are and what they need. Efforts need to be made to ensure the culturally and or/linguistically diverse children and their families receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible manner, including in relevant community languages. (<i>see Child Safe Standards</i>) |
| Children with a disability | Means any physical, sensory, neurological disability, acquired brain injury or intellectual disability or development delay that affects a child's ability to undertake everyday activities (<i>s3 Disability Act 2006</i>). A disability can occur at any time in life. Children can be born with a disability or acquire a disability suddenly through an injury or illness. Some disabilities may be obvious while others are hidden (<i>DHHS</i>). |

Associated documents

Linked policy

- Child Safe Policy

Other Foundation House documents

- Child Safety Reporting Process Flowchart
- Procedure: Complaints – Child Safe Code of Conduct

External references and resources

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (VIC), 2005*
- Department of Health and Human Services, *An Overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards*, Melbourne: State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services, November 2015
- Department of Health and Human Services, Child Safe Standards Toolkit, available at <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards-resources>

Document control

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