

Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children's Centre

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

BWFCC is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people.

BWFCC has zero tolerance for child abuse.

BWFCC is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.

All allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

Every person involved in BWFCC has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

BWFCC is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks and all staff undertake Mandatory Reporting training.

We carefully consider the increased vulnerability of Aboriginal children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as well as children with a disability. We promote and advocate for gender equity and respectful relationships.

In our service planning, decision-making and operations BWFCC will:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect, or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk;
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

Child Safe Standards

The Child Safe Standards are compulsory minimum standards for all Victorian early childhood services to ensure they are well prepared to protect children from abuse and neglect.

The organisation overseeing the implementation and compliance with the Child Safe Standards is the *Commission for Children and Young People*.

The 7 Child Safe Standards are:

1. Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements
2. A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety
3. A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
4. Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
5. Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
6. Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
7. Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

BWFCC Child Safety Policies and Procedures

BWFCC has Policies and Procedures in place to meet and demonstrate our commitment to child safety and the Child Safe Standards, including:

- *Statement of Commitment to Child Safety*
- *Child Safe Environment Policy - (including responding and reporting procedures)*
- *Staff Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Within Our Centre Philosophy*
- *Within Our Centre Values*
- *Within our Quality Improvement Plan goals*

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse – 4 Critical Actions for Early Childhood Services

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/health/childprotection/Pages/eccritmustact.aspx>

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

PROTECT THE EDUCATION STATE VICTORIA Department of Education and Training



It is strongly recommended that **ALL** early childhood service staff follow these **Four Critical Actions** as soon as they witness an incident, or form a reasonable belief that a child has, or is at risk of being abused. This means acting even when you're not sure and have not directly witnessed the abuse (e.g. if another person tells you about the abuse). A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

Following these actions will support you to:

- best protect children in your care
- meet your legal obligations and Duty of Care.*
- It is also strongly recommended that you use the *Responding to Suspected Child Abuse Template* to keep clear and comprehensive notes. MCH services may opt to use this form, but **must still** utilise their existing information management systems.

1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm, go to **Action 2**.

If the child is at immediate risk of harm you **must** ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victim and others involved
- administering first aid
- calling **000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance** to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the service for future liaison with police

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

* In Victoria there are a range of legal obligations which set out the actions you **must** take if you suspect a child has, or is at risk of being abused. Some of these obligations apply differently across the range of licensed, approved and other early child services and can vary depending on your role within the service. For further information on how these obligations apply to you see the *Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Early Childhood Services*.

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you **must*** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

Q: Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?

WITHIN THE SERVICE

VICTORIA POLICE
You **must*** report all instances of child abuse which are led by a staff member, contractor or volunteer, or child† to Victoria Police.

REPORT TO MANAGEMENT
You **must*** report to your approved provider or licensee.

NOTIFY THE REGULATOR
Licensed or approved early childhood services* **must also** report to their Quality Assessment and Regulation Division.
Notifications may be made at www.ocsqpa.gov.au/national-quality-agenda-it-system or by contacting **1300 307 415**.

* Sexual offending, involving children 10 years and over.
* Licensed services operate under the Children's Services Act 1996 and approved services operate under Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010.

WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION
You **must*** report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:

- in need of protection from child abuse
- at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has, or is likely to have a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

VICTORIA POLICE
You **must also*** report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

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 DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police.

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

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

- **not to contact** parents/carers (e.g. 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)
- **to contact** the parents/carers and provide agreed information as soon as possible (for licensed and approved services it is a requirement that parents/carers are notified within 24 hours if the suspected abuse occurred at the service)

4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your service **should**† take reasonable steps to make a child feel safe and supported whilst they are attending the service. Your service should also consider providing support for children impacted by abuse. E.g. referral to wellbeing professionals. MCH nurses should follow the MCH Service Practice Guidelines to determine appropriate support.

You **must** follow the **Four Critical Actions** every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

CONTACT

<p>DHHS CHILD PROTECTION AREA</p> <p>North Division 1300 664 9777</p> <p>South Division 1300 655 795</p> <p>East Division 1300 360 391</p> <p>West Division (Rural) 1800 075 599</p> <p>West Division (Metro) 1300 664 9777</p> <p>AFTER HOURS After hours, weekends, public holidays 13 12 78</p> <p>CHILD FIRST www.dhs.vic.gov.au</p> <p>VICTORIA POLICE 000 or your local police station</p>	<p>QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND REGULATION DIVISION</p> <p>NORTH WESTERN Loddon Mallee (03) 5440 3111 Northern Metropolitan (03) 8397 0372</p> <p>SOUTH-EASTERN Gippsland Area (03) 5127 0400 Southern Metropolitan (03) 8765 5787</p> <p>NORTH-EASTERN Eastern Metropolitan 1300 651 940 Hume (03) 8392 9500</p> <p>SOUTH-WESTERN Barwon South West (03) 5225 1001 Western Metropolitan (03) 8397 0246 Grampians (03) 5337 8444</p>
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