

Purpose

All early childhood services operating in Victoria are required to comply with the Child Safe Standards as set out under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015. Child Safe Standards raise awareness and help early childhood services become child safe environments.

Young Adventurers Child Safe Standards Child Safety Policy (also referred to as Child Safety Policy) sets out our commitment and approach to creating and maintaining a child safe organization where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Child Protection & Child First (Orange Door) Notifications Policy and Confidentiality/Privacy/Sharing Information Policy.

The Child Safe Standards work by ensuring a consistent organizational culture where child safety is embedded in everyday thinking and practice thus protecting children and young people from child abuse, providing cultural safety for all children including Aboriginal children and young people, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, children in Out Of Home Care, LGBTI children and families and children who are vulnerable, thus ensuring any type of abuse, discrimination, racism or bias within the organisation is identified, confronted and not tolerated.

This policy applies to all staff, educators, students, volunteers and contractors who work in our environment, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people and whether or not they work in a paid or unpaid role.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the Confidentiality/Privacy/Sharing Information Policy which sets out to identify the appropriate procedure to follow when sharing information, requesting information or receiving a request for information about a child, group of children or families to reduce or identify a risk of abuse or family violence – refer to the Confidentiality/Privacy/Sharing Information Policy for more information.

This policy also applies to all company persons or personnel who act in management or control of the company on behalf of the company.

Definitions

Child Abuse

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence; or
 - grooming; and
- the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence; or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- serious neglect of a child.

Child connected work

Child-connected work means work authorised by the company Young Adventurers Early Childhood Education Services Pty Ltd or any person acting in management or control of the company, or Secretary of the Department of Education and Training and performed by an adult in a school or early childhood environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child Safety

Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

School or early childhood environment

School or early childhood environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school or early childhood service for use by a child, including:

- on site at any of the company's early childhood services
- online school or early childhood environments (including email, social media and intranet systems); and
- other locations provided by the school or early childhood service for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, homestays, and other school or early childhood activities or events)

School or early childhood staff

School or early childhood staff means an individual working in a school or early childhood environment who is:

- employed by the Department of Education and Training;
- directly engaged or employed by a school or early childhood service or other Agency providing paid or unpaid work on behalf of the company; or
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).

Statement of commitment to Child Safety and Child Safety Principles

Young Adventurers is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

We have zero tolerance for child abuse. In line with our philosophy all children and families have a right to feel safe, secure and supported in our environment. Children learn and develop best when they are provided with an environment where they can be safe and can feel safe.

Our child safe policies, procedures, strategies and practices will be inclusive of the needs of all children, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, children in Out of Home Care, LGBTI children and families and children who are vulnerable.

What are the Standards?

There are 11 Child Safe Standards:

Child Safe Standard 1 – 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

In complying with Child Safe Standard 1, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 1.1 A child's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights is encouraged and actively supported.
- 1.2 Strategies are embedded within the organisation which equip all members to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and young people.
- 1.3 Measures are adopted by the organisation to ensure racism within the organisation is identified, confronted and not tolerated. Any instances of racism are addressed with appropriate consequences.
- 1.4 The organisation actively supports and facilitates participation and inclusion within it by Aboriginal children, young people and their families.
- 1.5 All of the organisation's policies, procedures, systems and processes together create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal children, young people and their families.

Child Safe Standard 2 – Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

In complying with Child Safe Standard 2, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 2.1 The organisation makes a public commitment to child safety.
- 2.2 A child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the organisation from the top down and bottom up.
- 2.3 Governance arrangements facilitate implementation of the child safety and wellbeing policy at all levels.
- 2.4 A Code of Conduct provides guidelines for staff and volunteers on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities.
- 2.5 Risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children and young people.
- 2.6 Staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and recordkeeping.

Child Safe Standard 3 – Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

In complying with Child Safe Standard 3, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 3.1 Children and young people are informed about all of their rights, including to safety, information and participation.
- 3.2 The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated.
- 3.3 Where relevant to the setting or context, children and young people are offered access to sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant related information in an age appropriate way.
- 3.4 Staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children and young people to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns.
- 3.5 Organisations have strategies in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and young people.
- 3.6 Organisations provide opportunities for children and young people to participate and are responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening confidence and engagement.

Child Safe Standard 4 – Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing

In complying with Child Safe Standard 4, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 4.1 Families participate in decisions affecting their child.
- 4.2 The organisation engages and openly communicates with families and the community about its child safe approach and relevant information is accessible.
- 4.3 Families and communities have a say in the development and review of the organisation's policies and practices.
- 4.4 Families, carers and the community are informed about the organisation's operations and governance.

Child Safe Standard 5 – Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice

In complying with Child Safe Standard 5, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 5.1 The organisation, including staff and volunteers, understands children and young people's diverse circumstances, and provides support and responds to those who are vulnerable.
- 5.2 Children and young people have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.
- 5.3 The organisation pays particular attention to the needs of children and young people with disability, children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.
- 5.4 The organisation pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal children and young people and provides/promotes a culturally safe environment for them.

Child Safe Standard 6 – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice In complying with Child Safe Standard 6, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 6.1 Recruitment, including advertising, referee checks and staff and volunteer pre-employment screening, emphasise child safety and wellbeing.
- 6.2 Relevant staff and volunteers have current working with children checks or equivalent background checks.
- 6.3 All staff and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their responsibilities to children and young people, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.
- 6.4 Ongoing supervision and people management is focused on child safety and wellbeing.

Child Safe Standard 7 – Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused

In complying with Child Safe Standard 7, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 7.1 The organisation has an accessible, child focused complaint handling policy which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of leadership, staff and volunteers, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report.
- 7.2 Effective complaint handling processes are understood by children and young people, families, staff and volunteers, and are culturally safe.
- 7.3 Complaints are taken seriously, and responded to promptly and thoroughly.
- 7.4 The organisation has policies and procedures in place that address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and co-operates with law enforcement.
- 7.5 Reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

Child Safe Standard 8 – Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training

In complying with Child Safe Standard 8, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 8.1 Staff and volunteers are trained and supported to effectively implement the organisation's child safety and wellbeing policy.
- 8.2 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and young people.
- 8.3 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm.
- 8.4 Staff and volunteers receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people.

Child Safe Standard 9 – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed

In complying with Child Safe Standard 9, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 9.1 Staff and volunteers identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.
- 9.2 The online environment is used in accordance with the organisation's Code of Conduct and child safety and wellbeing policy and practices.
- 9.3 Risk management plans consider risks posed by organisational settings, activities, and the physical environment.
- 9.4 Organisations that contract facilities and services from third parties have procurement policies that ensure the safety of children and young people.

Child Safe Standard 10 – Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved

In complying with Child Safe Standard 10, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 10.1 The organisation regularly reviews, evaluates and improves child safe practices.
- 10.2 Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.
- 10.3 The organisation reports on the findings of relevant reviews to staff and volunteers, community and families and children and young people.

Child Safe Standard 11 – Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

In complying with Child Safe Standard 11, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 11.1 Policies and procedures address all Child Safe Standards.
- 11.2 Policies and procedures are documented and easy to understand.
- 11.3 Best practice models and stakeholder consultation informs the development of policies and procedures.
- 11.4 Leaders champion and model compliance with policies and procedures.
- 11.5 Staff and volunteers understand and implement policies and procedures.

Child Safety Principles

In its planning, decision-making and operations, Young Adventurers Early Childhood Education Services Pty Ltd 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 – refer Behaviour management policy;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development – refer Monitoring, support & supervision of educators, staff, students & volunteers policy;
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 concerns;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities – refer Child Protection & CHILDFIRST (Orange door) Notifications policy;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk (refer Confidentiality/Privacy/Sharing Information Policy for more information);
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers
11. Adhere to all company policies and procedures to ensure a safe, secure and supported environment.

Policy

Strategies to embed a child safe culture

Our culture encourages educators, staff, students, parents and the school and early childhood community to raise, discuss and scrutinise child safety concerns. This makes it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

All child safety documents, including this policy, the Code of Conduct, the Child Protection & CHILDFIRST (Orange Door) Notifications Policy and Procedures are readily available in hard copy in the foyer, staff room and all children's rooms of the service for all educators, staff, students and parents to read at any time.

Child safety is everyone's responsibility.

All educators and staff are required to:

- Act in accordance with the Code of Conduct, which clearly sets out the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour
- Act in accordance with the Child Protection & CHILD FIRST (Orange Door) Notifications Policy and Procedures at all times,
- Undertake annual guidance and training on child safety
- Act in accordance with their legal obligations, including:
 - Failure to disclose offence (applies to all adults)
 - Duty of care (applies to all educator & staff)
 - Mandatory reporting obligations (applies to all mandatory reporters, including teachers, principals, registered psychologists, and registered doctors and nurses)

- Organisational duty of care (applies to the organisation as a whole)

As part of our child safe culture, **our Management team** (including the Nominated Supervisor, Educational Leader and Approved Provider will:

- Consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, children in Out Of Home Care, LGBTI children & families and children who are vulnerable, when implementing the Child Safe Standards
- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at leadership meetings and staff meetings
- Encourage and enable staff professional learning and training to build deeper understandings of child safety and prevention of abuse
- Ensure that no one is prohibited or discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the company or from making records of any allegation.
- Ensure records are kept in line with the Service's Confidentiality and Storage of Records policy
- Regularly communicate the service's commitment to its Child Safety Policy to children and families through meetings, newsletters, text and media.

Training

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

Our culture aims for those working with children to feel confident and comfortable in coming forward with any allegations or suspicions of child abuse or child safety concerns. Educators and staff are trained to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. This training occurs annually or more often as required.

We also support our educators and staff through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, to promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, children with a disability, children in Out Of Home Care, LGBTI children and families and vulnerable children.

As part of our child safe culture, **all educators and staff** are required to:

- Complete the [Protecting Children – Mandatory reporting and other obligations](#) online module every year
- Read the Young Adventurers Early Childhood Education & Care Services Pty Ltd policies and procedures, and maintain familiarity with that document

Management will maintain records of the above processes.

Child safety will be communicated to children and families through literature, child appropriate books, newsletters and displays.

Recruitment

Young Adventurers Early Childhood Education Services Pty Ltd screens all potential applicants including educators and staff, students and volunteers to ensure they meet the obligations in relation to Working with Children check or Victorian Institute of Teaching current registration. At least two referee checks for all potential educators and staff.

Supervision & Practice

- Educators and staff, students and volunteers are not rostered to work alone with children.
- All children should be appropriately supervised following the service's Supervision & safety of the environment policy.
- Educators and staff, students & volunteers should refrain from using 'pet names' for children that may be considered condescending or grooming such as 'love', 'darl', 'honey'. Use children's names.
- Educators, staff, students & volunteers should refrain from lifting or carrying children or sitting children on their laps unless the child is not yet independent to be able to do these things for themselves.
- Children should be supervised around bathroom/toileting areas.
- Educators should position themselves in a manner that enables them to see or hear children and to be seen and heard by others.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Approved Provider will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Educators and staff will comply with the company's Code of Conduct; Behaviour Management Policy; Child Safe Standards Child Safety Policy; Child Protection and CHILD FIRST (Orange Door) Notifications Policy and Confidentiality/Privacy/Sharing Information Policy, which sets out clearly the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and how these can be addressed.

Specific child safety responsibilities:

- Approved Provider is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safe Standards Child Safety Policy every 2 years.
- Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor is responsible for monitoring compliance with the Child Safety Policy. The school and early childhood community should approach the Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider if they have any concerns about compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
- Approved Provider is responsible for informing the school and early childhood community about this policy and making it publicly available.

Policy evaluation and review

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed every 2 years.

Approved Provider: Marg Hartshorn

Date of last review: 22/03/2022

Date of next review: 22/03/2024