GRPSA
GOULBURN REGION
PRESCHOOL ASSOCIATION

CHILD SAFETY & WELLBEING POLICY

Play, laugh...
...learn, grow!

Mandatory – Quality Area 2

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following GRPSA policies:

- *Behaviour Guidance Policy*
- *Children's use of ICT Policy*
- *Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Excursions and Service Events Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Interactions with Children Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*
- *Safe use of Information Communication Technology Policy*
- *Sun Protection Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*
- *Water Safety Policy*

PURPOSE

This policy will provide a clear set of guidelines and procedures to:

- Ensure everyone in Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children.
- Ensure children are provided with a safe environment which protects their safety, health and wellbeing.
- Promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children.
- Promote the cultural safety of children from culturally and / or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Ensure safety of children with disabilities.
- Ensure equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in all policies and practice.
- Identify, reduce and remove risks of child abuse.
- Timely and effective intervention for children and young people who may be at risk of abuse or neglect.
- Involve children in child safety including listening to children, families and the community and incorporating their views about how to provide a safe environment
- Make staff aware of their legal and duty of care obligations to report child abuse and neglect.
- Abide by the Child Safe Standards.
- Abide by the National Child Safe Principles for Child Safe Organisations.
- Abide by the Commission of Children and Young People – Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- Complying with all requests under the information sharing and reporting obligations.
- Abide by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc. is committed to excellence in early childhood to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children.

GRPSA has zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to children's best interests, wellbeing and keeping them safe.

GRPSA actively strives to listen to and empower children in the organisation.

We value diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices, to achieve this we:

- Abide by the Child Safe Standards.
- Uphold the National Child Safe Principles for Child Safe Organisations.
- Abide by the Education and Care Services National Regulations and the Education and Care Services National Law Act.
- Abide by the Commission of Children and Young People – Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- Abide by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Abide the guidelines on information sharing and reporting obligations.
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and their families.
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and / or linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and their families.
- Welcome children with a disability and their families and act to promote their participation.
- Consider equably all applications from people from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the service is protected at all times while also promoting their learning and development
- Fulfil our duty of care (refer to Definitions) obligations under the law by protecting children from any reasonable, foreseeable risk of injury or harm
- Ensure that people caring for children at the service act in the best interests of the child, and take all reasonable steps to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing at all times
- Support the rights of all children to feel safe, and be safe, at all times
- Develop and maintaining a culture in which children feel valued, respected and cared for
- Encourage active participation from parents/guardians and families at the service, and ensuring that best practice is based on a partnership approach and shared responsibility for children's health, safety, wellbeing and development
- Promote children's development and wellbeing.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the GRPSA Board, Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisors, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, contractors and others attending the programs and activities of Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc Services, including during offsite excursions and activities.

3. PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

A commitment to cultural safety for Aboriginal Children:

- Ensure Aboriginal children and their families feel included and welcome in the Service, and support Aboriginal children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights.
- Acknowledge and celebrate the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
- Ensure all educators are supported and trained to understand, respect, and value Aboriginal culture and to understand the importance of this to the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children.
- Creating a physical environment that is respectful of Aboriginal culture, and has a positive image of a range of cultures, family units and LGBTIQA+ people, and that their cultural rights are reflected in practice, and that they are involved in decisions that affect them.
- Taking a zero-tolerance approach to racism and dealing with inappropriate behaviour as required.
- Make Aboriginal cultural safety a priority in the formation of Reconciliation and develop an action plan.

A commitment to child safety and wellbeing:

- Ensuring that the Nominated Supervisors and staff members at the service who work with children are advised of current child protection legislation, its application, and any obligations that they may have under that law (Regulation 84)
- Ensuring clear procedures are in place for reporting suspected child abuse and management of complaints (refer to Attachment 2 and the *Complaints and Grievances Policy*).
- Ensuring educators, staff and students undertake appropriate training and education on child protection annually, including recognising the signs and symptoms of child abuse (refer to Definitions), knowing how to respond, and understanding processes for reporting and managing concerns/incidents (refer to Attachment 1 – Incident/concern management and reporting guidelines)
- Ensuring children are adequately supervised and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times (refer to Supervision of Children Policy and Interactions with Children Policy)
- Identifying and implementing appropriate programs and practices to support the principles of a child safe organisation, in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor and educators/staff at the service
- Notifying DE, in writing, within 24 hours of becoming aware of a notifiable complaint (refer to Definitions) or allegation regarding the health, safety and/or welfare of a child at Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc Service
- Ensuring everyone is aware of the *Code of Conduct Policy* and complies with it (refer to the *Code of Conduct Policy*)

A commitment to taking child participation and empowerment seriously

- Protecting the rights of children and families, and encouraging their participation in decision-making.
- Ensuring that all educators involve children and young people in decisions about the activities they participate in.
- Educating and empowering children to talk about events and situations that make them feel uncomfortable.

A commitment to involving families and communities

- Conducting an annual survey of families and critically reflect on the results of these and the needs of the community in the decisions made about services.
- Offering support to the child and their family, and to educators and staff in response to concerns or reports relating to the health, safety and wellbeing of a child at Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc.
- Developing co-operative relationships with appropriate services and/or professionals (including Orange Door) in the best interests of children and their families.
- Ensuring parents/guardians have completed the enrolment form including details of authorised nominees, and permission forms for excursions and administration of medication (refer to *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*, *Excursions and Service Events Policy*, *Administration of Medication Policy*; and *Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy*).

A commitment to respecting equity and diversity

- Treating all children and young people with respect, regardless of race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, cultural background, financial situation, disability or other characteristics.
- Consider the different needs of all children, support them to participate fully in programs and help them and their families feel included.
- Ensuring GRPSA Services are places where people of all cultures feel safe and included.

A commitment to ensuring all staff are suitable and supported

- Ensuring recruitment and induction processes for educators, staff and contractors are in line with this policy.
- Screening all educators, staff and students, including undertaking criminal history checks (if required), Working with Children Checks (except for individuals under the age of 18, registered teachers or police officers), reference checks and interviews (refer to *Staffing Policy*).
- Ensuring that volunteers/students, parents/guardians and other visitors to the service are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children.
- Ensure that the recruitment procedure is followed.
- Ensure that WWCC, VIT and qualifications are all checked prior to employment and ongoing to ensure they are valid.
- Ensure that the Register of Prohibited Persons & Suspended Educators is checked prior to employment.

A commitment to a child focused complaint system

The Reportable Conduct Scheme:

- The Approved Provider must initially notify the Commission for Children and Young People of a reportable allegation (refer to Definitions) within three business days and update the Commission of progress within 30 calendar days.
- The Approved Provider must also investigate the reportable allegation and provide the findings of the investigation to the Commission. The service must also respond to the Commission when contacted for information.
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse.
- Ensuring that all educators listen to children and respond to them if they feel unsafe.
- Ensuring any information that is shared with an educator, is responded to and investigated and taken seriously.
- Protecting the rights of children and families, and encouraging their participation in decision-making at the service.
- Uphold the rights of the child and always prioritise their needs.
- Investigating all complaints and responding to them in a realistic time frame.

A commitment to staff knowledge, skills and awareness

- Arranging appropriate training and education for educators and staff on child protection, including recognising the signs and symptoms of child abuse (refer to Definitions), knowing how to respond, and understanding processes for reporting and managing concerns/incidents (refer to Attachment 2 – Incident/concern management and reporting guidelines).
- Providing appropriate training and education for educators on safe sleeping practices.
- Ensuring that where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the service premises.
- Maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*).
- Ensuring that the Nominated Supervisors, educators and all staff at the service who work with children are aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances.
- Identifying and providing appropriate resources and training to assist educators, staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers and students to implement this policy (refer to Sources).
- Ensuring the Nominated Supervisors, educators, staff, contractors, volunteers and students are kept informed of any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.

A commitment to a safe physical and online environment

- The *Safe Use of Information and Communication Technology* policy provides clear guidelines on maintaining a safe online environment.
- Undertaking child safety reviews and developing and implementing effective prevention strategies in consultation with staff, parents/guardians and children to maintain Child Safe Standards.
- Ensuring the physical environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children.

- Ensuring all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards.
- Ensuring the service is up to date with current legislation on child restraints in vehicles if transporting children.
- Implementing and practicing emergency and evacuation procedures every 3 months (refer to *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*).
- Ensuring there are appropriate procedures in place for the safe delivery and collection of children (refer to *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*)

A commitment to a review of child safe policies and procedures

- Regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness, particularly in relation to identifying and responding to child safety concerns.
- Monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy.
- Keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice.
- Revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required.
- Notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures (Regulation 172(2).

A commitment to documenting policies and procedures

- Ensuring educators are provided with the appropriate forms and guidelines to document how the organisation supports child safety and wellbeing.

All Early Childhood Staff are responsible for:

A commitment to the cultural safety of Aboriginal Children

- Ensure Aboriginal children and their families feel included and welcome in the Service, and support Aboriginal children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights.
- Acknowledge and celebrate the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
- Creating a physical environment that is respectful of Aboriginal culture, and has a positive image of a range of cultures, family units and LGBTIQA people. and that their cultural rights are reflected in practice, and that they are involved in decisions that affect them.
- Make Aboriginal cultural safety a priority in the formation of Reconciliation and develop an action plan.
- Taking a zero-tolerance approach to racism and deal with inappropriate behaviour as required.

A commitment to the cultural safety of all children

- Consider the different needs of all children, support them to participate fully in programs and help them and their families feel included.
- Work in partnership with families to understand and value all cultural identities.

- Create a physical environment that is respectful of all cultural backgrounds, including children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.
- Provide a safe and welcoming environment for all children from all cultural and religious backgrounds, children with disability, children who are living in out-of-home care and LGBTIQA+ families.
- Ensure that children who identify as LGBTIQA+ and children from diverse family units have their rights reflected in the program.

A commitment to child safety and wellbeing

- Talk about child safety with the children who attend GRPSA Services in a way that is appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- Incorporate child safety discussions in the program that address body safety and empowering children to use their voice.
- Provide educational programs that support children to develop positive, respectful and reciprocal relationships with peers and educators.
- Ensure all educators seek, listen to and act on the voices of children.
- Identifying the potential for child abuse at Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc Services, and developing and implementing effective prevention strategies in consultation with the Approved Provider and educators/staff.
- Identifying and implementing appropriate programs and practices to support the principles of a child safe organisation in consultation with the Approved Provider and educators at the service.
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse.
- Treating suspicions, allegations, disclosures and incidents of child abuse (including grooming) with concern and notifying authorities if required by law or by our policies and procedures.
- Implementing the procedures for reporting suspected child abuse and management of complaints (refer to Attachment 2 and the *Complaints and Grievances Policy*).
- Ensuring children, families, staff and communities feel safe to speak up about child safety.

A commitment to taking child participation and empowerment seriously

- Offering support to the child and their family, and to educators and staff in response to concerns or reports relating to the health, safety and wellbeing of a child at Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc.
- Ensuring that all educators involve children and young people in decisions about the activities they participate in.
- Educating and empowering children to talk about events and situations that make them feel uncomfortable.

A commitment to involving families and communities

- Co-operating with other services and/or professionals in the best interests of children and their families.

- Co-operating with other services and/or professionals (including Orange Door) in the best interests of children and their families informing families of support services available to them (such as Orange Door), and of the assistance these services can provide.
- Protecting the rights of children and families, and encouraging their participation in decision-making.

A commitment to respecting equity and diversity

- Treating all children and young people with respect, regardless of race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, cultural background, financial situation, disability or other characteristics.
- Consider the different needs of all children, support them to participate fully in programs and help them and their families feel included.
- Ensuring GRPSA Services are places where people of all cultures feel safe and included.

A commitment to ensuring the staff are suitable and supported

- Ensuring that all contractors/visitors sign into the visitor's logbook.
- Ensuring that no child is left alone (or is out of sight) with a contractor, visitor, volunteer, student or parent/guardian at the service.
- Ensuring that all children are adequately supervised at all times (refer to *Supervision of Children Policy* and *Interactions with Children Policy*).

A commitment to a child focused complaint system

- Taking all disclosures of harm or abuse made by a child seriously.
- Ensuring that all educators listen to children and respond to them if they feel unsafe.
- Ensuring any information that is shared with an educator, is responded to and investigated.
- Notifying the Approved Provider immediately on becoming aware of a concern, complaint or allegation regarding the health, safety and welfare of a child at Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc.
- Protecting the rights of children and families, and encouraging their participation in decision-making at the service.
- Uphold the rights of the child and always prioritise their needs.
- Analyse complaints and feedback alongside child safety data to identify areas of improvement, to ensure children's safety is prioritised.

A commitment to staff knowledge, skills and awareness

- Participating in all compulsory training and professional development including training on child safety and wellbeing.
- Ensuring that all educators and staff at the service who work with children are aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances.
- Ensuring that they are aware of current child protection legislation, its application and any obligations that they may have under that law.

- Keeping up to date and complying with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.
- Maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*).
- Notify the Approved Provider of any allegations of inappropriate behaviour of employees with children in any circumstances.
- Ensuring that all educators and staff who work with children are aware of this policy, and are supported to implement it in the service.

A commitment to a safe physical and online environment

- Ensure a good understanding of the *Safe Use of Information & Communication Technology Policy* and comply with it.
- Ensuring learning environments are established that provide sufficient space, and include carefully chosen and well-maintained resources and equipment that will help enhance the quality of children's learning and experiences.
- Organising/facilitating regular safety audits of the following:
    - emergency equipment
    - playgrounds and fixed equipment in outdoor environments
    - cleaning services
    - horticultural maintenance
    - pest control
- Ensuring that all cupboards/rooms are labelled accordingly, including those that contain chemicals and first aid kits. All chemicals must be stored in secure locations that are inaccessible to children.
- Ensuring safety data sheets are maintained for all chemicals used within the Service.
- Ensuring the physical environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children.
- Conducting risk assessments for excursions and considering children's safety when leaving the service premises.
- Ensuring all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards
- Ensuring the service is up to date with current legislation on child restraints in vehicles if transporting children.
- Implementing and practising emergency and evacuation procedures (refer to *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*).
- Maintaining a regular cleaning schedule for all equipment to avoid cross-infection (refer to *Hygiene Policy*).
- Maintaining a clean environment daily and removing tripping/slipping hazards as soon as these become apparent.
- Conducting a daily check of the building, ensuring all children are signed out of the service, doors and windows are closed and locked, and appliances are switched off etc.

A commitment to review child safe policies and practices

- Implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisors, educators, staff and parents/guardians

A commitment to documenting policies and procedures

- Keeping up to date and complying with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.
- Completing any documentation provided by the approved provider.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Reading and complying with this policy.
- Acting upon any concern that an organisation, including GRPSA, is not keeping their child or other children safe.
- Reporting any concerns, including in relation to potential for child abuse, to the Nominated Supervisors or Approved Provider.
- Talking to their service leader or GRPSA Management to discuss their concerns and what may be the next course of action.
- Calling the Regulatory Authority if GRPSA does not address their concerns.
- Abiding by GRPSA's Code of Conduct.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Child safe organisations
- Attachment 2: Incident/concern management and reporting guidelines

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc on 3rd September 2012

Reviewed and Approved: 15th May 2016
Reviewed: 8th March 2019
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REVIEW DATE: JULY 2028

ATTACHMENT 1

Child safe organisations[1]

GRPSA is a Child Safe Organisation and is guided by the national approach to embedding a child safe culture within the organisation.

The National Principles collectively show that a child safe organisation is one that creates a culture, adopts strategies and takes action to promote child wellbeing and prevent harm to children and young people.

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations are:

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
9. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

[1] Attachment 1 is based on principles for creating child safe organisations, as developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission.

ATTACHMENT 2

Process for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

Individuals working with children or young people have a duty of care to support and protect them. Where there is a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child/young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm, adults in contact with or working with that child/young person are ethically bound to act to maintain their safety and wellbeing.

The Approved Provider or staff must act when they form a reasonable belief or have a suspicion that a child has been or is at risk of being abused.

Acting on a belief that child abuse has occurred, or is occurring, can be the first important step in stopping the abuse and protecting the child from further harm.
It is a Child Protection worker's role to investigate and prove significant harm, so other professionals need only provide reasonable grounds for their belief.

General guidelines

- The best interests of the child should always be the primary consideration, with due regard to confidentiality and fairness to the person against who the allegation is made.
- Children should be encouraged to approach any person in the service to express concerns about their treatment and should be made to feel confident that they will be taken seriously.
- It is very important to validate a child's disclosure, by listening to the child, taking them seriously and responding and acting on the disclosure by implementing GRPSA reporting procedures.
- Employees and volunteers must be clear about who they are expected/permitted to approach when expressing concerns.
- Staff must seek advice from the Approved Provider or DFFH Child Protection, Orange Door and/or Victoria Police if they are uncertain about whether they have sufficient grounds to form a reasonable belief.
- Any investigation undertaken by the service must ensure procedural fairness and natural justice for a person suspected of abusing a child.
- Records must be kept about any child safety concern or complaint and stored in accordance with the service's Privacy and Confidentiality Policy. These records must contain information about the action taken, including any internal investigation and any reports made to statutory authorities or professional bodies.
- Everyone at the service must be made aware of the need to report serious matters involving child protection to external authorities.
- Privacy must be maintained, and information must only be disclosed on a need-to-know basis.
- Instances of physical and sexual abuse of children are crimes and must be reported within 24 hours to the police. If a child discloses any such abuse, the service must listen, respond and report to both the police and child protection authorities.
- A report to the appropriate authorities can be made even if educators/staff and others working with children at the service do not have all the necessary information.
- Permission is not required from parents/guardians of a child where abuse is suspected, and parents/guardians do not need to be notified that a report has been made.

Forming a professional judgement

Forming an objective and professional judgement can be based on:

- warning signs (or indicators) of harm or potential harm, that have been observed or inferred
- knowledge of child development
- knowledge of cultural backgrounds
- knowledge of any difficulties experienced, or support currently being received by a family
- consultation with colleagues and other professionals
- professional obligations and duty of care responsibilities
- established service protocols
- individual service procedures
- legal requirements, such as mandatory reporting.

Forming a reasonable belief

If you have witnessed behaviour, have a suspicion, or received a disclosure of child abuse, you will need to determine whether you have formed a 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' that a child has or is being abused or is at risk of being abused.

Forming a belief on reasonable grounds may include:

- A child stating that they have been abused.
- Any person telling you they believe someone has been abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves).
- Physical indicators of abuse such as non-accidental or unexplained injuries; persistent neglect, or inadequate care and supervision lead you to believe that the child has been abused.
- Behavioural indicators of abuse lead you to believe that the child has been abused.
- Other signs such as family violence, parental substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability that is impacting on the child's safety, stability or development.

Gathering information

Action	**Details**
Make notes	Record your observations, and date and sign the entries
Continue to observe	Record your observations, and date and sign the entries
Consult colleagues	Access support and advice from your colleagues, compare notes and brainstorm possible strategies to address areas of concern
Develop action plans based on service procedures	Understand and consult the policies and procedures of Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc when determining what action to take
Talk to other agencies about helping the family	Collaborate with or engage community health services, local government services, Orange Door, DFFH/Child Protection officers and

	disability services. You may wish to instigate a case meeting
Talk to the child	Do this with respect for the child or young person's need for privacy and confidentiality
Talk to the parents/guardians	Only do this when it will not jeopardise the safety of the child or young person

Signs or indicators of harm

- Physical signs of abuse or neglect may include, but are not limited to, bruises, burns, sprains, bites, cuts, fractures, frequent hunger, malnutrition, poor hygiene and inappropriate clothing.
- Behavioural signs of abuse (physical, sexual and emotional) or neglect may include, but are not limited to, wariness or distrust of adults, fear of parents/guardians and of going home, fear when other children cry/shout, excessive friendliness to strangers, being very passive and/or compliant, having/claiming to have headaches and/or stomach pains, displaying sexual behaviour that is unusual for the child's age, frequent rocking, sucking and biting, having difficulty sleeping, being withdrawn, aggressive and/or demanding, being highly anxious, having delayed speech, acting like a much younger child, and often being tired and falling asleep.
- Disclosures by the child concerned, or by other parties.

Managing a disclosure

Strategies include:

- Let the child talk about their concerns in their own time and in their own words.
- Give them your full attention, the time and a quiet space in which to do this and be a supportive and reassuring listener.
- Remain calm and use a neutral non-judgmental tone.
- Comfort the child if they are distressed.
- Record the child's disclosure using the child's words.

- Tell the child that telling you is the right thing to do and that what has happened is not their fault.
- Let them know that you will act on this information and that you will need to let other people know so that they can help the child.
- It is the role of DFFH Child Protection and Victoria Police to investigate. DO NOT take any steps to investigate. Avoid asking investigative or invasive questions which may cause the child to withdraw and may interfere with an investigation. Avoid going over information repeatedly.

Reporting

- There are two types of notifications to be made in relation to significant concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child: a referral to Orange Door (Family Services) or a report to Child Protection.
- To report concerns that are life threatening, ring Victoria Police on 000.

- If there is an allegation of abuse by a proprietor, staff member, contractor, volunteer, student or visitor within the service, the matter must be immediately reported directly to Victoria Police.
- If there is an allegation of abuse or misconduct in relation to a child by the Head of Organisation (GRPSA CEO) the matter must be reported to the Goulburn Region Preschool Association Board, board@grpsa.com.au
- To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit, call the nearest DFFH office in your region during business hours. To report concerns after hours or on weekends, call the Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78 (24 hours, 7 days a week and toll free within Victoria). Note: this is an emergency service for weekends and after hours only, and cases reported to the Child Protection Crisis Line will be referred to the relevant DFFH office on the following working day.
- Provide the following information:
  - the child's name, age and address
  - the reason for believing that the injury or behaviour is the result of abuse or neglect
  - the reason why the call is being made at this point in time
  - an assessment of immediate danger to the child/ren (the person making the report may be questioned regarding knowledge of the current location of the alleged abuser/s)
  - a description of the injury or behaviour observed
  - the current location of the child
  - knowledge of other services that support or are involved with the family
  - any other information about the family
  - any specific details that will help the child, such as cultural background, need for an interpreter or disability support requirements.

A notification should still be made, even if the notifier does not have all the necessary information.

- The Approved Provider or Person with Management or Control must notify DET (through the NQA IT System portal (www.acecqa.gov.au)) of any circumstance arising at the service that poses a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or children attending the service (Regulation 175 (2) (c) including:
- occurrences of sexualised play between children
- where children are being or may be at risk of being subjected to physical, emotional or sexual abuse including instances where children are observed displaying concerning behaviour that may indicate they are being subject to abuse
- Report to the Commission for Children and Young People in line with the requirements of the Reportable Conduct Scheme (see below).

Making a report to Orange Door

A report to **Orange Door** should be considered if, after taking into account the available information, the staff member has significant concerns for a child's wellbeing and that the immediate safety of the child will not be compromised. This may include circumstances when there are:

- significant parenting problems that may be affecting the child's development
- family conflict, including family breakdown
- families under pressure, due to a family member's physical or mental illness, substance misuse, disability or bereavement

- young, isolated and/or unsupported families
- families experiencing significant social or economic disadvantage that may adversely impact on a child's care or development.

Orange Door provides a consolidated intake service to Family Services within sub-regional catchments. Orange Door ensures that vulnerable children, young people and their families are linked effectively into relevant services, and this may be the best way to connect children, young people and their families with the services they need.

Making a report to Child Protection

A report to **Child Protection** should be made if, after taking into account all of the available information, the staff member forms a view that the child is in need of protection because:

- the harm or risk of harm has a serious impact on the child's immediate safety, stability and/or development
- the harm or risk of harm is persistent and entrenched, and is likely to have a serious impact on the child's safety, stability and/or development
- the child's parents/guardians are unwilling or unable to protect the child or young person from harm.

Upon receipt of a credible report, Child Protection will seek further information, often from professionals who may already be involved with the child or family, to determine whether further action is required. In determining what steps to take, Child Protection will also consider any concerns previously reported with regard to the child or young person. In most circumstances, Child Protection will inform the notifier of the outcome of investigations.

When reporting concerns of child abuse and/or neglect, it is important to remember that:

- a failure to notify the DFFH is an offence under section 182 of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- Child Protection must be notified as soon as practicable
- it is not necessary to prove that abuse has taken place, only to provide reasonable grounds for the belief
- permission from parents/guardians or caregivers is not required to make a notification, nor do they need to be informed that a notification is being or has been made
- if a notification is made in good faith, the notifier cannot be held legally liable for any consequences, regardless of the outcome of the notification
- the identity of the notifier will remain confidential unless the notifier chooses to inform the child and/or family, or if the notifier consents in writing to the disclosure of their identity, or if the court decides that this information must be disclosed

- the notifier may have an ongoing role, including:
  - acting as a support person in interviews with the child or young person
  - attending a case conference
  - participating in case-planning meetings
  - continuing to monitor the child's behaviour and their interactions with others
  - observing/monitoring the conditions of a protective court order that may relate to access or contact with a parent/guardian and following GRPSA procedures where the conditions are breached
  - liaising with other professionals and child protection officers in relation to a child or young person's wellbeing

– providing written reports for case-planning meetings or court proceedings in relation to the child's wellbeing or progress.

Support when making a report

Making the decision to report can be a challenging and it is important to make use of available supports to guide your practice. Support is available from:

- Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor
- DFFH Child Protection and Orange Door
- Department of Education and Training staff
- Commission for Children and Young People
- Early Learning Association Australia for member organisations

Resources

Department of Education PROTECT Portal: www.education.vic.gov.au

The Department of Education PROTECT portal provides tools and resources to assist professionals and early years services to respond to child abuse or potential child abuse, including:

- Early Childhood Guidance: This section supports early childhood providers to take action if they suspect, or are witness to, any form of child abuse.
- The flowchart: Four critical actions for early childhood services: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse, provides a summary of the critical actions to take:
- Early Childhood Online Learning: This eLearning Module supports all professionals in early childhood settings to increase their capacity to respond effectively to children whose safety, health or wellbeing may be at risk.

Commission for Children and Young People: www.ccyp.vic.gov.au

Acknowledgement

I, _____the undersigned, have read, understood, and agree to comply with the terms outlined in this *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*. I understand any breach in this policy may result in disciplinary action or termination of employment.

_____ _____

Print Name Date

_____

Signature