



# Child Safe Policy

## Document control

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## Purpose

This policy outlines the:

- importance of child safety;
- expectations regarding how employees are to behave with children attending the Institute;
- Institute's commitment to protecting children from abuse; and
- the process for reporting concerns about child safety.

A child is a person under the age of 18 years.

## Scope

The Victorian Government has introduced compulsory standards for organisations that provide services to children to help protect children from abuse. This policy establishes the measures required to adhere to the standard, including risk management, reporting and training, as well as police and working with children checks.

## Policy

### 1. Our commitment to child safety

The Institute is committed to the safety of children. As a post-secondary education provider we are committed to ensuring the safety of students undertaking their studies at the Institute. We take care to provide a safe working environment for all employees and students, and take special care with our people under the age of 18 years. We are committed to providing a safe and positive experience for children who visit our Institute on Discovery Tours, school programs, work experience students and event attendance.

The Institute:

- has zero tolerance of child abuse;
- will identify risks to child safety early, and work to reduce or remove these risks;
- will treat any allegation or child safety concern seriously; and
- will contact relevant authorities with concerns about a child's safety.

Employees and students who believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse must phone 000.

## 2. Code of conduct

Institute employees and students are required to adhere to our child safe code of conduct<sup>1</sup>. The code provides clear direction for employee and student responsibilities, as well as expected behaviours. Employees and students are all required to sign the code of conduct on completion of their child safe standards training.

## 3. Training

All Institute employees and students will be required to complete a training module on child safe standards so that they:

- can identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and detect potential signs of child abuse; and
- are confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

Wherever possible, two or more employees or students should be present when working with children.

## 4. Checks

Police and working with children checks will be carried out where child-related work involves contact with a child that is direct and a part of that person's duties. Checks will not be carried out where contact is incidental to an employee's or student's work, such as work experience students or Discovery Tours.

Position	Activity	Training	Code of conduct	Police check	WWC check
Division Heads	Supervisors	Y	Y		
Lab Heads	Supervisors Tour guides	Y	Y		
Post docs	Supervisors Tour guides	Y	Y		
UROP supervisors	P&C to monitor age of students, only supervisors with students under 18 will require Police and WWC checks	Y	Y	Y (where applicable)	Y (where applicable)
Research Technicians	Supervisors	Y	Y		
Students	Tour guides	Y	Y		
Head of People and Culture	Child Safety Officer	Y	Y	Y	Y
Department Heads	Supervisor (where applicable)	Y	Y	Y (where applicable)	Y (where applicable)

<sup>1</sup> Child safe: code of conduct, cited 24 January 2018 [http://catalyst.wehi.edu.au/services/hr/HR\\_document\\_repository/ChildSafe-CodeofConduct.pdf](http://catalyst.wehi.edu.au/services/hr/HR_document_repository/ChildSafe-CodeofConduct.pdf)

Position	Activity	Training	Code of conduct	Police check	WWC check
Communications team	Supervisor Tour guides	Y	Y		
Events team	Supervisor Tour guides	Y	Y	Y	Y
Fundraising team	Supervisor Tour guides	Y	Y		
Education team	Students	Y	Y	Y	Y
Professional Services team	Supervisor (where applicable)	Y	Y	Y (where applicable)	Y (where applicable)
Parkville First aiders	First aid	Y	Y	Y	Y

## 5. Recruitment and induction

The Institute will take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children by:

- developing selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate the Institute's commitment to child safety;
- ensuring that all employees and students engaged in child-related work, hold a Working with Children Check and provide evidence of this check;
- carrying out reference checks and police record checks to ensure the Institute recruits the right people; and
- ensuring information regarding the Institute's expectations for child safety are communicated to new employees and students as a part of their induction process through training and a code of conduct.

## 6. Legislative responsibilities

The Institute 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.<sup>2</sup>
- **Failure to protect:** Institute employees and students are aware that it is 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 fail to do so.<sup>3</sup>
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A 'reasonable belief' is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. Victorian Department of Justice, cited 24 January 2018

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>>

<sup>3</sup> This is in recognition of the shared community responsibility to protect children from abuse and to provide a safe environment for children to develop, learn and play. Victorian Department of Justice, cited 24 January 2018

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>>

<sup>4</sup> Step-by-step instructions for those who are concerned about a child in relation to child abuse or neglect for making a report to child protection services in Victoria. Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, cited 24 January 2018 <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/making-report-child-protection>

## 7. Risk management

The Institute acknowledges our responsibility to protect children when a risk is identified and will proactively manage risks of abuse to children attending our workplace. The Institute has risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks.

## 8. Reporting concerns about child safety

If an employee or student has a **reasonable belief**<sup>5</sup> 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<sup>6</sup>;
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it; and/or
- observing suspicious behaviour.

The Institute takes all allegations seriously and will investigate thoroughly and quickly. The Institute's Child Safety Officer (Head of People and Culture) can provide advice and assistance to concerned employees and students.

### If a child discloses an incident of abuse

Employees and students must:

- try to separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully;
- let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred;
- reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing;
- explain to them that this information may need to be shared others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in the Institute, or the police;
- do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe;
- do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them;
- provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this;
- as soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to your manager or the Institute's Child Safety Officer, Victoria Police or Child Protection; and
- ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

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<sup>5</sup> A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. Victorian Department of Justice, cited XDATE <  
<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>>

<sup>6</sup> Possible behavioural indicators: sexual behaviour or knowledge unusual for a child's age, difficulty sleeping, withdrawn, headaches or stomach pains, fear of specific people, wariness or distrust of adults, aggressive behaviour. Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, p13 *An Overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards*

## **If a parent/carer says their child has been abused in the Institute or raises a concern**

Employees and students must:

- explain that the Institute has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously;
- ask about the wellbeing of the child;
- allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words;
- advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details;
- explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the Institute's Child Safety Officer, the police or child protection;
- do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe;
- provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together;
- ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be; and
- ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

Employees and students need to be aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse. For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking with police, and communicating in English may be a barrier for some. Employees and students must be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a friend or family member).

If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal child, employees and students must ensure a culturally appropriate response. People and Culture can provide advice and assistance.

Some children with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, children with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters. Advice on communicating with people with a disability can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website:

<https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/communicate-and-consult-people-disability>

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

## **10. Incident reporting**

The Institute Child Safety Officer (Head of People and Culture) will receive and manage any incident reports<sup>7</sup> concerning the child safety standards. All reporting will be handled in a confidential manner.

### **Related documents**

Child safe: code of conduct

Child safe: incident report form

Child safe: risk assessment

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<sup>7</sup> Child safe: incident report form, cited 24 January 2018 <http://catalyst.wehi.edu.au/services/hr/HR%20document%20repository/ChildSafe-IncidentReportForm.pdf>

## Relevant legislation/regulations/agreements

Child safe standards resources, Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, cited 24 January 2018 <https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/child-safe-standards>

Communication with people with disabilities, Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, cited 24 January 2018 <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/communicate-and-consult-people-disability>

Failure to disclose offence, Victorian Department of Justice, cited 24 January 2018 <http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>>

Failure to protect offence, Victorian Department of Justice, cited 24 January 2018 <http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>>

Guide to making a report to child protection or child FIRST, Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, cited 24 January 2018 <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/making-report-child-protection>

## Definitions

Term	Definition
child	A child is a person under the age of 18 years.
child-related work, working with children	Work involves contact with a child that is direct and a part of that person's duties.
mandatory reporters	Section 182 (1) of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005(as amended in 2011) lists the following people as mandated to report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• registered medical practitioner</li><li>• nurse</li><li>• midwife</li><li>• person who is registered as a teacher under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 or has been granted permission to teach under the Act</li><li>• the principal of a Government school or non-Government school within the meaning of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006</li><li>• member of the police force</li></ul>
reasonable belief	Formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

## Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, in addition to following significant incidents if they occur. The next review is scheduled for January 2020.

## Version history

Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Changes made
1.0	Samantha Ludolf	19/01/2018	19/01/2018	

Version history should be brief, but still give enough detail to effectively track changes made over time.