

 <b>Community Living &amp; Respite Services</b>	Policy No.	<b>STAFF C1</b>		
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	Authorised By	Reviewed by the Senior Managers authorised by the CEO		

## **Child Safety Policy**

### **Policy Statement**

Community Living & Respite Services (CLRS) is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment that supports the safety, participation, empowerment and wellbeing of all children and young people.

The *Child Safety Policy* aims to:

- protect the safety of children and young people in our care and prevent abuse from occurring;
- ensure all allegations are dealt with promptly;
- guide staff on how to behave with children; and
- comply with the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2015* and the *Victoria Child Safety Standards*.

### **Commitment to Child Safety**

CLRS is committed to:

- child safety;
- the safety, happiness, participation and empowerment of all children;
- supporting and respecting all children, as well as staff;
- zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures;
- preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks;
- regular training and education;
- cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability;
- implementing and continuously improving procedures and systems that promote and influence an organisational culture of child safety and that provides a safe environment for children and young people; and
- Children (younger than 18 years old) not being placed in facility-based respite with adults (older than 18 years).

CLRS does not tolerate child abuse in any form, and will:

- take a proactive approach to the prevention of child abuse by identifying, removing and/or reducing risks early;
- treat all allegations and safety concerns relating to child abuse very seriously; and
- contact authorities when we are concerned about a child's safety.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all (ongoing, fixed term or casual) CLRS staff, volunteers, board members, students, contractors and community members.

## Definitions

<b>Child (Young Person)</b>	refers to a person who is under the age of 18 years.
<b>Child abuse</b>	refers to any act committed against a child involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• physical violence (including threats of physical violence);</li><li>• sexual abuse;</li><li>• serious emotional or psychological abuse; or</li><li>• serious neglect.</li></ul>
<b>Child safety</b>	in the context of this policy, refers to measures to protect children from child abuse
<b>Staff</b>	refers to ongoing, fixed term or casual staff, volunteers, board members, students and contracts.
<b>Reasonable belief</b>	refers to a belief that is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

## Policy

### CLRS Children and Young People

CLRS involve children when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them and listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

CLRS values diversity and does not tolerate any form of discrimination.

CLRS promotes and respects diversity by ensuring:

- cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children;
- cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds; and
- the safety and equality of children with a disability.

### CLRS Staff

All staff are responsible for promoting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- treating children with respect;
- complying with all relevant laws, regulations, policies, processes and guidelines;
- immediately reporting any concerns or allegations of child abuse or non-compliance; and
- complying with any child safety training, registration or accreditation requirements which may be relevant to their duties or activities.

A failure to report may constitute a criminal offence and result in serious penalties.

All staff must avoid actions or behaviours that could be construed as child abuse. In particular, staff have a positive duty of care to avoid:

- using language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;

- exploiting or harassing children in any way;
- engaging in unauthorised personal contact with children, including through social networking sites; or
- developing special relationships that could be seen as favouritism.

### **Recruitment**

CLRS takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. Selection criteria and advertisements clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities.

All staff who may come into contact with children are required provide a Working with Children Check in accordance with the *Working with Children Procedure*. Staff working in the Out of Home Care environment are placed on the DHHS carer's register.

Pre-employment screening including police record checks, working with children check, referee check and other checks relevant to the role are conducted in accordance with the *Recruitment and Employment Policy*.

All staff must sign the *Child Safety Code of Conduct* outlining the standards of conduct required to work with children and others at the commencement of employment or at the time of implementation of the *Child Safety Code of Conduct*.

### **Education and Training**

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

Our organisational culture aims for all staff to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. All staff will be provided with ongoing training and education to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse

New staff will be provided with the *Child Safety Policy*, *Child Safety Code of Conduct* and an overview of the standards at induction in accordance with the *Induction Policy and Procedure*.

Ongoing supervision will be provided for all staff working in Out of Home Care, administration, service provision and management in accordance with the *Supervision Policy*. This will include ensuring behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Staff working in Out of Home Care are required to complete specific training in relation to child protection. All staff must complete the mandatory units of a Certificate IV in Children Youth and Families Intervention and are required to complete the full course as per DHHS requirements.

Reporting flow chart will be displayed in all settings where services are provided to children.

### **Responding to and Reporting Child Abuse**

A child who discloses that they are feeling unsafe or being abused must be heard, must be taken seriously and treated with sensitivity and compassion. On Call or a Senior Manager must be notified immediately.

If a child is in immediate danger call 000 immediately.

### *Reportable Conduct Scheme*

The CEO must be made aware of any allegations of physical and sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, significant emotional or psychological harm or significant neglect by an employee or volunteer towards a child. We are also legally required to notify the Commission for Children and Young People of the allegation

### **Legislative Requirements**

CLRS take our legal responsibilities seriously, including Failure to Disclose, Failure to Protect, Mandatory Reporting and Duty of Care.

*Failure to Disclose:* Any adults must report a reasonable belief that an offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 years to the Police. Failure to disclose the information to the police is a criminal offence.

*Failure to Protect:* Any CLRS person of authority will commit 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 negligently fail to do so.

*Mandatory Reporting:* Any staff who are mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teacher, principals and police officers) must comply with their duties.

*Duty of Care:* If a child is abused by an individual associated with our organisation, our organisation is presumed to have breached its duty of care unless it can prove that it took 'reasonable precautions' to prevent the abuse in question.

### **Risk Management**

Risk assessments are to be conducted in accordance with the *Risk Assessment and Actions Procedure* to identify and minimise child abuse risks. We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments.

Staff are required to report any risks or hazards in accordance with the *Risk Management and Hazard Reporting Policy*.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed every three years and following significant incidents if they occur.

### **Relevant Reference**

*Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic);  
*Crimes Act 1958* (Vic);  
Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities;  
Victorian Child Safe Standards; and  
*Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic)

Add internal & external references etc