

16. CHILD SAFE POLICY

PURPOSE

This document sets out EDVOS' commitment to making EDVOS an entirely child-safe organisation at every level, and to embedding child-safe practice and procedure into all operations.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all EDVOS staff, volunteers, students, and the executive Board, whether working in the EDVOS offices or off-site.

Visitors to EDVOS are expected to abide by this Policy in order to ensure the organisation is child safe at all times.

EXCLUSIONS

NA

DEFINITIONS

Child: any person under the age of 18 years.

Child Abuse: an act that endangers a child or young person's health and wellbeing. Child abuse comes in different forms, all of which can have an impact on a child or young person's social, physical, intellectual and/or emotional development. Child abuse can be a single event or a series of traumatic events, both of which can have long lasting impacts on the victim. ([Understanding and Responding to Child Abuse Victoria Edition, Child Wise 2016](#))

Child Safe Standards: A set of compulsory minimum standards designed to improve the way organisations that provide services for children prevent and respond to child abuse that may occur within their organisation. ([Understanding and Responding to Child Abuse Victoria Edition, Child Wise 2016](#))

Grooming: Occurs when communication or conduct is linked to the intention of facilitating the involvement of a child in sexual behaviour with an adult. It can include, but is not limited to: developing special relationships with a child; favouring or giving gifts to a child or young person; inappropriate interactions with children either in person or via forms of media and electronic devices; asking a child or young person to keep a secret of any aspect of their relationship; and testing of, or ignoring, professional boundaries or rules. ([Understanding and Responding to Child Abuse Victoria Edition, Child Wise 2016](#))

Reportable Conduct Scheme: Established by the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*, the Scheme requires certain organisations to respond to allegations of child abuse (and other child-related misconduct) made against the organisations' workers and volunteers, and to notify the Commission for Children and Young People (at a minimum) or any allegations. ([About the Reportable Conduct Scheme, Commission for Children and Young People 2018](#))

Reportable Conduct: Under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, there are five types of 'reportable conduct': sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child; sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child; physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child; any behavior that causes significant emotional or

Document No:	POL-CS-01	Version No:	1
First approved:	28/11/2018	Next review date:	28/11/2021
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psychological harm to a child; significant neglect of a child. ([Summary of the Reportable Conduct Scheme, Commission for Children and Young People 2018](#))

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

EDVOS takes its legal responsibilities seriously including:

- **Mandatory reporting:** Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties. Moreover, all EDVOS staff must report to Child Protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse
- **Reportable Conduct Scheme:** EDVOS will report and investigate allegations of child abuse and neglect by its staff and volunteers to the Reportable Conduct Scheme administered by the Commission for Children and Young People in accordance with its legal requirements and commitment to child safety.
- **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.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in EDVOS 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.

RECRUITMENT

- We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements that clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.
- We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.
- All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.
- We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people.
- If during the recruitment process, a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

- Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is paramount and everyone's responsibility.
- Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

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- We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to identify risks to children; protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.
- New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services, the Commissioner for Children and Young People and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

RISK MANAGEMENT

- We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise risks to children that include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock).

ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

- Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to report and if appropriate, investigate thoroughly and quickly.
- Our staff are trained to deal appropriately with allegations of child abuse.
- We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

FAIR PROCEDURE FOR PERSONNEL

- The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to staff and volunteers. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.
- We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns by staff and volunteers using our incident reporting form including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.
- If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern by staff and volunteers is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

POLICY STATEMENT

EDVOS is committed to child safety. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

EDVOS is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

EDVOS has zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.

EDVOS has legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which are followed rigorously.

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EDVOS is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

EDVOS has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

EDVOS is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

EDVOS is committed to the 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.

EDVOS will abide by specific procedures and will have trainings in place to support the leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these policy commitments.

This policy will be reviewed every three years and following any legislative changes and/or significant incidents if they occur. EDVOS will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible EDVOS will work with the contributions of local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities, and people with a disability during the Child Safe Policy reviews.

RESPONSIBILITIES

EDVOS Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivate and support an organisational culture of child safety awareness, transparency and communication
Executive Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivate and support an organisational culture of child safety awareness, transparency and communication Respond to a reportable allegation made against an EDVOS worker or volunteer, by ensuring that allegations are appropriately investigated Report allegations which may involve criminal conduct to the police Notify the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) of allegations within three business days after becoming aware of the allegation and follow the necessary requirements
Managers and Team Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support staff to report any child safety concerns Ensuring all recruitment procedures follow the child safe requirements Maintaining register of Working with Children Checks and Police checks for all staff, students and volunteers, and contractors and ensuring the Checks are up-to-date
All staff, students & volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have knowledge of and abide by this Policy and all related legislation, guidelines and frameworks at all times Participate in mandatory child safe trainings Report all instances of misconduct or child abuse in line with legislation, guidelines and procedures Reporting to Child Protection

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RELATED DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES

INTERNAL

- EDVOS Code of Conduct
- EDVOS Human Resources Policy
- EDVOS Privacy & Confidentiality Policy
- EDVOS Volunteer Policy
- EDVOS Legislative Compliance Policy
- EDVOS Child Protection Reporting Procedure
- EDVOS Discipline Procedure
- EDVOS Fraud, Corruption & Whistleblower Policy
- EDVOS Working with Children Check Procedure
- EDVOS Incident Reporting and Management Procedure

EXTERNAL

- [Victoria Government, Department of Health and Human Services: Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Commission for Children and Young People: Child Safe Standards Resources and Support](#)
- [Commission for Children and Young People: Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)
- [Child Wise: Child abuse trauma indicator by age group \(page 8\)](#)

LEGISLATION

- [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Working with Children Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Failure to Disclose 2014 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Failure to Protect 2015 \(Vic\)](#)

AUTHORISATION

Board Chair

DATE

28 November 2018

MINUTES OF MEETING

Board of Governance

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