CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT
Early Years Services

Purpose

Education and Care Services National Regulations require policies and procedures for providing a child safe environment, minimising hazards and risks to children while creating a child safe culture.

Policy Statement

City of Stonnington acknowledges the importance of their role as a child safe organisation and understands that children's safety and wellbeing are paramount within Early Years Services. Early Years Services aim to foster a child safe culture where children are safe and feel safe, developing responsive relationships, providing engaging programs and safe healthy environments.

Definitions:

Child Safe Standards: A set of eleven mandatory standards designed to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect within organisations that provide services. The standards aim to promote the safety of children, embedding child safety into leadership, governance, and daily practice.

Code of Conduct: A set of rules, principles and values that outline the expected behaviour and helps guide interactions between management, Educators, and staff.

Child Safety Code of Conduct: Outlines expected and unacceptable behaviour for adults when interacting with children. The Child Safety Code of Conduct sets clear boundaries, particularly around physical contact, communication, and professional relationships while promoting a safe and respectful environment.

Mandatory Reporting: The legal requirement for Early Childhood Educators to report any reasonable belief of suspected child abuse or neglect to the relevant authorities.

National Early Childhood Worker Register: people added to Register when employed, engaged or appointed. The system checks against Prohibited Persons and Suspended Educators Register. If a match occurs, approved provider is prompted to contact the regulatory authority for information.

Reportable Conduct: Through the Reportable Conduct Scheme, City of Stonnington is required to respond, investigate and report allegations of child abuse and other child-related misconduct made against someone they employ or engage to work with children.

Risk Assessment: A process used to identify and evaluate any potentials risks and plan steps to minimise these risks

Wellbeing: sound wellbeing results from the satisfaction of basic needs – the need for tenderness and affection; security and clarity; social recognition; to feel competent; physical needs and for meaning in life. It includes happiness and satisfaction, effective social functioning and the disposition of optimism, openness, curiosity, and resilience.

Working with Children Check: A mandatory screening process for people on paid or voluntary child related work, it assesses criminal history and professional conduct to determine suitability.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Early Years Coordinator
- Early Years Services Lead
- Team Leaders
- Educators including Agency Educators
- Educational Leader
- Health & Safety Representative (HSR)
- Child Safety Champion
- Administration Officers
- Chef
- Parents/Guardians
- Students and Volunteers
- Visitors to the service

Responsibilities

Early Years Services Lead/Early Years Coordinator

- Ensure compliance as Person with Management and Control (PMC) under *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010,* and *Education and Care Services National Regulations Child Safe Standards* and *Reportable Conduct Scheme*
- Oversee *City of Stonnington Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)* requirements, ensuring systems are in place to reduce hazards and risk of injuries
- Approve development and review of *Emergency Management Plans* and *Risk Assessments* and confirm procedures in place to minimise risk to children Educators, staff, parents/guardians, or visitors to the service
- Confirm potential candidates undergo screening requirements, such as pre employment medical checks, police check, Working With Children Check (WWCC), checking details against the NQAIT System register of prohibited persons and suspended Educators (Section 269, Regulation 358)
- Confirm Team Leaders and Educators understand responsibility to identify and respond to children at risk of abuse or neglect under child protection legislation and follow procedures in *City of Stonnington Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*
- Investigate allegations of child-related misconduct, report in accordance with *Reportable Conduct Scheme* and *City of Stonnington Child Safety and Wellbeing Procedure*
- Ensure Team Leader, Educators and staff team comply with *Child Safety Code of Conduct* and *Practice Guidelines* which are signed upon commencement of employment and when reviewed or updated.
- Ensure policies and procedures are accessible and implemented into daily practice
- Schedule professional development relating to Child Protection, Mandatory Reporting, Emergency Management, First Aid and Manual Handling as required
- Consult with Facilities Management regarding building audits/upgrades when capital funds are secured, or maintenance repairs to ensure safety is maintained
- Approve requests for purchasing additional furniture and equipment, that these are reasonable and able to be used safely within service environments.

Team Leaders

- Ensure obligations are met under *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010, Education and Care Services National Regulations*, *Child Safe Standards* and *Reportable Conduct Scheme*
- Make sure staff team comply with *Child Safety Code of Conduct* and *Practice Guidelines* which are signed and kept in staff files
- Check and confirm OHS checklists and Risk Assessments are complete, and that Risk Minimisation plans developed for individual children are followed
- Follow procedures in service *Emergency Management Plans* to effectively manage incidents and emergencies and rehearse emergency drills quarterly
- Regularly check *WWCC* status and *VIT* registration for Educators and staff team and make sure a record is kept of each check
- Ensure Educators and staff team know the location of the policies, their responsibilities, and the included procedures
- Provide parents/guardians with updates and opportunities to give feedback through a consultation process when policies and procedures are reviewed
- During Team Meetings include child safety, OH&S, legislation or regulation updates and changes to policies or procedures on the agenda
- Report child safety concerns to Early Years Services Lead, Early Years Coordinator, and Child Safety Compliance Officer, follow procedures in *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* and submit a SolvSafey report
- Create a culture of child safety, promoting an environment that provides physical, wellbeing and online safety for children
- Report maintenance requests through the online portal for repairs through the Facilities Management Department
- Request that visitors, contractors, or allied health professionals present WWCC and complete the Visitors Book including the purpose of their visit and arrival/departure times
- Instruct contractors to undertake repairs safely, keeping equipment out of reach of children and area left clean on completion. Schedule building upgrades or repairs that involve noise, dust, odours, or disruptions outside service operating hours
- Submit requests to the Early Years Services Lead or Early Years Coordinator for approval to purchase furniture or equipment that meets physical and developmental needs of children
- Review changes to physical environment assessing hazards, considering the children accessing the environment, and any potential risks identified
- Provide environments free from tobacco, vaping devices/substances, alcohol, and illicit drugs, making sure Educators or staff are not affected by alcohol/drugs (including prescription medication) which may impair their response and judgement
- Ensure children do not have access to the staff room where personal belongings are kept
- Ensure Educators and staff records are accurate, and all training certificates are current and stored securely in their file at the service and updated accordingly in the *National Early Childhood Worker Register* .

Administration Officer

- Monitor entrance to the service, when visitors arrive, request purpose of visit, and WWCC and complete the visitor book
- Report issues or concerns to the Team Leader regarding safety of the service.

Educational Leader

- Provides guidance regarding the educational program and support the inclusion of children's safety and wellbeing into the program

- Mentor Educators and staff to provide high quality educational programs, encouraging a child safe culture and environment
- Monitor the Educational Program including the taking, use, storage and destruction of images and videos of children in line with the *Safe Use of Digital Technology and Online Environments Policy*
- Attends Child Safety Champion meetings with Child Safety Champions, Early Years Services Lead and Child Safety Compliance Officer (if available).

Educators

- Comply with *Child Safe Standards*, *Code of Conduct, Child Safety Code of Conduct, Practice Guidelines* and implement policies and procedures
- Understand child protection legislation, including mandatory reporting and obligation to report if Educators/staff believe a child is at risk of abuse or neglect
- Monitor children's safety and wellbeing, discuss concerns with the Team Leader
- Comply with *Safe Use of Digital Technology and Online Environments Policy* and align practice with *National Model Code for Taking Images or Videos of Children while Providing Early Childhood Education and Care*
- Monitor and maintain staff to child ratios to ensure adequate supervision of children inline current Supervision Plans
- Develop knowledge and confidence to raise child safety concerns and report allegations in accordance with *Reportable Conduct Scheme* and *City of Stonnington Child Safety and Wellbeing Reporting Procedure*
- Ensure environments are free from alcohol, and illicit drugs, making sure other staff or parents/guardians are not affected by alcohol/drugs (including prescription medication) which may impair their response and judgement
- Must keep Tobacco, vaping devices, and/or substances securely stored in staff room lockers, not used within the premises or up to 4 metres from the entrance to the service
- Ensure children do not access the staff room where personal belongings are kept
- Complete *Staff Attendance Record* on arrival and departure throughout the day
- Follow opening procedure, conducting OHS daily checklist prior to children arriving, checking for hazards, if identified remove and report to the Team Leader
- Follow closing procedures, make sure all children have been collected, signed out and the service securely locked on departure at the end of the day
- Develop respectful relationships with children, other Educators and families aiming to create a positive child safe and wellbeing environment and culture in the service
- Recognise and respond to individual needs of children in the group including action plans, implement risk assessment/minimisation plans for individual children
- Arrange furniture and equipment layout in learning spaces to allow visibility and aligns with current supervision plans (i.e., ensuring windows are uncovered shelving is not reducing visibility)
- Report any maintenance concerns to the Team Leader so repairs can be actioned
- Collaborate with external professionals to support children's access, inclusion, and participation in the program
- Complete professional development and training including Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting, National Child Safety Training, Emergency Management, Food Safety, First Aid and Manual Handling as required.

Health and Safety Representative (HSR)

- Identify, report, and resolve any OHS issues, assist with safety concerns and help identify and implement new ideas
- Confirm OHS checklist are completed on daily, weekly, monthly, or annual basis.

- Complete workplace inspections on a quarterly basis, checking for hazards and report concerns as required.

Child Safety Champion
- Each service has a nominated Child Safe Champion to provide support to the team regarding Child Safety and Child Safe Standards
- Obtain knowledge and understanding of Child Safe Standards and gather evidence of compliance with each of the eleven standards
- Attend quarterly meetings with Early Years Services Lead, Educational Leader and Child Safety Compliance Officer (if available).

Parents/Guardians
- If any concerns arise regarding child safety and/or wellbeing, report and discuss with the Team Leader as soon as possible
- Follow and comply with Child Safety Code of Conduct for Parents/Guardians
- Provide current WWCC when participating in excursions or activities with children
- Maintain respectful relationships within the service community to strengthen the positive environment and child safe culture of the service.

Procedure

Safety Checks of Buildings, Grounds and Equipment
- Daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual safety checks are completed in line with OHS requirements, assessing hazards and minimising risk within the buildings, furniture, or equipment

Equipment Safety
- When purchasing furniture, equipment, and resources their safety and suitability should be taken into consideration
- New equipment is checked using *Pre-Start Equipment Safety Checklist* prior to being introduced to children
- When equipment is introduced, Educators demonstrate how to use this with children
- Electrical cords are kept out of children's reach and outlets covered with child safety plugs.

Centre Security
- Services have coded keypad entry, codes are changed annually or as required
- If alarm is installed, code is provided to Educators and contractors for daily cleaning
- External emergency exit gates remained locked, only used as exit point in an emergency
- At the discretion of the Team Leader, Educators receive a key, the Team Leader must maintain a key register and keys returned when ceasing employment

Child Safety – Situational Environmental and Opportunistic Risks
- All employees monitor who is on the premises, i.e., ensure visitors and contractors sign in and understand the expectation of child safety
- Team Leaders ensure roster allows Educators to work in pairs, groups and/or in line of sight of others when providing education and care to children

Working with Children (WWC) Checks
- During recruitment, potential candidates provide evidence of current Working with Children (WWC) check in accordance with the *Worker Screening Act 2020*

- Educators will be unable to work if their WWCC lapses and not able to return until their WWCC status is updated
- Visitors are required to sign in/out in the visitor book, present their WWCC upon arrival to Team Leader or Administration Officer.

Safety in the Educational Program

- The service fosters a culture of child safety and wellbeing by providing a culturally safe environment for children attending the service
- Cultural safety is created for all children including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to ensure a safe and respectful environment where they feel comfortable being themselves, expressing their culture, knowledge and spiritual beliefs and can develop a strong sense of identity
- Each child's cultural safety and inclusion is supported, and opportunities are provided for children to share information and celebrations from their culture
- Programs and children's learning are shared within the service community via the approved online platform to promote engagement with families
- Images and/or videos of children within the program are taken, used, stored, and retained following the processes outlined in the *Safe Use of Digital Technology and Online Environments Policy*
- Allows children to develop awareness and understanding of their rights, knowledge of body safety and an introduction to the concept of consent
- Allows for children to participate in decision making in matters that affect them, including safety issues and risk identification.

Professional Development and Support

- Educators undertake *EC PROTECT – Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations* training every 12 months
- Educators undertake Mandatory *National Child Safety Training* every two years
- *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Code of Conduct for Parents and Guardians* or *Child Safety Code of Conduct for Children* can be referred *to* for guidance and support
- City of Stonnington employs a Child Safety Compliance Officer who can be contacted for any questions, concerns and guidance around Child Safety, and Child Protection.

Relevant Legislation, Policies & Sources

Body Safety Australia https://www.bodysafetyaustralia.com.au/
City of Stonnington Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
City of Stonnington Child Safety and Wellbeing Reporting Procedure
City of Stonnington Child Safety Code of Conduct
City of Stonnington Child Safety Code of Conduct for parents and guardians
City of Stonnington Child Safety Code of Conduct for children and young people
City of Stonnington Employee Code of Conduct
City of Stonnington Occupational Health and Safety Manual
Child Safe Standards - https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/being-a-child-safe-organisation/
Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Act 2021
Commission for Children and Young CCYP | Reportable Conduct Scheme
Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy
Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
Department of Health and Human Services https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/resources-child-safe-standards
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations - Version 1 January 2026
Educator Practice Guidelines
Emergency and Evacuation Policy
Excursion and Safe Transportation of Children Policy
National Model Code for Taking Images or Videos of Children while Providing Early Childhood Education and Care [National Model Code – Taking images in early childhood education and care | ACECQA]
National Quality Standards
Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
Safe Use of Digital Technology and Online Environments Policy
Sleep and Rest Policy
Social Services Regulator (SSR)
Supervision Policy
Victorian State Government [www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au]
Victorian Institute of Teaching [www.vit.vic.edu.au]
Workers Screening Act 2020

Related Services Forms

Agency Staff Record
Early Years Services Emergency Management Plan
OHS Checklists
OHS General and Task Risk Assessment
OHS Pre-Start Equipment Safety Checklist
OHS Safe Work Procedures
OHS Workplace Inspection Checklist
Medical Condition Risk Minimisation Plan
Sleep and Rest Risk Assessment
Sleep Chart
Staff Record
Student Volunteer Record