

Child Safety Policy

Policy Statement

The Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd Board is committed to meeting all applicable legislation and standards designed to safeguard children and young people. commUnity+ will work to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children and young people feel and are safe, are heard and enjoy learning.

Child Safety Statement

Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd commits to the safety of children and young people in all that we do. It is the responsibility of all members of our team.

We understand that we have a responsibility to uphold the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who come in contact with us, our team and services. Their safety and wellbeing will always be our first priority.

We will always act promptly when we learn that a child is at risk.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy and accompanying procedures is to:

- a. Underpin an open and transparent culture that upholds the safety of children and young people and ensures actions which do not are responded to appropriately
- b. Provide guidance on action that should be taken where abuse of children and young people within or outside of the organisation is suspected
- c. Provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse of children and young people will be reported and fully investigated.

Authorisation and Responsibility

Level	Position
Authorisation	Board
Responsibility for implementation	CEO

Scope

This policy applies to all Board members, employees, volunteers, consultants, contractors, and suppliers.

Policy

Child Safety Governance

commUnity+ structures, systems, policies, and processes are designed to ensure the organisation is responsive to the needs and voices of children and young people, legislatively compliant and enable broad-based participation, transparency and accountability.

commUnity+ builds risk identification and mitigation, along with continuous quality improvement, into the organisation's child safety structures and systems. Regular and systematic review and internal reporting support these measures.

The governance of the child safety system is a key responsibility of the organisation's Board and senior leaders and is described in its Delegations Instrument.

Procedures

Prevention

Child Safety Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct provides an explanation of the performance expectations of all team members. It requires those working with children to, at all times, demonstrate utmost respect, abide by all legal requirements, and not do anything that would directly or indirectly harm or cause disadvantage to them. The Code explains that it is the responsibility of all team members to create a safe and positive service environment for children and young people including:

- Acting in the best interests of children and young people and do no harm
- Promoting the safety and wellbeing, participation and empowerment of all children and young people regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation or background
- Actively working to listen to, empower and protect all children and young people
- Being alert to potential risks to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- Immediately raising any concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person
- Conducting themselves in a manner that is consistent with this code, their position and as a representative of our organisation.

commUnity+ team members will not:

- Use prejudice, racist, oppressive behaviour or language with children
- Discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability or sexuality
- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves
- Take or publish (including online) photos, movies or recordings of a child without parental / guardian consent
- Use physical means or corporal punishment to discipline or control a child
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
- Develop 'special' relationships with specific children for their own needs
- Show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention
- Have contact with children outside of commUnity+ duties.

Staff Recruitment and Screening

Qualifications, skills and attributes to meet the required role will be verified as part of recruitment processes. Suitability to work with children and other vulnerable people will be part of this screening. CommUnity+ requires that all team members hold a valid Police Record Check and Working with Children Check before being engaged with the organisation and throughout their association with the organisation. An International Police Check is required for all prospective team members who have resided overseas for 12 consecutive months in the past 10 years. This check must be finalised prior to the candidate commencing in a commUnity+ role.

Additionally, other screening methods and schemes will be used in accordance with the specific role, such as NDIS Screening Checks, contracted service provider (e.g. Consultant Supervisor Child-Safe/Indemnity Insurance), and current professional Registration and Membership eligibility (e.g. AHPRA, AASW, APS) checks.

At commUnity+, any person convicted of a child sex offence will not be permitted to either work or seek work in a position with us (refer to Staff Induction Policy) where that person's duties will potentially involve direct contact with children and where that contact is unsupervised.

Training

commUnity+ will regularly undertake, with all team members mandatory child safety training, to ensure understanding of organisational requirements and currency of external obligations.

Enhancing the professional skills and knowledge of team members working with children and other vulnerable people is part of enabling safe environments.

CommUnity+ will provide as part of its Learning and Development Program a range of opportunities to this end. Amongst these opportunities will be:

- Induction for all new team members which describes the organisation's child and young people safety commitments
- Regular compliance training which provides details of the child safety environment and requires the participation of all team members

Specific knowledge, skill or practice development relating to CommUnity+ programs and/or staff.

Supervision

commUnity+ will have in place a supervision regime that provides opportunities for team members, their line managers and/or clinical practice leaders to regularly examine incidents involving children and associated risks, child safety practice strategies and structures, performance challenges and training needs.

Child Safety Officer

commUnity+'s CEO and GMFCS will be responsible for implementing policy and for leading the child safety program. The GMFCS will act as the organisation's Child Safety Officer and will:

Provide Authoritative Advice

- Act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety.
- Liaise with organisational leaders to maintain the visibility of child safety.
- Lead the development of the organisation's child safety culture, including being a child safety champion and providing coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety.
- Keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals.
- Assist team members in child protection reporting by keeping oversight of all such matters.

Raise Awareness

- Ensure the organisation's policies are known and used appropriately.
- Ensure the organisation's child safety policy is reviewed and updated as planned.
- Ensure the child protection policy is available throughout the organisation, and publicly, so that the team, clients and others are aware that referrals/reports about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of CommUnity+ in this.
- Be alert to the specific needs of children in need, in particular those with additional vulnerabilities.
- Encourage among all staff a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.

Train

- Ensure each member of staff has access to and understands the organisation's child safety policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff.
- Make sure that mandatory and other skill/knowledge development occurs as planned for all team members.

Risk Assessment

Understanding and Mitigating Risk

Creating a child-safe organisation begins with a clear understanding of the potential risks to children and young people within commUnity+ and its work. That is, what could go wrong and what you can do to reduce or remove these risks.

commUnity+ risk management strategy includes the following steps:

- a. Identify the risks – A risk is anything that has the potential to cause harm to children and young people or enables that harm to occur.
- b. Assess and evaluate the risks – Determine the likelihood of each risk occurring and the severity of the consequences for children and young people should that risk occur.
- c. Manage and treat the risks in a timely manner – Develop an action plan to eliminate or reduce the risks to the safety of children and young people that have been identified and ensure that the actions are completed in a timely manner.
- d. Review and improve our approaches – Regularly review and reiterate our approaches to building and demonstrating a child safe culture.
- e. Reporting risks and mitigation strategies – CommUnity+ collects risk information at the organisational and programmatic level and reports this throughout the organisation to inform prevention and risk mitigation priorities and strategies, including relevant training.
- f. Risk identification and management is a shared organisational responsibility. Staff, students/interns, volunteers, and contractors are expected to share any risks to the safety of children with line management.

In relation to the safety of children and young people, the following risk assessment questions should be used to guide the identification of effective mitigation strategies:

- a. Risks to children and other vulnerable people
 - How vulnerable is the person/people?
 - Is there a history or pattern of significant concerns with this child/ren or other people in the family?
 - Are the family members aware of the concerns, capable and willing to take action to ensure the child/ren's safety and stability, and promote their health, wellbeing, and development?
 - Are the family members able and willing to seek help and use support services to promote the child/ren's safety, stability, wellbeing and development?
- b. Risks within programs and activities:
 - What could go wrong within the organisation or in any specific activity?
 - Are there any circumstances that expose children to risk?
 - Does CommUnity+ work involve physical contact between team members and children?
 - Is there a low level of family or other involvement?
 - Are there places where interactions between team members and children can be obscured from sight?
 - Are there circumstances where commUnity+ team members could be left alone with children?
 - Does the organisation work with people who are particularly vulnerable?

Response

Identifying potential abuse

Abuse is any action or non-action that hurts children or other vulnerable people or puts them in danger. It can include:

- Physical abuse (intentionally physically injuring a child or other vulnerable person, or threatening to)

- Sexual abuse (involving children and other vulnerable people in direct or indirect sexual activity)
- Emotional or psychological abuse (undermining children or other vulnerable people's self-esteem including witnessing violence in the home)
- Bullying (usually deliberate and repetitive, aggressive and threatening) or
- Neglect (failure to provide children and other vulnerable people with basic necessities of life or actions that result in risk to health and safety)
- Online abuse (e.g. grooming - sexting; image abuse)
- Identifying child abuse involves receiving a disclosure of abuse by a child, other vulnerable person or witness, or a combination of factors suggesting the likelihood of abuse or becoming aware of any of the following:
 - Physical abuse of, or non-accidental or unexplained injury to, children and other vulnerable people
 - Emotional abuse and ill treatment of children and other vulnerable people impacting on their stability and health and safety
 - Persistent neglect, poor care or lack of appropriate supervision/support, where there is a likelihood of significant harm to children and other vulnerable people
 - Persistent family violence
 - A likelihood of significant harm to children and other vulnerable people's stability and health and safety as a result of family or significant other/s substance misuse, mental illness, intellectual disability or other impacting factors.

Taking Action

Where a suspicion, or a reasonable belief, is formed that a child has been abused, or could be, action must be taken by all commUnity+ team members. This can be done with the support of the Child Safety Officer, People and Culture, a member of the Executive Management Team including the CEO, or the Board Chair.

Sexual Abuse

All commUnity+ staff who hold a reasonable belief that a child sexual abuse offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child (aged under 16) must disclose that information to police. It is a criminal offence not to disclose this information and this applies to all adults in Victoria, not just professionals who work with children.

More information about "failure to disclose" offence is available here:

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

Children and young people using commUnity+ Services

Where abuse is suspected, or a reasonable belief has been formed in relation to children and young people using commUnity+ services, team members must follow the steps outlined below:

Initial response procedure (when child abuse is suspected)

- Make notes - record what you observe. Date and sign the entry.
- Talk to the Child Safety Officer and raise your concerns. Gain an acknowledgement that your concerns have been taken seriously and record their response. Follow-up with the Child Safety Officer no longer than 24 hours later to monitor how your concerns have been dealt with.

- If not satisfied with the Child Safety Officer's response, consult with the People and Culture Manager, a representative of the Executive Management Team, the CEO or the Board Chair for support. Compare notes and brainstorm possible strategies.
- Develop action plans based on procedures - familiarise yourself with the legislative procedures and processes within the relevant jurisdiction and follow these accordingly.
- Complete a commUnity+ incident report.

Reporting procedure

Report the incident to the Child Safety Officer who will then contact the appropriate Child Protection authorities. The Child Safety Officer will ask you for certain information, including:

- Details - the child's or young person's name, age and where you encounter them.
- Indicators of harm - the reason for believing that the injury or behaviour is the result of abuse or neglect.
- Reason for reporting - the reason why the report is being made now.
- Safety assessment - assessment of immediate danger to the child or children.
- Description - description of the injury or behaviour observed.
- Child's whereabouts - the current whereabouts of the child or young person if known.

Cultural characteristics - any specific cultural characteristic or other details which will help to care for the child - for example, Aboriginality, interpreter or disability needs.

nb. A NOTIFICATION SHOULD STILL BE MADE, EVEN IF YOU DON'T HAVE ALL THE INFORMATION LISTED ABOVE.

Children in the Community:

If a commUnity+ team member has concerns about the welfare of child in the community the following actions apply:

- If the child is in immediate danger and concerns are life threatening, **ring Victoria Police: 000**
- If the child is not in immediate danger but the person has formed a reasonable belief that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect, a report to Child Protection is appropriate.
- The report must be made to the Child Protection intake service covering the local government area where the child normally resides. Telephone numbers to make a report during business hours are listed below.
- North Division intake: 1300 664 977
- South Division intake: 1300 655 795
- East Division intake: 1300 360 391
- West Division intake – metropolitan: 1300 664 977
- West Division intake – rural and regional: 1800 075 599

To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child after hours, call the Afterhours Child Protection Emergency Service: 13 12 78.

If there is concern about a child's wellbeing, but not a belief that the child is at risk of significant harm a referral to Orange Door is appropriate. The Orange Door provides support and assistance to families with the care and wellbeing of children, including those experiencing family violence.

Contact numbers for services in local government areas can be found at:

<https://orangedoor.vic.gov.au>

Information Sharing and Privacy

Privacy

All personal and/or sensitive information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved with such information managed according to our privacy statement unless there is a risk to someone's safety, relevant court orders are in place or other requirements apply including:

Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Reportable Conduct Scheme requires organisations involving children to notify the Commission for Children and Young People of alleged abuse (and other child-related misconduct) by workers or volunteers whether at work or not.

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme/>

Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS)

CISS enables authorised organisations and services to share information to promote the wellbeing or safety of children. Find more information on child information sharing.

Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS)

FVISS enables authorised organisations and services to share information to facilitate assessment and management of family violence risk to children and adults. Find more information on family violence information sharing.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM)

MARAM sets out the responsibilities of different workforces in identifying, assessing and managing family violence risk across the family violence and broader service system. MARAM will guide information sharing under both information sharing schemes wherever family violence is present. Find more information on the MARAM framework.

<https://www.vic.gov.au/about-information-sharing-schemes-and-risk-management-framework>

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the GMSS with endorsement by the CEO for approval by the Board to ensure that it continues to comply with relevant state or federal legislation or regulation.

Activities	Frequency
Review	Annually

Related Documents

Legislation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.) - Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic.) - Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reportable Conduct Scheme 2017 - Victorian Child Safe Standards 2015; 2022 - The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic.) - Family Law Act 1975 (Cth.) - The Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012 (Vic) - Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) - Privacy Act 1988 (Cth.) - Children Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2018
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	- Information Sharing Scheme
Standards and Guidelines:	- Child Safe Standards
Organisational Documents:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Code of Conduct Policy - CCS Service User Feedback Policy - Child Abuse Reporting Policy (to be adapted from related CCS reporting policies) - Privacy Policy - Recruitment and Selection Policy - Police Record and Working with Children Check Supervision Policy - Learning and Development Policy - Whistle-blower Policy - Counselling, Disciplining and Termination Policy - Risk Management Framework - Glossary of Terms

Version Control

Version	Code Type	Change	Authorised	Date
5	POL ORG	Update to bring in line with new Child Safety Standards (Vic)	Board	24 Feb 2022
6	POL020	Reclassification from Organisational Policy to Board Policy	Board	17 April 2023

Appendices

References

1. Australian Childhood Foundation: www.childhood.org.au
2. Kids Helpline: www.kidshelp.com.au
3. National Child Protection Clearinghouse: www.aifs.gov.au
4. National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN):
www.napcan.org.au
5. Stop Child Abuse: www.stopchildabuse.com.au
6. Child Abuse Reporting Procedures:
<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/HealthyLiving/child-abuse-reporting-procedures>

Important contacts

Child Protection (DFFH)	West Division Intake - metropolitan only - 1300 664 977 https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse
Child Protection Crisis Line (Victoria)	13 12 78
Orange Door	Inner Eastern Melbourne 1800 354 322 IEMA@orangedoor.vic.gov.au North Eastern Melbourne 1800 319 355 nema@orangedoor.vic.gov.au
Victoria Police	000