

The Centre's Child Safe Standards Policies and Procedures

The Centre Connecting Community in North & West Melbourne is committed to developing and delivering the safety, happiness and empowerment of all children within our charge, while notably celebrating the unique and diverse identities and experiences of local Aboriginal children and young people under 18 years of age.

Utilising the skills of volunteer medical and health care professionals, academics and teachers, tradespeople and caterers, as well as several tertiary students, The Centre coordinates carers who bring their knowledge and myriad life experiences to our youngsters.

The Centre follows and promotes a series of Child Safe Standards in compliance with the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People's legislated regulations. Our principle is to ensure all children and young people in The Centre's care are safe, happy and empowered, while being peacefully respected and stimulated to enjoy their cultural rights with The Centre's encouragement and support. This complies with Child Safe Standard (CSS)1.1.

Further, with reference to CSS 1.2, The Centre's philosophical and operational strategies equip all members to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture, thereby understanding its vital importance to the wellbeing and safety of local Aboriginal children and young people.

Within CSS1.3 The Centre has adopted and continually enacts measures to ensure no racism is ever tolerated by anyone at any level in our organisation. Any instances of racism against any child or young person is urgently addressed with appropriate consequences.

Regarding CSS1.4, The Centre actively supports and facilitates participation and inclusion within its myriad courses and activities by Aboriginal children, young people and their families.

Enacting CSS1.5, the complete range of The Centre's policies and systems aim to create a culturally safe and inclusive environment to meet the needs of Aboriginal children, young people and their families.

All paid and unpaid staff – including volunteers, interns and trainees – of The Centre are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of all children and young

people who engage with us. Paid and unpaid staff are expected to act in accordance with The Centre's Code of Conduct in all their physical and online interactions with children and young people under the age of 18 years. This expectation is regularly emphasised at The Centre between paid and unpaid staff on all professional levels.

Within our operations The Centre strives to involve families, carers and communities in our efforts to keep children and young people safe and happy. No matter your age, if you're a North & West Melbourne local, you're a stakeholder in The Centre.

Amongst new Community Safe Standards operating from July 1, 2022, The Centre has enthusiastically adopted CSS2, which embodies child safety and wellbeing in our leadership, governance and culture. This is enacted by ensuring:

- 2.1 The Centre is publicly committed to child safety.
- 2.2 A child safe culture is championed and modelled within all levels of The Centre from the top down and bottom up. This crucial behaviour is stringently maintained by executives, staff and volunteers.
- 2.3 The Centre's arrangements at all levels facilitate implementation of our child safety and wellbeing policy.
- 2.4 The Centre's Code of Conduct provides guidelines for staff and volunteers on their expected behavioural standards and responsibilities.
- 2.5 Our risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risk to children and young people.
- 2.6 Staff and volunteers at The Centre understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping.

Child Safe Standard 3 empowers children and young people about their rights to participate in decisions affecting them. It ensures those rights are taken seriously. In compliance with CSS3 The Centre must ensure, at a minimum:

- 3.1 Children and young people are informed about all their rights, including to safety information and participation details.
- 3.2 The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated.

- 3.3 Where relevant to the setting or context, The Centre may offer children and young people access to sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant information in an age-appropriate way.
- 3.4 The Centre's staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children and young people to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise any concerns.
- 3.5 The Centre has strategies in operation to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and young people.
- 3.6 The Centre provides opportunities for children and young people to participate and is responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening the youngsters' confidence and engagement.

Child Safe Standard 4 demands families and communities be informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing, so - at a minimum – The Centre ensures:

- 4.1 Families participate in decisions affecting their child/children.
- 4.2 The Centre engages and openly communicates with families and the local North & West Melbourne community about our child safe approach and relevant information is accessible.
- 4.3 Families and communities have input in the development and review of The Centre's policies and practices.
- 4.4 Families, carers and the community are informed about The Centre's operations and governance.

In compliance with Child Safe Standard 5, equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected within The Centre's policy and practice. In compliance, at a minimum The Centre ensures:

- 5.1 Staff and volunteers understand children and young people's diverse circumstances, so The Centre provides support and responds to those who are vulnerable.
- 5.2 Children and young people have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.

- 5.3 The Centre pays particular attention to the needs of children and young people with disability, those from culturally and diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.
- 5.4 The Centre pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal children and young people, especially providing and promoting them with a culturally safe environment.

Child Safe Standard 6 stipulates that people working with children and young people must be suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice. In compliance, at a minimum The Centre ensures:

- 6.1 Recruitment, including advertising, referee checks and staff and volunteer pre-employment screening, emphasises child safety and wellbeing.
- 6.2 Relevant staff and volunteers have current Working with Children checks or equivalent background assessments.
- 6.3 All staff and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their responsibilities to children and young people, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.
- 6.4 Ongoing supervision and people management is focussed on child safety and wellbeing.

Within Child Safe Standard 7, processes for complaints and concerns are specifically child focussed. At a minimum in compliance, The Centre ensures:

- 7.1 An accessible, child focussed complaint handling policy which clearly outlines the role and responsibilities of leadership, staff and volunteers, approaches to dealing with different types of complaint, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report.
- 7.2 Effective complaint handling processes are understood by children and young people, families, staff and volunteers, and are culturally safe.
- 7.3 Complaints are taken seriously, with prompt and thorough response.
- 7.4 The Centre has active policies and processes in place to address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether

or not the law requires reporting, and cooperates with law enforcement.

7.5 Reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

Child Safe Standard 8 stipulates that staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training. The Centre takes pride in ensuring:

- 8.1 Staff and volunteers are trained and supported to effectively implement this organisation's child safety and wellbeing policy.
- 8.2 The Centre's staff and volunteers receive training and information to recognise child abuse indicators, including symptoms of harm caused by other children and young people.
- 8.3 Staff and volunteers at The Centre receive training and information to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm.
- 8.4 Staff and volunteers at The Centre receive training and explicit information on how to develop culturally safe environments for children and young people.

Victoria's Child Safe Standard 9 ensures physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising any opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

In complying with Child Safe Standard 9, The Centre must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 9.1 Centre staff and volunteers identify and mitigate risks in our online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.
- 9.2 The online environment is used in accordance with The Centre's Code of Conduct and child safety and wellbeing practices.
- 9.3 Risk management plans consider risks posed by organisational settings, activities and our physical environment.
- 9.4 All facilities and services contracted by The Centre from third parties have procurement policies that ensure the safety of children and young people is maintained.

Victoria's Child Safe Standard 10 demands implementation of Child Safe Standards be regularly reviewed and improved. In complying with Child Safe Standard 10, The Centre ensures that, at a minimum:

- 10.1 Regular reviews are conducted for evaluation and improvement of child safe practices.
- 10.2 Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are regularly analysed to identify causes and system failures to inform continuous improvement.
- 10.3 The Centre reports on the findings of relevant reviews to staff and volunteers, community, families and their children and young people.

Child Safe Standard 11 – The Centre's Policies and Procedures document how The Centre is safe for children and young people.

In compliance with CSS 11, The Centre ensures that, at a minimum:

- 11.1 The Centre policies and procedures address all Child Safe Standards.
- 11.2 The Centre policies and procedures are documented and easy to understand.
- 11.3 Best practice models and stakeholder consultation informs development of The Centre's policies and procedures.
- 11.4 The Centre's leaders champion and model compliance with policies and procedures.
- 11.5 The Centre's staff and volunteers understand and implement policies and procedures.