

SAFETY AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY

SUMMARY

This Policy outlines Olympic Neighbourhood House's (ONH) commitment to promoting and protecting the wellbeing and safety of Children and Young People.

Olympic Neighbourhood House recognises and reinforces its responsibility to create a child safe environment.

Olympic Neighbourhood House is committed to the protection, welfare, engagement and support of Children and Young People under 18 years of age in accordance with:

- a. the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) and the Child Safe Standards;
- b. the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic);

SCOPE

This Policy applies to Olympic Neighbourhood House staff, volunteers, contractors and subcontractors, consultants, students and their families and visitors to Olympic Neighbourhood House.

This Policy applies to all activities undertaken as part of study, community development, work, socialising and any auspicing arrangements associated with ONH, whether that activity occurs on an ONH site, at a different site, or online.

This Policy applies to all learning and teaching and other activities undertaken by ONH in an online environment.

DEFINITIONS

Aboriginal Child: A person under the age of 18 who is of, identifies as and is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent

Adult: Any person aged 18 years and over (whether staff, students, volunteers, visitors, parents, carers or guardians).

Activity: Any ONH activity including educational, community development, recreational or other programs which take place on an ONH site, at a different site or occur online.

Child: Any person under the age of 18 years

Child Abuse or Harm: Any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or an offence under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 and or the infliction on a child of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm and serious neglect.

Child Safe Environment: An environment created to reduce opportunities for harm and abuse to children. A safe environment is one where children feel valued and empowered, one that has in place suitable safety strategies and one where families and the broader community are engaged with the organisation.

Staff: Anyone employed by ONH including volunteers, Committee of Management members and contractors

Student: anyone enrolled in a course or participates in any of the community development activities.

Young Person/Young People: A person/people currently under 18 years of age either enrolled or not enrolled as a Student.

POLICY STATEMENT

Legislative Context

Olympic Neighbourhood House is committed to the protection, welfare and support of Children and Young People in accordance with the:

- a. Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- b. Child Safe Standards;
- c. Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic);
- d. Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- e. Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)
- f. Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)
- g. Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme
- h. Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)
- i. Crimes Act 1914 (Cth)
- j. AHRC National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- k. DFAT Child Protection Policy 2017
- l. National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (Updated 2018), Chapter 4.2: Children and Young People

Child Safety and Wellbeing Commitments

ONH values children and young people and is committed to their safety and wellbeing. ONH commits to creating an environment in which children and young people are safe, respected, engaged and happy.

All Staff must abide by the Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy and the associated Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People - Staff Code of Conduct when interacting with Young People.

ONH has zero tolerance of Child Abuse or Harm.

All allegations and safety concerns made to ONH will be treated very seriously and consistently in line with ONH's policies and procedures.

ONH in accordance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards, has the following priorities:

Manage all allegations of child abuse, neglect and exploitation sensitively and expeditiously, and in accordance with principles of natural justice and procedural fairness.

Establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected, listened to and valued and that they have access to culturally appropriate support.

ONH will take every measure possible to ensure equity is upheld and ensure that diverse needs are respected in policy and practice and that young people of all sexualities and gender identities, including intersex Young People and all Young People with disabilities have access to culturally appropriate support and are empowered to participate.

Embed Child safety and wellbeing into organisational leadership, governance and culture

Ensure that people working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice and that staff receive induction and ongoing training, education and support relating to this Policy.

Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training

Ensure physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed

Ensure processes for complaints and concerns are child focused and any complaints and concerns raised by a Young Person or Adult concerning the safety and wellbeing of a Young Person, will be listened to and acted on appropriately.

Empower children and young people about their rights and ensure they are taken seriously when participating in decisions affecting them whilst ensuring that children and families have information about how to raise concerns. Children and families must be assured that ONH is committed to maintaining appropriate confidentiality when dealing with and reporting on all allegations of child abuse / harm and exploitation.

Ensure families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing

Ensure implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved

ONH commits to continuously reviewing and improving our systems to protect children and young people from all types of abuse and commits to reviewing policies and procedures so it is safe for children and young people

Safety and Participation of Children

ONH encourages all Children and Young People who participate in its Activities to express their views about matters that directly affect them or are of importance to them.

ONH will ensure that Children and Young People are provided appropriate information as to their rights and the standards of care to which they are entitled and are provided culturally appropriate guidance and support with regards to raising concerns, making complaints, or letting someone know if they feel unsafe.

Grooming

Grooming is a criminal offence and must be reported to Victoria Police.

This offence targets predatory conduct designed to enable later sexual activity with a child. Grooming can be conducted in person or online. Many offenders of sexual offences against children intentionally create relationships with victims, their families or carers in order to create a situation where abuse could occur. For this reason, parents, carers or other family members who have been targeted by offenders in order to gain access to a child are also victims.

Reporting Child Abuse and Child Safety Concerns

ONH has processes in place for responding to and reporting on suspected Child Abuse or Harm and concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a Young Person. These are specified in [Appendix 1 - Child Safety Reporting Process](#).

ONH has legal obligations to report child abuse to relevant authorities including to the Commission for Children and Young People and/or Child Protection Services,

ONH will work to ensure that all Children, Young People and Adults involved in Activities know what to do or who to tell if they observe actual or potential Child Abuse or Harm.

Failure to disclose

All adults who have a reasonable belief that an adult (a person 18 year or older) has committed a sexual offence of a minor under the age of 16 has an obligation to report any information they have to the Victorian Police. It is a criminal offence if you do not report unless the person has reasonable circumstances for not reporting in a timely manner.

Where a reasonable belief exists that a child is at risk, it must be reported as soon as practicable. Reasonable belief includes any event, incident or disclosure including a child stating they have been abused.

A reasonable explanation for not disclosing includes fear for your safety or the safety of another person (other than the person believed to have committed the sexual offence), or belief that the information has already been disclosed to the Victoria police and/or Child protection.

Failure to protect:

It is a criminal offence for a person in authority at an educational institute which cares for children or young people 16 and under, fails to reduce or remove any substantial risk of a child, that can become the victim of a sexual offence from someone over the age of 18 who is associated with the educational institute.

The organisation must take reasonable actions to ensure a child's safety where an impending threat or risk exists. Where a child is deemed to be at immediate risk, it is the responsibility of the organisation and mandated reporters to ensure the child's immediate safety. This includes protecting the child from any further risk or harm by removing the alleged staff member or other adult from having further contact with the child.

Review

ONH has a continuous improvement approach to reviewing policies and practices. Accordingly, ONH:

- a. Regularly reviews, evaluates and improves child-safe practices; and,
- b. Analyses complaints, concerns and safety incidents to identify causes and systemic failures of practices; and,
- c. Reports on relevant findings of reviews to management, and where relevant and appropriate, staff, families and young people.

PROCEDURES

Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People Procedure

Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People - Staff Code of Conduct

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION

Appendix 2 - Child Safety Reporting Guidelines

POLICY CONTROL

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