

POLICY & PROCEDURAL STATEMENTS

Topic: Child Safety and Wellbeing

Purpose: This policy is designed to inform all staff, tutors, volunteers, and Committee of Management of their obligations in relation to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. This policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct will be made publicly available on the ANH@E website and in induction packs for new personnel and families to help raise awareness about the importance of child safety and demonstrate our commitment to protecting children.

Scope: This policy applies to all activities in ANH@E which involve, result in, or relate to contact with children, and must be adhered to by the Committee of Management, all staff, tutors, and volunteers.

Definitions: *Child/Young person* is defined under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic), a child or young person is a person under eighteen (18) years of age. *Child safety* encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

Child abuse includes any act committed against a child involving:

- A sexual offence.
- A grooming offence.
- The infliction on a child of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, or serious neglect.

Child-connected work includes all work authorised by ANH@E and performed by an adult at ANH@E while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child Safety Officer (CSO) is the first point of contact for staff, volunteers, students and their families who have concerns about a child or young person. The CSO may provide advice and support to assist with making a report..

Responsibilities

Committee of Management (CoM)

The Committee of Management is ultimately responsible for the detection and prevention of child abuse and complying with the National Child Safe Principles and the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

Committee of Management responsibilities include:

- Ensuring appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place, including processes to respond to complaints, concerns, disclosures, with regular reviews.
- Implementing policies, procedures, and codes of conduct to ensure staff know how to identify and prevent child abuse and report it when it occurs or is suspected.
- Promoting a culture of child safety.
- Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at meetings.
- Ensuring all CoM members, staff, volunteers, and contractors undertake initial training on child safety and thereafter undergo annual refresher training.
- Approving updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to Committee of Management.

- When hiring Committee of Management members, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe.

House Manager

The House Manager is responsible for:

- Modelling a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- Enabling inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered.
- Reinforcing high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between individual students.
- Promoting regular open discussion on child safety issues within the House community including at staff meetings and sub-committee meetings.
- Facilitating regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing, and prevention of responding to abuse.
- Creating an environment where child safety complaints, and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.
- Appointing an investigator to investigate reports of child abuse and ensuring that the investigation is carried out in accordance with legislative requirements.
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and ANH@E's Codes of Conduct.
- Ensuring that all adults within the House community are aware of their obligation to report suspected child abuse or risk of abuse in accordance with these policies and procedures.
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe and adhere to the Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- Ensuring the House Manager's obligations under the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic) (i.e. the Reportable Conduct Scheme) are satisfied, and that the Commission for Children and Young People is notified in the required manner (and time periods).
- Providing support for staff, contractors, and volunteers in undertaking their child safety responsibilities.
- When hiring staff ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe.
- Working closely with the Committee of Management to ensure all staff, volunteers, including the CoM, and contractors undergo initial and annual refresher training on child safety.
- Undertaking prescribed initial and annual refresher training on child safety.

Staff, Volunteers, and Contractors

All staff, volunteers, and contractors share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and are required to:

- Promote child safety at all times and provide a safe Environment for children.
- Telephone Triple Zero ('000') if they believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse.
- Read and comply with this policy and the Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- Respond to a child disclosing an incident of child abuse or harm (or a risk of child abuse or harm), in a child-focused manner, with sensitivity and professionalism.

- Report any concerns about actual or suspected child abuse or harm as soon as possible to a Child Safety Officer or supervisor.
- Report any breach or suspected breach of this policy or the Child Safety Code of Conduct as soon as possible to a CSO or supervisor.
- Any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child needs protection from child abuse, may disclose that information to the police or the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH). If a person would like internal guidance or support with addressing their concerns, they are encouraged to speak with a CSO. This helps the House to meet its obligations to protect children from potential abuse to the greatest extent possible.
- Participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the House Manager, and always follow the child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.
- Identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct and Mandatory Reporting policy.
- Ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.
- Implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.
- Undertaking prescribed initial and annual refresher training on child safety.

Child Safety Officer

The House Manager and Director Early Learning are designated Child Safety Officers (CSOs) and responsible for implementing the Child Safe Standards policy and the mandated requirements of Ministerial Order 1359. CSOs will make reports on behalf of the House and ensure adequate records are kept. Staff may seek advice from the Child Safety Officer if they have concerns about child safe matters and when considering whether to make a report about a child in need of protection.

CSOs' responsibilities include:

- Overseeing investigations of complaints and disclosures.
- Reporting any risks to child safety.
- Maintaining adequate records of all complaints, disclosures, decisions, and actions taken in relation to a child safety complaint or disclosure.
- Providing support for children at risk or where an allegation, complaint, or disclosure has been made.
- Supporting others in the community to maintain a child safe environment.

The Youth Team (Senior Youth Manager and Youth Workers) are trained in child safety and available to listen, discuss and clarify issues confronting individuals in relation to child abuse and risk of child abuse and harm.

Policy: ANH@E is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. ANH@E has a commitment to **zero tolerance of child abuse**. We support and respect all children and young people and are committed to providing a child safe environment. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability, children who are unable to live at home and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.

We want all children and young people at ANH@E to be safe, happy, and empowered. Every person involved at ANH@E has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make. We have legal and moral obligations, which we follow rigorously, to contact authorities when we have concerns about a child's safety.

Our commitment to child safety

In supporting child safety, ANH@E is committed to:

- Ensuring all children feel safe, respected, and supported.
- Preventing child abuse by identifying risks early and removing and/or reducing the risks.
- Ensuring that processes and procedures are in place to protect children from child abuse.
- Valuing and empowering children to participate in decision-making processes.
- Ensuring that all staff (including contractors), Committee of Management, volunteers, visitors, and parents/carers, understand ANH@E's child safety guidelines and how to behave appropriately with and towards children.
- Complying with [Ministerial Order No. 870 and the Child Safe Standards](#).
- Complying with the [Worker Screening Act 2020](#) (Vic).
- Complying with the [Wrongs Amendment \(Organisational Child Abuse\) Act 2017](#) (Vic).
- Complying with the requirements of [The Reportable Conduct Scheme](#).
- Complying with reporting obligations under child protection law and criminal law. We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- Ensuring risks to children are identified, assessed, treated, and regularly reviewed.
- Ensuring robust recruitment practices for all staff, including contracted staff, Committee of Management, and volunteers undertaking child-related work.
- Employing appropriate screening to ensure a person's suitability to work with children and that they are aware of their responsibilities.
- Ensuring ongoing training and educating of staff, volunteers, and Committee of Management on child abuse risks.

Our children and young people

Children and young people are vital and active participants in our organisation, and the intention of this policy is to empower them. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

We will:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.
- Promote the cultural safety, participation, and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and with the required support can participate equally.
- Ensure that children who are unable to live at home are safe and with the required support can participate equally.

- Ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people are safe and with the required support can participate equally.
- Endeavour to deliver appropriate education about child abuse awareness and prevention.

Our parents/guardians and families

We encourage family/parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs child safe operations and builds the capability of children and young people and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities. ANH@E is committed to supporting and encouraging children and young people to use their voice to raise and share their concerns with a trusted adult at any time of need.

Our staff and volunteers

All staff, volunteers, and Committee of Management members must agree to abide by this policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

Training and supervision

Training and education are important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that *child safety is everyone's responsibility*. Training includes developing skills to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse, and to detect potential signs of child abuse. This training occurs annually or more often if required.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff, volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children), and Committee of Management members 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.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, the safety of children with a disability, children who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.

New employees, volunteers, and Committee of Management members will undergo an induction, including being referred to the Child Safety and Wellbeing policy (this document), the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct policy. New staff and volunteers will also be regularly supervised. This is to ensure they understand ANH@E's commitment to child safety and that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate, with reference to the ANH@E Child Safety Code of Conduct.

All staff will be monitored and assessed by regular performance reviews to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported to the House Manager and will be managed in accordance with ANH@E's Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct policy and procedures.

Recruitment

We will employ only suitably qualified and skilled people to work with children, and develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety

and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. ANH@E understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers it has ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We require all employees and volunteers to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening processes, including reference checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people prior to their engagement with ANH@E.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers and Committee of Management members, are required to hold a Working with Children Clearance (WWCC) and/or Criminal History Record Check (CRIMHIST) and to provide evidence of this. 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.

Individuals applying for a role as a tutor with ANH@E can be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) and supply evidence of their VIT teacher registration. A person holding an approved VIT registration means a criminal history check has been completed and is satisfactory.

A digital record of staff, volunteers, and Committee of Management members' WWCC, Criminal History Record Checks, and VIT Registration details will be contained in a password protected document and securely stored in a password protected environment on the House IT network.

All prospective volunteers are required to comply with our Volunteers policy, including in relation to assessing the suitability of prospective volunteers and obtaining checks required under this policy.

Allegations, concerns, and complaints

The decisions we make when assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff, volunteers, Committee of Management members, as well as parents/carers/families, children, and young people to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We are aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers reporting allegations of abuse or that for some communication in English may be a barrier. We will endeavour to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible.

ANH@E has protocols and procedures in place to enable all staff, volunteers, Committee of Management members, as well as parents/carers and children and young people, to raise any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns (refer to Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct policy).

All staff, volunteers, and Committee of Management members must follow ANH@E's Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct policy if there is an incident, disclosure, or suspicion of child abuse. Immediate actions should include reporting their concerns to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection, Victoria Police, and/or another appropriate agency and notifying the House Manager of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

ANH@E will always strongly encourage staff, volunteers, and Committee of Management members to report allegations of child abuse. ANH@E will always take action to respond to a complaint in accordance with the Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct policy. ANH@E will provide ongoing support for children and young people affected by child abuse.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, Committee of Management members, parents, or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to

ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it (refer to ANH@E Privacy of Information policy and privacy legislation).

Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child on social media). Refer to ANH@E’s Risk Management Policy and Risk Register & Management Plan.

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two (2) years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children can contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities, the LGBTQIA+ community and people with a disability.

Appendix A - Child Safety Code of Conduct

Related Policies and Documents

- Child Safe Standards
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Complaints and Appeals
- Further Education Tutors – Conditions of Employment
- Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct
- Privacy of Information
- Staff Recruitment, Employment, and Induction
- Volunteers
- Worker Screening

Status	Current
Effective Date	26 July 2023
Review Date	By July 2025
Approval Authority	Committee of Management
Enquiries	9808 2000