

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

PURPOSE

Village Early Education is committed to protecting every child from abuse, neglect, harm and inappropriate conduct.

Children's safety, rights and best interests are the paramount consideration in all decisions and actions relating to their education and care.

All staff, educators, students, volunteers and relevant persons must understand how to recognise and respond to child protection concerns and must comply with their individual reporting obligations.

Village Early Education will act promptly where there is a concern, disclosure, allegation or suspicion that a child has been harmed or may be at risk of harm.

This policy applies to child protection concerns arising within the Service and concerns relating to a child's family, community or other environment.

CHILD PROTECTION COMMITMENT

Village Early Education will maintain a child safe culture that:

- prioritises children's safety, rights and best interests
- takes all child protection concerns seriously
- supports children to speak about concerns and be listened to
- responds promptly to disclosures, allegations and indicators of harm
- supports staff to understand and meet their reporting obligations
- ensures child protection concerns are reported to the appropriate authorities
- does not require staff to investigate suspected abuse
- protects confidentiality
- supports children following a disclosure, concern or report
- works collaboratively with relevant authorities and support services
- continually reviews practices where child safety concerns identify opportunities for improvement.

UNDERSTANDING CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT AND HARM

Child abuse or harm may involve an act, omission or pattern of behaviour that harms a child or places their physical, psychological or emotional health, wellbeing or development at risk.

Child protection concerns may include:

- physical abuse

- sexual abuse
- grooming
- emotional or psychological abuse
- neglect
- family violence
- inappropriate conduct towards a child
- concerning or harmful sexual behaviour involving a child
- online abuse or exploitation
- other circumstances where a child's safety or wellbeing may be at risk.

Child abuse may occur within families, communities or organisations and may involve a parent, family member, staff member, educator, volunteer, contractor, another child or another person.

RECOGNISING A CHILD PROTECTION CONCERN

Staff must remain alert to signs, behaviours, disclosures or other information that may indicate a child has experienced, or is at risk of experiencing, abuse, neglect or harm.

A child protection concern may arise from:

- something a child says
- something another person reports
- injuries or physical indicators
- changes in a child's behaviour or emotional presentation
- repeated or concerning patterns
- interactions observed between a child and another person
- information about family violence or circumstances affecting the child's safety
- inappropriate behaviour by a staff member, educator, volunteer, student or other adult
- online or digital activity
- concerning or harmful sexual behaviours.

The presence of one indicator does not necessarily establish that abuse has occurred. However, a single indicator may still be significant and must not be dismissed.

FORMING A REASONABLE BELIEF

A person does not need proof that abuse has occurred before raising or reporting a child protection concern.

A reasonable belief may be formed through:

- a child's disclosure

- information provided by another person
- direct observations
- injuries or behaviours
- patterns of neglect or inadequate care
- family violence
- other information that reasonably raises concern for a child's safety or wellbeing.

Staff should clarify only the information reasonably necessary to understand the concern and determine what action is required.

Staff must not conduct their own investigation into suspected abuse, neglect or criminal conduct. Child Protection, Victoria Police or another relevant authority will determine what investigation is required.

RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE, CONCERN OR SUSPICION

Where a child discloses abuse or harm, or a child protection concern is identified, staff will:

- remain calm
- listen carefully
- take the child seriously
- allow the child to use their own words
- reassure the child that they did the right thing by speaking up
- avoid making promises that information will remain secret
- avoid leading, excessive or investigative questioning
- record the disclosure or concern accurately and objectively
- take immediate action where the child is unsafe
- make or support the required reports and notifications
- continue to support the child's safety and wellbeing.

Current Victorian PROTECT guidance and the applicable Four Critical Actions must be followed.

Where there is immediate danger or urgent medical assistance is required, Victoria Police or emergency services must be contacted on 000.

CONTACTING PARENTS OR CARERS

Parents or carers will be informed of child protection concerns where appropriate and consistent with advice from relevant authorities.

A parent or carer must not be contacted where doing so:

- may increase risk to the child
- may place another person at risk
- may compromise a police or child protection investigation
- is inconsistent with advice from Victoria Police, Child Protection or another relevant authority.

Staff must seek appropriate guidance where there is uncertainty about whether or when a parent or carer should be contacted.

MANDATORY REPORTING

Early childhood workers are mandatory reporters under Victorian child protection legislation.

A mandatory reporter who forms a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection due to physical or sexual abuse must make the required report to DFFH Child Protection in accordance with Victorian law.

Reporting a concern internally to a Centre Manager or Approved Provider does not replace an individual's mandatory reporting obligation.

Where a staff member continues to hold a reasonable belief that a report is required, they must fulfil their legal obligation regardless of whether another person agrees with the concern.

FAILURE TO DISCLOSE AND FAILURE TO PROTECT

Victorian criminal law includes obligations relating to child sexual abuse.

Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 may be required to disclose that information to Victoria Police unless a lawful exception applies.

Persons in positions of authority may also have legal obligations to take reasonable steps to reduce or remove a substantial risk of child sexual abuse where they have the power or responsibility to do so. These obligations operate in addition to mandatory reporting and other child protection requirements.

Staff must seek appropriate advice where they are unsure of their obligations.

CONCERNS INVOLVING STAFF, EDUCATORS, VOLUNTEERS OR OTHER ADULTS

Any concern, allegation, observation or disclosure that a staff member, educator, volunteer, student, contractor or other person has:

- abused or harmed a child
- groomed a child
- engaged in sexual misconduct
- used physical violence
- significantly neglected a child
- caused significant emotional or psychological harm
- engaged in inappropriate conduct
- otherwise placed a child at risk

must be reported immediately in accordance with this policy and the relevant child protection and Reportable Conduct procedures.

The person raising the concern must not:

- confront the alleged person
- alert them to the allegation
- investigate the matter
- discuss the matter with persons who do not need to know.

Immediate steps may be taken to protect children while reporting, investigation or regulatory processes occur.

An internal investigation, disciplinary process or complaint process must not delay a required report to Victoria Police, DFFH Child Protection, VECRA, the Social Services Regulator or another authority.

INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT

Children must not be subjected to inappropriate conduct while being educated and cared for by Village Early Education.

Inappropriate conduct may include behaviour that is inconsistent with professional standards or that could reasonably cause physical, emotional or psychological harm or involve violent or sexual conduct.

Any allegation, observation or suspicion of inappropriate conduct towards a child must be immediately escalated and managed in accordance with the Management of Inappropriate Conduct Procedure and relevant notification requirements.

REPORTABLE CONDUCT

An allegation involving a worker, volunteer or other relevant person may also fall within Victoria's Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Where reportable conduct may have occurred, the matter must be immediately escalated to the Approved Provider or designated Head of Organisation.

The matter will be managed in accordance with the Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy and applicable Social Services Regulator requirements.

Reporting under the Reportable Conduct Scheme does not replace any requirement to report to:

- Victoria Police
- DFFH Child Protection
- VECRA
- another relevant authority.

REGULATORY NOTIFICATIONS

Some child protection concerns, incidents, allegations or changes in child safety status must also be notified to VECRA.

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will ensure required regulatory notifications are completed within prescribed timeframes.

Notifications may include:

- incidents or allegations involving physical or sexual abuse of a child while the child is being educated and cared for
- complaints alleging a serious incident
- serious incidents
- reportable sexual conduct
- inappropriate conduct
- circumstances that pose a risk to a child's health, safety or wellbeing
- required changes relating to Working with Children Check or other relevant suitability status

A report made to one authority does not necessarily satisfy reporting obligations to another.

REPORTING OUTSIDE OPERATIONAL HOURS

Child protection and regulatory reporting obligations continue to apply outside ordinary Service hours.

Village Early Education will maintain arrangements that enable urgent child safety concerns and matters subject to short notification timeframes to be escalated and reported during weekends, public holidays and other periods when the Service is closed.

CONCERNING OR HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS INVOLVING CHILDREN

Children's sexual development can include age-appropriate curiosity and exploration.

Where behaviour falls outside expected developmental patterns, is coercive, persistent, harmful, distressing or places another child at risk, it must be treated as a child safety concern.

Staff will:

- ensure the immediate safety and wellbeing of all children involved
- respond calmly and without blame
- avoid labelling a child as a perpetrator or offender
- document the behaviour objectively
- escalate the concern
- follow applicable child protection, mandatory reporting and regulatory notification requirements
- seek appropriate guidance and support.

ONLINE ABUSE AND DIGITAL CHILD SAFETY CONCERNS

Suspected online grooming, exploitation, unlawful images, inappropriate digital communication or other online abuse involving a child must be treated as a child protection concern.

Where required, concerns will be reported to relevant authorities, which may include Victoria Police, the eSafety Commissioner or another appropriate authority.

The use of personal devices, capturing and storing images of children and other digital safety controls are governed by the Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Policy.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES REQUIRING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

A child or family may require additional support even where a concern does not meet the threshold for a statutory child protection report.

Where appropriate, Village Early Education may:

- discuss available supports with the family
- provide information about community services
- support referral to The Orange Door or another suitable service
- work collaboratively with professionals already supporting the child
- continue to monitor the child's wellbeing.

Family consent will be sought where appropriate, unless information sharing or action is otherwise authorised or required by law.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN FOLLOWING A CONCERN OR DISCLOSURE

Following a child protection concern or disclosure, educators will continue to support the child in a manner that is sensitive to their individual circumstances.

Support may include:

- maintaining predictable routines
- providing reassurance and emotional support
- ensuring access to trusted adults
- responding to changes in behaviour or emotional wellbeing
- supporting the child's participation and sense of safety
- implementing safety or support plans where required
- working with relevant professionals and authorities
- respecting the child's privacy.

Children will not be repeatedly asked to recount their experience unless required by an appropriate authority or professional.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Child protection information is highly sensitive and must be handled confidentially.

Information will only be shared where reasonably necessary to:

- protect a child
- make a required report or notification

- support an authorised investigation
- provide appropriate support
- comply with information-sharing legislation
- meet another legal obligation.

The person who raises a concern must not inform the alleged perpetrator unless specifically authorised or directed to do so.

Staff must not discuss child protection matters with unrelated staff, families or other persons.

INFORMATION SHARING

Village Early Education will share and request information where permitted or required under applicable child protection and family violence information-sharing laws.

This may include the:

- Child Information Sharing Scheme
- Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme
- MARAM Framework
- Children, Youth and Families Act
- other applicable legislation.

Information sharing will be undertaken in accordance with the Child Information Sharing and Family Violence Reforms Policy and Privacy and Confidentiality Policy.

PROTECTION AND SUPPORT FOR REPORTERS

Persons who raise genuine child safety concerns or make reports in good faith will be supported and must not be subjected to victimisation or retaliation.

The identity of a reporter will be protected in accordance with applicable legislation.

Staff may access appropriate wellbeing or professional support following involvement in a child protection matter while continuing to maintain confidentiality.

CHILD PROTECTION AND CHILD SAFETY TRAINING

Village Early Education will ensure persons required by law complete prescribed child safety and child protection training within required timeframes.

This includes:

- required national child safety training

- Victorian child protection and mandatory reporting training
- required refresher or advanced training
- induction into Village Early Education's child protection reporting procedures.

Training will support staff to understand:

- child protection law
- mandatory reporting
- recognising indicators of abuse and neglect
- responding to disclosures
- grooming
- concerning or harmful sexual behaviours
- inappropriate conduct
- reportable conduct
- online abuse
- applicable reporting and notification pathways
- information sharing requirements.

Training completion and renewal dates will be recorded in the OWINA Training Register.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND WORKFORCE REQUIREMENTS

Persons working or volunteering with children must meet applicable Working with Children Check, teacher registration, prohibition, worker registration and suitability requirements.

Detailed screening, verification and workforce register requirements are addressed in the Recruitment Policy, Staffing Arrangements Policy and relevant procedures.

Staff, volunteers and other persons subject to notification requirements must advise the Approved Provider of relevant changes to their Working with Children Check, registration or suitability status within required timeframes.

The Approved Provider will ensure any required notification to VECRA or another authority is completed.

RECORDING CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS

Child protection concerns, disclosures, observations and actions must be documented accurately, objectively and as soon as practicable.

Records should include, where relevant:

- date and time
- persons involved
- exact words used by a child where possible
- observations
- injuries or behaviours observed
- information provided by another person
- actions taken
- reports and notifications made
- advice received
- follow-up actions.

Records must distinguish between:

- what was directly observed
- what was said
- what was reported by another person
- professional observations
- assumptions or opinions.

Child protection records will be securely stored and retained in accordance with the Record Keeping and Retention Policy and applicable legislation.

WORKING WITH AUTHORITIES

Village Early Education will cooperate with Victoria Police, DFFH Child Protection, VECRA, the Social Services Regulator and other authorised agencies.

Staff must:

- follow lawful directions
- preserve relevant records and evidence
- provide information where authorised or required
- avoid actions that could compromise an external investigation

- support safety planning or other protective measures.

Internal processes may be adjusted or delayed where necessary to avoid interfering with an external investigation.

CHILD PROTECTION RESOURCES

Australian Human Rights Commission. [Child safe organisations](#)

Emerging Minds. [Supporting children who have experienced trauma](#)

[Kids Helpline](#)

[Lifeline](#)

NAPCAN - [Prevent Child Abuse & Neglect](#)

Raising Children Network. [Safeguarding children and child sexual abuse](#)

Sexual Assault Services Victoria. [Child Sexual Abuse in Early Childhood Education and Care Settings](#)

Stop It Now! [A child or young person's sexual behaviour](#)

[The Orange Door](#)

Victorian Government. [Guidance and resources to help early childhood services prevent, identify and respond to child safety concerns](#)

Victorian Government. [Family Violence Information Sharing and Child Information Sharing](#)

Victorian Government. [Identify signs of child abuse in early childhood](#)

Victorian Government. [Understanding your obligations to protect children](#)

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our *Child Protection Policy* will be evaluated and reviewed on an annual basis or earlier if there are changes to legislation, ACECQA guidance or any incident related to our policy. Feedback will be requested from children, families, staff, educators and management. All families will be notified 14 days before any policy change that may have a significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the Service or the family's ability to utilise the Service.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.

2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.
2.2.3	Child safety and protection	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding child safety, including the need to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND NATIONAL REGULATIONS

S. 2A	Paramount consideration—safety, rights and best interests of children
S. 4	How functions to be exercised
S. 5	Definitions: “serious incident”
S. 51	Conditions on service approval
S. 162A	Child protection training
S. 162B	Child safety training
S. 165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
S. 166	Offence to use inappropriate discipline
S. 166A	Offences relating to inappropriate conduct
S. 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazard
S. 172	Offence to fail to display prescribed information
S. 174	Offence to fail to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority
S. 174B	Offence for approved provider to fail to notify Regulatory Authority of any reportable sexual conduct committed by relevant staff members
Part 6A	Devices In Education And Care Services
S. 188	Offence to engage person to whom prohibition notice applies
S. 188A	Offence to give false or misleading information to approved provider about prohibition notice
S. 269B	National Early Childhood Worker Register
S. 269E	Approved provider must give information to the National Authority for the National Early Childhood Worker Register
12	Meaning of serious incident
84	Awareness of child protection law
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
87	Incident, injury, trauma and illness record

115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
128B	Child protection training
128D	Foundation child safety training
128E	Advanced child safety training
145	Staff record
149	Volunteers and students
154A	National Early Childhood Worker Register
154B	Approved provider must give information to the National Authority for the National Early Childhood Worker Register
155	Interactions with children
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
175	Prescribed information to be notified to Regulatory Authority
176	Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority
176B	Nominated supervisor, staff member or volunteer must notify approved provider of changes
176C	Approved providers must notify Regulatory Authority of changes
181	Confidentiality of records kept by approved provider
358	Working with children check—nominated supervisors, staff members and volunteers
366A	Reportable sexual conduct notified to Regulatory Authority

RELATED LEGISLATION

<i>Crimes Act 1958 (including the Failure to Disclose and Failure to Protect offences)</i>	<i>Family Law Act 1975 (Cth)</i>
<i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (including Reportable Conduct Scheme)</i>	<i>Family Violence Protection Act 2008</i>
<i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005</i>	<i>Children's Services Regulations 2020</i>
<i>Children's Services Act 1996</i>	<i>Worker Screening Act 2020</i>
<i>Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012</i>	

SOURCES

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2025). [Embedding the National Child Safe Principles](#)
 Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2026). [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)

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Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (n.d.). [Reporting requirements about children](#)

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2026). [Safe use of devices in education and care services](#)

Australian Government Department of Education. (2022). [Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#). V2.0, 2022

Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2023). [Mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect](#)

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Commission for Children and Young People. [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#).

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[Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010](#)

[Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011](#)

Victorian Government. [PROTECT for early childhood](#).

Victorian Government. [Creating child safe organisations](#).

Victorian Government. [Child Information Sharing Scheme](#).

Victorian Government. [MARAM Practice Guides and Resources](#).

Victorian Government. [Working with Children Check](#).

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY	Kelsey Pearce		
POLICY REVIEWED	AUGUST 2026	NEXT REVIEW DATE	AUGUST 2027
VERSION NUMBER	V10.08.26		
MODIFICATIONS	• annual policy review • introduced and improved headings and the overall structure – reorganising points as needed • removed duplicated and outdated content • removed reportable conduct as separate policy exists • updated content for accuracy, clarity and consistency • all references and sources checked for currency and updated as required		