CODE OF CONDUCT CHILD SAFETY – Process, Steps, Guidelines and Implementation

Aim: To develop, establish and maintain an ongoing child safe environment for all children where a culture of child safety is always at the forefront of our minds.

Code of Conduct Policy presented and discussed at the start of each year at Leadership, Management, High School and Primary School meetings. High School and Primary School to break into small groups and work through different scenarios and mandatory reporting throughout the year.

Child Safety as a standing agenda point on all meetings – Primary, Secondary, Management and Leadership.

Staff and volunteers (and all those working with children) to sign a copy of the code of conduct, acknowledging they have read it, understand it, and agree to abide by it.

Principal Induction presentation for volunteers and parent/carer help with child safe scenarios included.

Provide various child safe educational programs for students, staff and NCS community from internal and external providers.

Survey students to assist in developing Child Safe policy and process.

Ensure screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices is provided to reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel:

> Ensure potential applicants are aware of your organisation's commitment to child safety.

> Apply a stringent recruitment process to all appointments for roles that involve working with children.

Ensure that your recruitment and selection processes focus on factors that may indicate a risk to child safety,
i.e. "red flags" (e.g. reluctance to undergo a Working with Children Check or police check).

When hiring or appointing personnel who will work/interact with children, ensure that they have a full understanding of child safety and the relevant reporting protocols, and that they respect Aboriginal culture, cultural and linguistic diversity and the needs of children with a disability.

Carry out appropriate working with children/police and reference checks.

(See Part Five of Child Safety Toolkit for more on this topic.)

Have processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse:

REPORTING
Ensure a supportive environment for children, staff, volunteers or families who report allegations of abuse or child safety concerns – never discipline a staff member for reporting a concern (unless there is clear evidence that the complaint was made for an improper purpose such as retribution).

Train your staff and volunteers, families and children on your organisation's reporting procedures so that they know how to report abuse allegations, and to whom (Principal Induction presentation and staff meetings).

Train staff and volunteers on how to identify signs of risk (Staff meetings with supplied scenarios).

Ensure that those handling complaints understand when to notify authorities, including the police and child protection, of suspected child abuse.

Ensure that there is an information feedback loop – that is, that the person who made the complaint knows what has been done with that information so that they can have confidence that the organisation is handling the matter appropriately.

Publicise (e.g. on your website) the ways in which people can report concerns, tailoring messages for children and families and providing information in a variety of languages and relevant modalities (such as braille and assistive technologies, as appropriate).

RESPONDING
Your first priority should always be to ensure that children are safe. This may mean that you need to suspend the alleged perpetrator and provide them with alternative duties during the carrying out of an investigation (seek legal advice before standing someone down) and contact a support person for that child, including a parent or carer as appropriate.

Provide support and comfort to a child reporting abuse or safety concerns, and ensure that a child is never blamed or interrogated.

Provide ongoing support to all participants in the investigation (including the alleged perpetrator) and also ensure that all participants are aware of any Employee Assistance Program or counselling services available to them.

Regularly review your processes and policies and seek feedback on them to ensure that they are working to serve the community in which you support.

Have strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse:

Ensure that your risk management program includes a process designed to evaluate risks posed to children, taking into account the organisation's activities, size and resources, and the types of children you work with.

Have a risk management committee that regularly discusses child protection and any incidents/reports that have been made with an aim of assessing and limiting/eliminating any ongoing risk.

Remove risks to children where possible (e.g. terminate staff/volunteers who are not suitable to work with children – seek legal advice before terminating such a relationship).

Remove physical risks to children. The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services recommends that organisations working with children provide staff and volunteers with training in identifying children at risk of abuse and physical and organisational child abuse risks such as blocked-off/out-of-sight spaces (especially rooms with doors that can be locked), and roster staff with experience and qualifications to manage high risk environments.

Always learn from past lessons and talk about incidents/complaints at senior management level to ensure that learnings are shared and benefited from across the organisation.

Have strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children:

Provide children, including children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability, with accessible information about what child abuse is, their rights and how they can raise concerns about abuse – e.g. through information sheets, websites and social media.

Assist children to understand their right to make decisions about their body and their privacy through age-appropriate training carried out by child safety professionals such as child psychologists.

Gather feedback from children about your organisation's child-safe policies and processes and seek input on whether they would feel safe to raise concerns. Implement improvements based on this feedback.

Train staff and volunteers on methods of empowering children and encouraging children's participation.

Encourage participation and empowerment of children in a range of organisational activities (not just that relating to child safety), such as organisational planning and decision making.

Raise awareness in the organisation and the community about children's rights.

Reference:

CHILD SAFETY TOOLKIT How to create a child safe organisation March 2019 Edition

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Institute of Community Directors – Victorian Child Safe Standards