

THE CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

As part of the Victorian Government's commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Betrayal of Trust report, there is a new regulatory landscape surrounding child safety, underpinned by the **Child Safe Standards**.

The child safe standards apply to school staff (including volunteers and contractors), visitors and students' family members. Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility.

Essendon Keilor College is committed to the safety of all its students. We are ensuring that our key governance documents – philosophy, vision and mission statements, as well as relevant policies and procedures around student safety and wellbeing, capture the zero tolerance message of the child safe standards.

Key governance documents aim to:

- further develop and maintain community knowledge and expertise around the child safety standards
- record the school's commitment to zero tolerance for child abuse in a Commitment to Child Safe Policy
- introduce a child safety code of conduct for all staff
- affect recruitment processes for our school
- inform how volunteers and contractors are involved
- increase student knowledge and empowerment
- involve the whole school community in decisions around child safety
- ensure timely and appropriate responses to child abuse incidents and allegations; and
- modify, as necessary, the school's physical environment.

The purpose of our Child Safe policy is to:

- facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within Essendon Keilor College;
- work towards an organisational culture of child safety;
- ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs;
- provide guidance to staff/volunteers/contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation;
- provide a clear statement to staff/volunteers/contractors forbidding any such abuse;
- provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

Child Safe Policy Outline

Essendon Keilor College is committed to promoting and protecting at all times the best interests of children involved in its programs, including the International Student Program.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

Essendon Keilor College supports and respects all children, staff and volunteers. Essendon Keilor College is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

Essendon Keilor College has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at Essendon Keilor College is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

All people involved in the care of children on behalf of Essendon Keilor College will:

- work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of the organisation;
- be responsible for relevant administration of programs and activities in their area;
- maintain a duty of care towards others involved in these programs and activities;
- establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work;
- be fair, considerate and honest with others;
- treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas and opinions;
- act as positive role models in their conduct with children and young people;
- be professional in their actions;
- maintain strict impartiality;
- comply with specific organisational guidelines on physical contact with children;
- respect the privacy of children, their families and teachers/carers, and only disclose information to people who have a need to know;
- maintain a child-safe environment for children and young people;
- operate within the policies and guidelines of Essendon Keilor College; and
- contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse (telephone 000)

No person shall:

- shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade children or young people;
- unlawfully discriminate against any child;
- engage in any activity with a child or young person that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them;
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves;
- be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily and for more than a very short time;
- develop a 'special' relationship with a specific child or young person for their own needs;
- show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention;
- arrange contact, including online contact, with children or young people outside of the organisation's programs and activities;
- photograph or video a child or young person without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians;
- work with children or young people while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs;
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children;
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children; or
- do anything in contravention of the organisation's policies, procedures or this Code of Conduct

Child protection is a shared responsibility between all employees, workers, contractors, associates, and members of the Essendon Keilor College community. Therefore, all homestay providers must adhere to this policy.

All staff/volunteers/contractors are required to:

- familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, and Essendon Keilor College's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements;
- report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police and / or the state-based child protection service) and fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters;
- report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to their supervisor (or, if their supervisor is involved in the suspicion, to a responsible person in the organisation); and
- provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

Definitions

Child means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Child protection means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.

Child abuse means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child.

Child sexual assault is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

Reasonable grounds for belief is a belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- (a) The child is in need of protection,
- (b) The child has suffered or is likely to suffer "significant harm as a result of physical injury",
- (c) The parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

- a) A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
- b) A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- c) Someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
- d) Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; and/or
- e) Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

Reporting

Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who has grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify the appropriate child protection service or the police. They should also advise their supervisor/school administrator about their concern.

In situations where the supervisor/school administrator is suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the next highest level of supervision/school administration.

Supervisors/school administrators must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the College Principal and also to any external regulatory body such as the police.

Further information

Contact: Essendon Campus on 9319 1300

Website: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/childsafestandards