

2.1.3 Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Introduction

At Access inc. this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children are safe and feel safe.

Scope

Policy category: Operational

This policy applies to all workers of Access inc. Access inc. will support any worker or Board Member who has witnessed, been made aware of or suspects any violence, abuse, exploitation or neglect, has occurred, to make a report without fear of retribution.

Worker: Refers to any employees, volunteers, placement students and contractors of Access inc.

Definitions

Child, Children, Young person - a person who is under the age of 18 years.

Child abuse material - child pornography. Visual, written or other mediums used to depict abuse of children.

Policy Statement

This policy provides Access inc's approach to implementing the Victorian Child Safe Standards and the requirements of the Reportable Conduct Scheme and, Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 in our environment.

This policy informs the Access inc. community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety of children and young people across all areas of our work.

This policy is to be enacted in conjunction with Access inc.'s Human Rights and Discrimination policy, Preventing and Responding to Violence, Abuse, Exploitation and Neglect policy and Incident Management policy.

Statement of Commitment to Participant and Child Safety

All participants, all children and all young people have the right to be safe.

Access inc. welcomes and values participants, children and young people.

Access inc. is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all, upholding the rights to be treated with dignity and respect, and to be free from any form of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation or discrimination.

Access inc.'s organisational commitment includes a framework approach to practise to promote protection and respond to violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation or discrimination, with a no tolerance approach.

Whereby, providing a safe service provision and an environment where participants, children and young people are and feel safe, along with their voices are heard.

Procedures

Employee Code of Conduct

Our Employee Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and participants/children. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

Access inc. supports the understanding of participants/children so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from Access inc. The Employee Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing

Access inc. will operate a Participant and Child Safeguarding framework as described in Access inc.'s - 2.1.2. Preventing and Responding to Violence, Abuse, Exploitation and Neglect policy.

Access will identify, assess and manage risks to child safety in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our Access inc. risk register.

Diversity, Equity and a culturally safe environment

Access inc. we celebrate the rich diversity of our Access inc. community, and we are committed to establishing an inclusive and safe environment for all, where strengths of culture, identity, values and practices are respected and encouraged. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and seek their voice in our planning.

Child empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment for children and families. Supporting them to understand their rights and ways to share their concerns.

Family engagement

Our families and support networks have an important role to play in promoting safety and wellbeing, helping to raise any concerns and tailor service delivery.

Suitable staff and volunteers

Access inc. applies robust recruitment, induction, training and supervision practices to ensure that workers are suitable to work with participants and children.

Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness

Access inc. will ensure that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address participant and child safety and wellbeing matters.

Complaints and reporting processes

Access inc. fosters a culture that encourages their community to raise concerns and complaints and operates under incident reporting and complaints policies and procedures. Further, it operates these processes in line with privacy and information sharing policy and records management processes.

Reportable conduct scheme

Under the reportable conduct scheme, reportable conduct includes allegations against workers or volunteers of child abuse and misconduct involving children. For example, reportable conduct includes sexual misconduct or offences, grooming, 'sexting', child

abuse material, inappropriate physical contact with a child or other conduct that crosses professional boundaries concerning children.

The Reportable Conduct Scheme requires all allegations of suspected criminal conduct to be reported to Victoria Police as the first priority. The scheme maintains the primacy of an investigation by Victoria Police of any allegations of criminal misconduct.

Reportable conduct' is defined in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* to include:

- (a) a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of a child; or
- (b) sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of a child;
or
- (c) physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child; or
- (d) any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child; or
- (e) significant neglect of a child.

Notifications of reportable conduct must also be made to the Commission for Children and Young People. This does not replace any existing requirement for organisations to report client incidents or professional misconduct to a relevant government department or statutory body.

Review of child safety practices

The Participant and Child Safeguarding framework steps out review processes.

Responsibilities:

Workers of Access inc. must:

- Uphold the Code of Conduct
- Ensure that safeguards are understood and implemented
- Report immediately to the CEO/their manager of any incidents, allegations or concerns related to child safety or wellbeing.

The CEO of Access inc. must:

- Uphold the Code of Conduct

- Provide leadership on safeguards and promote regular discussion.
- Ensure effective participant and child Safety and Wellbeing governance policies, procedures, and practices are in place and followed
- Provide governance over the incident reporting process.
- Ensure the reporting obligations to the Police, the Commission for Children and Young People and other Regulatory Bodies for any in-scope incidents within the set timeframes of The Commission and Regulatory Bodies.
- Coordinate any follow up reporting requirements to The Commission and regulatory bodies within timelines.

The members of the Access in. Board must:

- Uphold the Code of Conduct
- Lead a culture of safety for participants and children within Access inc. and the broader. community.

Referenced Documents:

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*
- *Victorian Child Safe Standards*
- *Reportable Conduct Scheme*
- Preventing and Responding to Violence, Abuse, Exploitation and Neglect policy.
- Human Rights and Discrimination policy
- Incident management policy
- Participant and Child Safeguarding framework
- Access inc. risk register

Date of Endorsement: 01/05/2023

Next Review Date: 01/05/2028
