

Child Safe Policy

Purpose

All children at Childhood Dementia Initiative have a right to feel safe, protected and included.

This policy is part of our organisation's ongoing commitment to protecting the children in our care from harm and abuse. It:

- outlines the child safe practices our organisation has put in place to minimise the risks to child safety
- sets out what is required from staff, including volunteers and others who interact with our organisation, so they know what is expected from them to keep children safe.

Our commitment to child safety

At Childhood Dementia Initiative we commit to the safety and wellbeing of every child in our care. Please read our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety, which is available on our website.

Our organisation ensures services and activities are inclusive of all children, including children with diverse needs.

Scope and audience for this policy

The policy describes what is required from all staff and volunteers in the organisation when taking part in any activities, services and events that involve children.

Responsibilities for children's safety

Everyone in our organisation is expected to carry out the requirements specific to their role to keep children safe. This includes:

- upholding our organisation's commitment to child safety
- reading, signing and upholding the behaviours set out in our Child Safe Code of Conduct
- meeting requirements across all other child safe policies and procedures, including child safe recruitment practices and risk management
- taking part in our regular reviews of our child safe documents
- reporting all breaches of our policies or any allegations of child harm or abuse, and meeting all external reporting obligations
- completing relevant child safe training.

Please contact our CEO or Operations Manager with any of your child-safety related questions or concerns.

Active participation of children, families and communities

- All our child-related policies and procedures are easily accessible on our website and offline for everyone who accesses our services and events, including children, parents, carers and community members.
- Children, parents and carers from diverse backgrounds and circumstances are encouraged to provide feedback on our child-related policies and procedures, including our Child Safe Code of Conduct that describes acceptable and non-acceptable behaviours and our Child Safe Risk Management Plan.
- We provide opportunities for children to provide feedback to our management, board or committee on what makes them feel safe, supported and included.

Definitions of harm and abuse

Psychological abuse (also known as emotional abuse)

This includes bullying, threatening and abusive language, intimidation, shaming and name calling, ignoring and isolating a child, and exposure to domestic and family violence.

Physical abuse

This includes physical punishment, such as pushing, shoving, punching, slapping and kicking, resulting in injury, burns, choking or bruising.

Sexual abuse

This includes the sexual touching of a child, grooming, and production, distribution or possession of child abuse material.

Grooming

This is a process where a person manipulates a child or group of children and sometimes those looking after them, including parents, carers, teachers and leaders. They do this to establish a position of 'trust' so they can then later sexually abuse the child.

Misconduct

This is inappropriate behaviour that may not be as severe as abuse, but could indicate that abuse is occurring and would often be in breach of an organisation's Child Safe Code of Conduct. This could include showing a child something inappropriate on a phone, having inappropriate conversations with a child or an adult sitting with a child on their lap.

Lack of appropriate care

This includes not providing adequate and proper supervision, nourishment, clothing, shelter, education or medical care.

What the policy covers

Social media use and online communication

Staff and volunteers must never communicate privately with children online or on social media. Any necessary online communication should include the child's parent or carer in the correspondence.

Photography and the use of images

Photos and videos of children can only be taken with the permission of parents. Parents must also approve any images used on our social media channels.

Private information including genetic diagnosis

Private information of children (including genetic diagnosis which is not already publicly available) must not be shared outside the organisation without parental consent.

Physical contact

Physical contact with children should be kept to a minimum. Everyone involved in the organisation is expected to have healthy physical boundaries with children.

Gifts and benefits

Staff and volunteers must never give gifts to children, or bestow benefits of any kind to a child, unless they have direct permission from the child's parents or carers.

Out of hours contact with children

Staff and volunteers must let us know about any out-of-hours contact they have with children in our care. It is unacceptable for staff or volunteers to participate in the lives of children outside the organisation without a valid reason. Professional boundaries with the children in our care must be maintained at all times.

Illness and injury management

Injuries must be reported to the first aid officer on duty and first aid administered in a safe space within lines of sight of other adults.

Child Safe Reporting Policy

Our Child Safe Reporting Policy sets out requirements and procedures for complaints, allegations, disclosures and reports, and external reporting obligations.

Reportable conduct definitions

Children's Guardian Act 2019 defines reportable conduct as:

- a sexual offence
- sexual misconduct
- ill-treatment of a child
- neglect of a child
- an assault against a child
- an offence under s 43B (failure to protect) or s 316A (failure to report) of the Crimes Act 1900
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

The definitions of harm and abuse listed below are based on those in part 4, section 20 of the *Children's Guardian Act 2019*.

Types of complaints (what to report)

All complaints should be reported. This includes:

- criminal conduct
- disclosures or reports of abuse
- risk of significant harm (ROSH)

- reportable allegations (an allegation that an employee has engaged in conduct that may be reportable conduct)*
- unacceptable behaviour around children and young people that breaches our Child Safe Code of Conduct.

Making an external complaint/ report

It can be a criminal offence for adults not to report to police if they know, believe or ought reasonably believe that a child abuse offence has been committed against another person. In addition, it can be a criminal offence for people employed in an organisation that provides child-related services if they fail to reduce or remove the risk of a child becoming a victim of child abuse.

Making an internal complaint

Everyone engaged to work or volunteer at Childhood Dementia Initiative must make an internal report about any child abuse or misconduct concerns they either observe or are told about.

The person making the internal report will not be penalised. A failure to report, or preventing another person from reporting, will be considered misconduct.

All breaches and disclosures must be reported to the CEO or Operations Manager.

Reporting Obligations and Processes

Detail on Reporting Obligations and Processes can be found in OCG's Reporting Obligations and Processes handbook.

Child Safe Recruitment, Induction and Training Policy

The aim of this policy is to make sure that staff responsible for recruitment, induction and training of staff and volunteers at Childhood Dementia Initiative uphold our child safe recruitment, induction and training practices.

The child safe recruitment and induction processes set out in this policy must be applied to anyone we are considering for a child-related roles.

This includes roles that involve any of the following:

- supervising children
- being alone with children or engaging with them in a way that is not observed or monitored
- taking part in activities with children away from the organisation's usual location
- having access (online or paper based) to a child's or children's personal and/or confidential information
- transporting children
- having any other type of unmonitored contact with children.

Processes for child safe recruitment for staff and volunteers

1. Include our commitment to child safety in our advertising
2. Conduct a robust interview process for new employees
3. Check references
4. Screen and verify applicant's Working with Children Check
5. Undertake a broader national criminal history check or other checks for specific roles or circumstances

Volunteer screening

Before commencing, volunteers working or interacting directly with children in our organisation must also have a cleared and verified Working with Children Check, unless they are exempted. This should follow the processes set out above for new employees.

Where possible, we undertake an informal interview with new volunteers, as part of our screening process. This should follow the general principles outlined above for employees.

If we are unable to conduct an interview, we ask volunteers to fill out a child safe questionnaire before they are permitted to work with children. This asks them to describe their beliefs and values in relation to working with children, and what they understand about being a child safe organisation.

Volunteers should also provide at least one referee – ideally someone who has worked with them in a previous role (paid or unpaid). We check with the referee whether they have any issues with the person working with children.

Child safe induction

At Childhood Dementia Initiative we recognise that making sure a staff member or volunteer is safe and suitable to work with children is an ongoing process. Inductions for staff and volunteers include:

- an overview of all our child safe documents, including our Child Safe Code of Conduct (to be read and signed), the Child Safe Risk Management Plan and our Child Safe Reporting Policy, ensuring that that new staff and volunteers are advised of their reporting obligations and how to identify and raise a child safety concern
- a tour of our premises explaining any physical risks new recruits should be aware of (which are included in our Child Safe Risk Management Plan) and relevant behaviours on site as set out in the our Code of Conduct, including the use of personal devices
- ensuring new recruits complete required child safe training (see below), and
- monitoring and supervision.

We support new recruits and volunteers with appropriate instruction and feedback when needed, including regular oversight as they become familiar with the new role.

There is also a probationary period or new workers are on a fixed term contract to make sure they are a good fit with our organisation.

Child safe training

New staff and volunteers should complete required child safe training. We encourage everyone to do introductory child safe training through the OCG.

Staff and volunteers also receive ongoing child safe training. We encourage everyone to do additional child safe training through the OCG, dependent on their role in the organisation.

Child Safe Code of Conduct review

Staff and volunteers are told when we are reviewing our child safe policies and we invite them to contribute. When our Child Safe Code of Conduct is reviewed and updated, staff and volunteers must be asked to re-read and sign it. Signed copies should be kept on file.

Other related child safe documents

Childhood Dementia Initiative has a range of other key documents that relate to child safety. These can be accessed at childhooddementia.org and include:

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Our public commitment to prioritising child safety across our organisation.

Child Safe Code of Conduct

Guides the day-to-day behaviours of adults interacting with children at the organisation.

Child Safe Risk Management Plan

Describes the specific risks at the service that could affect children's safety and identifies the protective strategies used to lower each risk.

Related legislation, regulations and standards

Childhood Dementia Initiative has to understand and comply with a number of NSW child protection laws and schemes. These include:

- § NSW Child Safe Scheme
- § Children’s Guardian Act 2019
- § Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
- § Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013
- § Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- § Crimes Act 1900
- § Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)
- § Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998.

Next review date

16th March 2026, or earlier if there are any critical incidents