

Child Safety

Commitment

At Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd, we have a responsibility to the children who come into contact with our staff, and the families of those children, to ensure that children are protected from any type of abuse. Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd staff, students and other representatives have a legal, moral and ethical responsibility to protect these children and take actions where they believe there is a requirement to do so.

Objective

Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people accessing our services and the welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where young people feel safe and enjoy learning.

Scope and Application

This policy is applicable to all Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd staff, management, students, volunteers and contractors.

Responsibility

Society as a whole shares responsibility for promoting the safety and protection of children from abuse. All members of Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd have their role to play – trainers, lawyers, social workers, staff, administrators, parents / guardians, volunteers and students. That said, Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd's Executive Team is committed to leading from the front and engaging in a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child protection issues.

Staff, managers, students and volunteers are encouraged to take an active role in developing and maintaining a child safe environment at Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd and are provided with opportunities to contribute and give feedback in the development of Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd's policies and practices. Students and volunteers are also made aware of the procedures to report or disclose abuse or concerns for their safety or the safety of others.

Child safety is the responsibility of everyone at Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd.

Relevant Legislation

The relevant legislation covering all aspects of Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd's work in delivering training, legal services and family services across Victoria is the *Children,*

Youth and Families Act 2005 (VIC.).

Additional legislation is also of relevance and listed below.

Principle Act:

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)

Other Relevant Legislation:

Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic.)

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act

The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic.)

Family Law Act 1975 (Cth)

The Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012

Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)

Staff Recruitment and Screening

At Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd, any person convicted of a child sex offence will not be permitted to either work or seek work in a position with us (refer to Staff Induction Policy) where that person's duties will potentially involve direct contact with children and where that contact is unsupervised. We will ensure that all staff members comply with the appropriate screening requirements relevant to the State or Territory in which they work, such as the requirement to hold a Working with Children Check. We will also ensure we have effective staff complaint management, investigation, disciplinary and reporting systems in relation to allegations of child abuse, including the appointment of a Child Safety Officer. Teachers and other staff are required to undertake Working with Children Checks (refer to Organisational Policy on staff employment conditions).

Child Safety – Code of Conduct

Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd staff and volunteers will:

- Treat every child with dignity and respect regardless of individual differences;
- Conduct themselves in a manner consistent with their position as a representative of our organisation;
- Promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of all users of our services;
- Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of clients with a disability;
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of linguistically and culturally diverse people;
- Respect cultural, religious and political differences;
- Help provide an open, safe and supportive environment for all to interact and socialise;
- Immediately raise any concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child in accordance with the reporting procedures (see below);

- Listen to children, take their concerns seriously and allow them to have a say in the decisions that affect them;
- Refer matters to the Police as soon as any concerns for a child's safety are raised;
- Respect the privacy of clients of our services and their families and only disclose information to people who have a need to know;
- Avoid being alone with children and ensure that other adults are present when working around children; and
- Report any breaches of this Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd staff will not:

- Use prejudice, oppressive behaviour or language with children;
- Discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability or sexuality;
- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves;
- Take or publish (including online) photos, movies or recordings of a child without parental / guardian consent;
- Use physical means or corporal punishment to discipline or control a child;
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse;
- Develop 'special' relationships with specific children for their own needs;
- Show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention; or
- Have contact with children outside of Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd duties.

Sources of Information

- Australian Childhood Foundation: www.childhood.org.au
- Kids Helpline: www.kidshelp.com.au
- National Child Protection Clearinghouse: www.aifs.gov.au
- National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN): www.napcan.org.au
- Stop Child Abuse: www.stopchildabuse.com.au

Child Protection Procedures

It is a legal requirement for Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd representatives to report child abuse or victimisation if it is observed or suspected. All adults are required to report to Police if they know, or reasonably believe, that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16. It is a criminal offence to fail to comply with this obligation.

More information about "failure to disclose" offence is available here: <http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>

The following procedure and guidelines are to be applied.

How to recognise abuse in children ¹

The following are the general indicators of child abuse and neglect that may be observed. It should be noted that the presence of one or more of these indicators does not by itself prove child abuse, but it may alert you to the possibility of child abuse.

- A child or young person tells you that he or she is being abused or hurt.
- You notice sudden or unexplained changes in mood or behaviour of a child or young person.
- You notice frequent or unexplained bruises or injuries on a child or young person.
- You see a child or young person with low self-esteem.
- You see a child or young person with poor hygiene.
- You notice that a child or young person becomes withdrawn or unresponsive.
- You notice a child or young person with a lot of exaggerated fears.
- You notice that a child or young person seems to lack trust in familiar adults.
- You notice that a child or young person has serious difficulties relating to peers and/or adults.
- You see a child or young person who is always angry or aggressive.
- You find out that a child or young person has difficulty sleeping and experiences nightmares.
- You notice a child or young person experience a change in eating patterns.

Initial response procedure (when child abuse is suspected)²

- Make notes - record what you observe. Date and sign the entry.
- Talk to the Child Safety Officer and raise your concerns. Gain an acknowledgement that your concerns have been taken seriously and record their response. Follow-up with the Child Safety Officer no longer than 24 hours later to monitor how your concerns have been dealt with.
- If not satisfied with the Child Safety Officer's response, consult with a representative of the Executive Management Team for support. Compare notes and brainstorm possible strategies.
- Develop action plans based on procedures - familiarise yourself with the legislative procedures and processes within the relevant jurisdiction and follow these accordingly.

Reporting procedure³

Report the incident to the Child Safety Officer, as appointed by the CEO, who will then contact the appropriate Child Protection authorities. The Child Safety Officer will ask you for certain information, including:

- Details - the child's or young person's name, age and where you encounter them.
- Indicators of harm - the reason for believing that the injury or behaviour is the result of abuse or neglect.
- Reason for reporting - the reason why the report is being made now.

¹ www.stopchildabuse.com.au

² http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/child_abuse_reporting_procedures?opendocument

³ Ibid.

- Safety assessment - assessment of immediate danger to the child or children.
- Description - description of the injury or behaviour observed.
- Child's whereabouts - the current whereabouts of the child or young person if known.
- Cultural characteristics - any specific cultural characteristic or other details which will help to care for the child - for example, Aboriginality, interpreter or disability needs.

PLEASE NOTE - A NOTIFICATION SHOULD STILL BE MADE, EVEN IF YOU DON'T HAVE ALL THE INFORMATION LISTED ABOVE.

Important phone contacts

Victoria - Child Protection Crisis Line: 13 12 78

Please contact the Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre on 8312 2020 if you need further legal information.