

# Family Day Care

## Child Safe Environment Policy

**Section: 2**

**Policy ID Number: 2.1**

**Link to National Quality Standard: 2.2, 2.2.3**

**Link to Education and Care Services National Legislation: As165, As166, As167, As171, r84**

### 1 Policy Statement

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Children's safety and wellbeing are vital to Family Day Care, and all Coordination Unit staff and Educators are committed to keeping all children safe from harm and abuse.

Children will be provided an environment that is safe and healthy, and where they are empowered and confident to raise concerns for their safety and/or wellbeing.

All Coordination Unit staff and Educators will adhere to the [Merri-bek City Council Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#) which supports compliance with the Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme.

### 2 Rationale

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Family Day Care is committed to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation, where protecting children and preventing and responding to child abuse and harm is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of all Educators, Educator family members, work experience/work placement students and volunteers irrespective of their involvement in child related duties.

To ensure

- all children are provided a safe environment
- ongoing training and understanding of responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe.
- any incidents of suspected abuse or harm against children are reported and investigated appropriately and thoroughly.

### 3 Procedures

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**Please Note:**

- Information in this policy relates to various types of abuse of children, including sexual and physical abuse, and some readers may find this triggering. Please seek support if required, links are provided in **Appendix B - Support links**
- throughout the procedures there will be reference to 'any type of abuse and harm'. The types of abuse and harm are outlined in the definitions section.

#### 3.1 General

- The FDC environment will be set up in a manner that promotes safety for children, Educators will:
  - develop responsive relationships with children where they listen to children and seek their feedback and input;
  - respond to children's requests and implement their feedback into their programs; and
  - provide children appropriate experiences to:
    - empower children and develop their confidence; and
    - support their learning about keeping themselves safe; and

- ensure they always directly supervise children, and they are not left alone with household members or friends.
- Children will be listened to and any disclosure a child makes about any type of abuse or harm will be taken seriously and responded to immediately.
- Educators will observe children's presentation and behaviour and note anything that may indicate any type of abuse or harm and will respond to this immediately.
- Educators will record the reason/s they believe the child is or has been abused or harmed, including the date/s and time/s of any observation/s and/or disclosure/s. This will be documented on the pre-existing or unknown injury/incident report. If the child discloses information to the Educator, they should write down the exact words the child has said.
  - If a child discloses abuse or harm to an Educator, they will listen and record this information. **Appendix A - Supporting a child when they make a disclosure** provides information to guide Educators if a child discloses abuse or harm.
- Educators will communicate any concerns they have for a child with the Coordination Unit immediately.
- It is acknowledged that any incidents of abuse or harm are highly emotional. Support may be offered to children, families, Educators and Coordination Unit staff as appropriate.

### 3.2 Training

- Child safety and wellbeing will be covered in induction for new Educators and applicants will be required to provide evidence that they have completed training in relation to child safety and wellbeing within the 12 months prior to registering.
- The Children's Services Coordinator, all Resource Officers and all Educators will undertake training annually in relation to child safety and wellbeing. This may be done using an online module or in person. Educators will provide a copy of their certificate upon completion the training will be noted on all staff and Educator records.
  - Training could be more regular if there are changes to legislative requirements that need implementation or if it is noted that Coordination Unit staff and/or Educators do not comprehend their responsibilities.

### 3.3 Reporting

- In Victoria all adults have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police if they have information that leads them to form a 'reasonable belief' that an adult has sexually offended against a child under 16 years of age.
- If a child and/or an Educator are at immediate risk the Educator must call the police on **000**.
- Coordination Unit staff and/or Educators will report any incidents of suspected abuse or harm of any type to the appropriate authorities.
- the Coordination Unit or the appropriate authority must be notified immediately if an Educator suspects a child has been subject to any type of abuse or harm. If the educator reported directly to an authority, they must notify the Coordination Unit as soon as possible. Educators can call the emergency phone if outside business hours.
- The Council's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy also provides a reporting process for suspected abuse or harm. In addition to reporting to external authorities, child safe incidents must also be reported in Council's Incident Management System. Coordination Unit staff will manage this process.
- Any disclosure by a child, observation or report by a parent, Educator or Coordination Unit Staff member, or any adult, about an Educator or staff member's conduct or behaviour with a child/ren, will be:

- lodged in the Council's incident management system; and
- managed according to Council's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure; and
- investigated thoroughly; and
- reported to the Commission for Children and Young People if deemed a reportable conduct (see definitions) incident.

The outcome will be determined after the investigation.

- If the situation arises that a report is made about the conduct or behaviour of a staff member or an Educator with a child/ren, the family/families of any child/ren this relates to will be notified if permitted and support may be offered.
- In addition to other reporting the Coordination Unit will report all incidents of suspected abuse or harm to the Department of Education.

## 4 References

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- [Education and Care Services National Law Act](#)
- [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)
- [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005](#)
- [National Quality Standards](#)
- [Department of Education](#)
- [ACECQA](#)
- [MCC Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Child, Youth and Families Support Information](#)
- [CCYP – The 11 Child Safe Standards](#)

## 5 Definitions

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Term	Definition
<b>Types of Abuse and Harm</b>	
<b>Sexual abuse</b>	<p>Child sexual abuse is when an adult or child involves a child in any kind of sexual activity. Some examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Asking a child to look at sexual images or videos;</li> <li>○ A child being shown someone else's private parts or someone else encouraging or enforcing a child to show their private parts;</li> <li>○ Doing anything sexual with or to a child's body;</li> <li>○ Making a sexual comment to a child or about children;</li> <li>○ Touching a child either above or under clothing in a way that makes the child feel uncomfortable or encouraging or forcing a child to touch themselves or someone else in a sexual way.</li> </ul>
<b>Physical abuse</b>	<p>Physical abuse occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm, from an injury inflicted by a child's parent, caregiver or any other adult. The injury may be inflicted intentionally or may be the inadvertent consequence of physical punishment or physically aggressive treatment of a child.</p> <p>This may take the form of punching, beating, biting, burning, hitting, kicking, scalding, shaking, strangling, suffocating and poisoning.</p>
<b>Emotional and Psychological abuse</b>	<p>Emotional and psychological abuse occurs when a person repeatedly rejects or uses threats to frighten a child.</p> <p>This may involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Being repeatedly rejected, name called or being put down;</li> </ul>

Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Being frightened by threats;</li> <li>○ Continual coldness to the extent that it significantly damages the child's physical, social, intellectual or emotional development;</li> <li>○ Can involve repeated exposure to family violence.</li> </ul>
<b>Neglect</b>	<p>Neglect includes both isolated incidents as well as a pattern of failure over time on the part of a parent or carer of children to provide for their development and wellbeing, when they can do so.</p> <p>Neglect is failure in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ nutrition: food &amp; drink</li> <li>○ shelter: safe sleeping &amp; living conditions</li> <li>○ hygiene: health, clothing, showering/bathing</li> <li>○ health: medical attention &amp; treatment</li> <li>○ safety: supervision, exposing to dangerous or life threatening situations</li> <li>○ education: attendance and adequate means to participate (uniforms, shoes, lunches)</li> </ul> <p>To the extent that the child's health and development are, or are likely to be, placed at risk.</p>
<b>Family Violence</b>	<p>Family violence is any behaviour that occurs in family, domestic or intimate relationships that is physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically, economically abusive, threatening, coercive or any way controlling that causes a person to live in fear for their safety or wellbeing.</p> <p>In relation to children, family violence is defined as behaviour by any person that causes a child to hear, witness or otherwise be exposed to the effects of the above behaviour. It affects the safety, stability &amp; development of children.</p> <p>This includes violence within the broader family context such as extended families, kinship networks and communities.</p> <p><b>A child's exposure to family violence constitutes child abuse</b></p>
<b>Grooming</b>	<p>Many perpetrators of <b>sexual</b> offences against children purposely create relationships with children, their families and carers to create a situation where abuse could occur.</p> <p>Grooming is the behaviour that precedes the actual or desired sexual activity with a child including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Spending special time with a child</li> <li>○ Giving gifts to a child</li> <li>○ Showing special favours to one child but not others</li> <li>○ Allowing the child to step out of boundaries or rules</li> <li>○ Touching the child</li> <li>○ Testing and breaking professional boundaries</li> <li>○ Building an online relationship with a child</li> </ul>
<b>Racial, cultural and religious abuse</b>	<p>Racial, cultural and religious abuse is behaviour that demonstrates contempt, ridicule, hatred or negativity towards a child because of their race, culture or religion.</p> <p>It may be obvious, such as direct racial vilification or discrimination, or subtle, such as demonstrating a lack of cultural respect (attitude and values) and awareness (knowledge and understanding) or failing to provide positive images about another culture.</p>

**Other Definitions**

Term	Definition
<b>Reasonable belief</b>	<p>You have a 'reasonable belief' if a reasonable person in the same circumstances as you would believe that an adult had sexually abused a child, for the same reasons you believed it. For example, you might form a reasonable belief that a child has been sexually abused if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the child tells you they have been sexually abused</li> <li>○ the child tells you they know someone who has been sexually abused (which may be a way of talking about themselves)</li> <li>○ someone who knows the child tells you the child has been sexually abused</li> <li>○ you observe signs of sexual abuse in the child</li> <li>○ you are a qualified professional who observes the child's behaviour or development, which leads you to believe the child has been sexually abused.</li> </ul>
<b>Reportable conduct</b>	<p>There are five types of conduct that are deemed reportable, they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child</li> <li>○ sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child</li> <li>○ physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child</li> <li>○ any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child</li> <li>○ significant neglect of a child.</li> </ul>

## 6 Appendix A - Supporting a child when they make a disclosure

If a child discloses abuse and harm to you, then there is a good chance they trust you.

It is normal for you to feel anger, shock or worry but you will need to put these feelings aside for them to feel safe. Simply by calmly and empathically listening and offering support you are helping the child.

Information on responding to a disclosure can be found [here](#) or [watch a short, animated clip](#).

Most importantly, once you form a reasonable belief, you must stop asking the child questions. Speak to the Coordination Unit and make a report. This is to ensure that the child does not have to speak about the abuse and harm in detail and can make a full disclosure to Police or Child Protection when they make contact.

## 7 Appendix B - Support links

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### **Kids Help Line**

A free confidential online or phone counselling service for young people aged 5 – 25 years. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Phone: 1800 55 1800

Online: [Home page](#) or [Chat with someone online](#)

### **Life Line**

Crisis support and suicide prevention services available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Services available via phone, text or online.

Phone: 13 11 14

Text: 0477 13 11 14

Online: [Home Page](#) or [Chat with someone online](#)

### **Beyond Blue**

Beyond Blue is Australia's most well-known and visited mental health organisation, focused on supporting people affected by anxiety, depression and suicide. Services available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Phone: 1300 22 46 36

Online: [Home page](#) or [Chat with someone online](#) (available 11.00am – 12.00am daily) or [email](#) (response within 24 hours) or [join online forums](#)

### **Commission for Children and Young People**

An independent statutory body that promotes improvement in policies and practices affecting the safety and wellbeing of Victorian children and young people. Have a particular focus on vulnerable children and young people.

Can help you with the Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme, including how to formally report a concern.

Phone: 1300 78 29 78 (9.30–11.30am and 2.00–4.00pm Monday to Friday, except on public holidays)

Email: [contact@ccyp.vic.gov.au](mailto:contact@ccyp.vic.gov.au)