

# Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

**AUTHORITY:** CEO

## SCOPE:

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisors, persons in day-to-day charge, administrative staff, specialist staff, teachers, trainers, educators, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of LCIS, including during offsite excursions and activities.

## OUR SAFETY AND WELLBEING STATEMENT

- LCIS is committed to and promotes the safety, happiness, and empowerment of all children.
- LCIS is committed to the safety, participation, and empowerment of all children
- LCIS has risk management strategies that focus on preventing, identifying, and mitigating risks to children and young people.
- LCIS has zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently with legislative requirements and LCIS Policies and Procedures
- LCIS staff and volunteers have a legal and moral obligation to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety which we always follow.
- LCIS is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

This statement is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. This statement should be published in a visible position on all websites and relevant organisational publications

## LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

All LCIS staff, volunteers and workplace students are mandatory reporters and will comply with their legal responsibilities. This is a condition of employment/engagement, they are trained and supported to do so.

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offense against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will be committing an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

*See Appendix 1 for a list of relevant Victorian Legislation. See LCIS Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting Policy for further details.*

## OUR CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING VALUES

LCIS:

- is committed to the rights of all children to feel safe, and be safe at all times, including:
  - promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
  - promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
  - promoting the safety and inclusion of children with additional needs

- promoting the (right to) safety of trans and gender diverse children and their families using our services
  - ensuring that LGBTIQ+ children and families feel included
  - ensuring that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally
- works to ensure all children are safe, happy and empowered across all our service areas.
  - fosters opportunities for each child to participate, express their views and to learn and develop
  - always acts in the best interests of each child and has zero tolerance of child abuse
  - takes all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children at all times, whilst also promoting their learning and development
  - actively manages the risks of abuse or harm to each child, including fulfilling our duty of care and legal obligations to protect children and prevent any reasonable, foreseeable risk of injury or harm
  - continuously improves the way our service identifies risks of and responds to child abuse and encourages reporting and improved responses to allegations of abuse.
  - is committed to proactively sharing information with relevant authorities to promote the wellbeing and/or safety of a child or a group of children, consistent with their best interests.
  - is committed to supporting children and young people to develop peer connections and to challenge bullying or isolating behaviour
  - ensures children and young people have access to age-appropriate information about their rights and about how adults in the organisation should behave
  - is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks and has specific policies, procedures and training in place that supports our staff volunteers to achieve these commitments
  - has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers to ensure child wellbeing

## **HOW WE IMPLEMENT OUR CHILD SAFETY & WELLBEING VALUES**

### **LEADERSHIP**

- Providing leadership for an organisational culture of accountability for child safety which is open to scrutiny and is continuously reviewed and improved
- Ensuring there is a Child Safety and Wellbeing Officer {LCCC} who can lead discussions, answer questions and support child safety and wellbeing
- Keeping up to date and complying with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy
- Maintaining co-operative relationships with appropriate services and/or professionals (including Child FIRST/Orange Door) in the best interests of children and their families
- Ensuring an explicit statement of LCIS commitment to child safety is included in all advertising promotion for the organisation

### **RISK MANAGEMENT**

- Implementing risk management plans, considering risks posed by service setting, activities, and the physical environment
- Undertaking child safety reviews and developing an action plan to maintain Child Safe Standards
- Screening contractors and conducting recruitment and induction processes for all volunteer and paid staff in line with this policy
- Ensuring appropriate annual training for all paid and volunteer staff on child safety, including recognising the signs and symptoms of child abuse, knowing how to respond, and understanding responsibilities and processes for reporting

## **PROMOTION OF PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF CHILDREN**

- Creating a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal children
- Understanding children's diverse circumstances, and providing support and responding to those who are vulnerable
- Protecting the rights of children and families, and encouraging their participation in decision-making
- Ensuring that children have access to information and support to assist empowerment and participation
- Managing complaints through processes that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand for children.

## **RECOGNISING AND SUPPORTING DIVERSITY AMONGST CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

- Training and supporting staff and volunteers to recognise and value the diverse circumstances and backgrounds of children and young people engaging with our service.
- Promoting a service environment that meets the needs of children and young people from diverse circumstances and backgrounds including:
  - Children and young people with disability
  - Children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
  - Children and young people who are unable to live at home.
  - Children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex.
- Ensuring that that needs of Aboriginal children and young people are understood and met and committing to maintaining a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal children and young people

## **RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING**

- Following processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- Ensuring processes for responding to and reporting are followed when there are significant concerns for the safety, health or wellbeing of a child at our services.
- Ensuring procedures for reporting and responding to suspected child abuse or neglect are promoted across the service and regularly reviewed in partnership with all stakeholders
- Notifying the CEO and Child Safety and Wellbeing Officer on becoming aware of a concern, complaint or allegation regarding the safety, health, and welfare of a child at our services.

## **REVIEWING**

- Undertaking annual reviews of our child safe policies and practices and developing annual action plans for child safety

## **INFORMING AND INVOLVING**

- Making our child safety and complaints policies visible and accessible to all stakeholders, including young people, families, the community, students, clients, and staff.
- Ensuring all paid and volunteer staff are fully aware of the organisations policies, commitments, and obligations in relation to child safety at induction and in annual staff performance reviews.
- Involving young people, families, the community, students, clients, and staff in annual reviews of our child safety and complains policies and practices.
- Ensuring young people families, the community, students, clients, and staff have a say in any changes in our child safety and complaints policies and practices.

## **Appendix 1 – SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES**

### **A. SOURCES - LEGISLATION**

Victoria Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005)

Victorian Child Safe Standards (2022)

Victorian Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act (2014)

Victorian Worker Screening Act (2020)

Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006)

Victorian Children, Youth and Families Act (2005)

### **B. SOURCES - OTHER**

Victorian Child Safe Standards (2022)

Commonwealth Child Safe Framework (Second Edition 2020)

### **C. RELATED POLICIES**

LCIS Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting Policy

LCIS Code of Ethics

LCIS Client Complaint Policy

LCIS Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

LCIS Inappropriate behaviour Policy

LCIS Staff Induction Policy

LCIS Recruitment of Staff Policy and Procedure

LCIS Staff Appraisal Policy

LCIS Volunteer Induction Policy

LCIS Disciplinary Action Policy

LCIS Governance Policy