

Child Safe Environment Policy

Raleigh St is committed to the safety, wellbeing, and support of all children. Management, CoM, staff, Educators, students, and volunteers always take every reasonable precaution to protect children in our care and treat all children with the utmost respect. To protect children from abuse, Raleigh St embeds a culture of child safety by providing a safe environment for the children in our care. We acknowledge that staff and Educators within an early childhood service are in a unique position to monitor behavioural and emotional changes, physical injuries, and the general wellbeing of a child due to the development of safe environments and trusting relationships with children and families.

Our staff and educators are trained to identify signs and behaviours that may indicate child abuse and thoroughly understand their obligations and responsibilities to respond to incidents, disclosures, or suspicions of child abuse as mandated reporters.

We are dedicated in promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

Raleigh St takes a **ZERO** tolerance approach to child abuse and we are committed to raise awareness about the importance of child safety in our environment and the community.

'Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility.' Victoria State Government- Education and Training (2019).

National Quality Standard (NQS)-

Quality Are 2: Children's Health and Safety		
2.2	Safety	Each child is respected
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practiced and implemented.
2.2.3	Child Protection	Management, educators, and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.

Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children

5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
--------------	---	---

Education and Care Services National Regulations/Law-

Education and Care Services National Law

84	Awareness of child protection law
273	Course in child protection

Other relevant laws-

Education and Training Reform Act 2006- Child safe standards- Managing the risk of child abuse in schools. Ministerial Order No. 870

The Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012

Failure to Disclose 2014

Failure to Protect 2015

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

Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)

Family Law Act 1975

Purpose-

The Child Safe Environment policy requires all staff and Educators to create and maintain a child safe organisation where children **are safe** and so they **feel safe**. We are committed to identify possible and significant risks of harm to children within our Service. We understand our duty of care to protect children from all types of abuse and adhere to our legislative obligations at all times. We aim to implement effective strategies to assist in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children. Raleigh St will act in the best interest of the child, assisting them to develop their full potential in a secure and safe environment.

Scope-

This policy applies to families, staff, Management, CoM, students, volunteers, and visitors of Raleigh St. It also includes others attending programs and activities of Raleigh St during offsite excursions.

Implementation-

Raleigh St strongly opposes any type of abuse against a child and endorses high quality practices in relation to protecting children. All staff understand their roles and responsibilities in protecting children from abuse and neglect and maintain up-to-date knowledge of child protection law (Reg 84). Staff will undertake child protection awareness training every 12 months, and whenever significant changes are made to the child protection law or reporting requirements. Staff will comply with our Code of Conduct at all times.

Our commitment to child protection and safety-

Raleigh St is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children. In our planning, development, and implementation of our Child Safe Environment policy we will:

- Create and maintain a child safe environment and comply with the Ministerial Order No. 870- Child Safe Standards and Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015
- Complete a self-audit to assess our progress in meeting the requirements of the Child Safe Standards
- Adhere to a zero tolerance for child abuse
- Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers regarding our Child Safe Environment policy
- Foster a culture of openness and respect where children and adults feel safe to disclose risk of harm to children
- Listen to and act decisively on any child safety concerns or allegations of abuse that are made
- Recognise, respect and foster children's rights where their voices and views are listened to and valued
- Assess and manage the risk of abuse to children as part of our daily practice
- Recognise the vulnerability of particular groups of children including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with a disability, children in out of home care (OOHC) and children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background

- Ensure effective processes are in place to respond to and report allegations of child abuse to the appropriate authorities
- **Employ staff who are not only approved to work with children through the Working with Children Check, (WWCC) but are those who have the right personal qualities, skills and experience to provide high-quality supervision and care to the children in our care**

Director and the CoM will ensure:

- Staff have completed approved child protection training
- All staff members at Raleigh St maintain up-to-date knowledge of child protection law and any obligations that they may have under that law
- All staff members who work with children:
 - understand and are confident implementing our Child Safe Environment policy
 - know how to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse
 - are aware of their role as mandated reporters to immediately report cases where they believe a child is at risk of significant harm
 - Raleigh St promotes the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and safety for children with a disability
- Educators understand the reporting procedures and professional standards to safeguard children and protect the integrity of Educators and staff
- Access to relevant acts, regulations, standards, and other resources are provided to help Educators and staff meet their obligations
- **Child Protection** is contacted as soon as practicable of any incident reasonably believed that physical and/or sexual abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring while the child is being educated and cared for by Raleigh St
- **Child Protection** is notified as soon as practicable of any allegation that sexual or physical abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring while the child is being educated and cared for by Raleigh St
- The Quality Assessment and Regulation Division (QARD) are notified of any serious incidents or concerns about the wellbeing of a child within our Service
- Clear and comprehensive documentation related to actions taken in response to incidents, disclosures and allegations of child abuse are kept securely and confidentially in line with our Privacy and Confidentiality policy.

Educators will:

- Comprehend their legal obligation as mandated reporters under the legislation (effective March 2019)

- Report any situation where they believe on reasonable grounds a child is at risk of significant harm to Child Protection and/or local Child Protection office (see end of policy for contact details) as appropriate
- Contact the Victorian Police on 000 if there is an immediate danger to a child and intervene instantly if it is safe to do so
- Understand their duty of care to take reasonable steps to protect children at all times
- Be able to recognise indicators of abuse
- Be aware of the **Four Critical Actions** for responding to incidents, disclosures, and suspicions of child abuse
https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/EarlyChildhood_FourCriticalActions.pdf
- Respect a child's disclosure, taking it seriously and respond to their disclosure immediately
- Document any incident, disclosure or suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused using the PROTECT template
https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/PROTECT_Responding_TemplateSchools.pdf
- Associate families with referral agencies where concerns of harm do not meet the threshold of significant harm. These services may be located through Child FIRST.
- **Family consent will be sought before making referrals**

Understand that allegations of abuse or suspected abuse against them as Educators are treated in the same way as allegations of abuse against other people

Mandatory Reporting-

It is a legislative requirement for selected classes of people to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities. In Victoria, mandatory reporting is regulated by the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic) ss. 162, 182, 184 (CYFA). Effective from March 1, 2019 all Early Childhood Educators and other persons employed or engaged in an education and care service or a children's service are mandatory reporters. This also includes all proprietors, nominees of a children's service, approved providers and nominated supervisors of an education and care service.

According to the CYFA, mandated reporters must respond to an emergency **immediately** if the child is at immediate risk of harm or has just been abused. Mandated reporters must respond to an incident, disclosure, or suspicion of child abuse as soon as they witness or form a belief based on reasonable grounds that a child needs protection because:

- the child's basic physical or psychological needs are not being met or are at risk of not being met
- the parents or other caregivers have not arranged and are unable or unwilling to arrange for the child to receive necessary medical care
- the child has been or is at risk of being physically or sexually abused or ill-treated
- the child is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and they are at risk of serious physical or psychological harm
- the parent's or other caregiver's behaviour means the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering serious psychological harm
- the child has stated they have been abused
- the child has evidence of abuse

To form a belief on reasonable grounds, the reporter may have witnessed behaviour, have a suspicion, or received a disclosure of child abuse.

Definitions-

Maltreatment refers to non-accidental behaviour towards another person, which is outside the norms of conduct and entails a substantial risk of causing physical or emotional harm. Behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and include acts of omission and commission. Specifically **abuse** refers to acts of commission while **neglect** refers to acts of omission. Note that in practice the terms child abuse and child neglect are used more frequently than the term child maltreatment.

Significant Harm refers to circumstances causing concern for the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of a child or young person present to a significant extent. This means it is sufficiently serious to warrant a response by a statutory authority irrespective of the family's consent. What is significant is not minor or trivial and may reasonably be expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on the child's or young person's safety, welfare, or wellbeing. In the case of an unborn child, what is significant is not minor or trivial and may reasonably be expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on the child.

Reasonable grounds refer to the need to have an objective basis for suspecting that a child may be at risk of abuse and neglect based on:

- firsthand observation of the child or family
- what the child, parent, or other person has disclosed

- what can reasonably be inferred based on observation, professional training and/or experience that causes the mandated reporter to believe the child has been abused or is likely to be abused or,
- signs of physical or sexual abuse leading to the belief that the child has been abused

Failure to disclose refers to the failure of a mandated reporter who has reasonable belief that a child under 16 has had a sexual offence committed to them by an adult to make a report to the police.

Failure to protect refers to a person of authority in the organisation who has the power or responsibility, but who negligently fails to reduce or remove the threat of substantial risk to the child who is being physically, mentally or sexual abused.

Support when making a report-

Making the decision to report can be challenging and it is important to make use of available supports for your wellbeing. Support is available from:

- The CoM and Director
- DHHS Child Protection and Child First
- Department of Education and Training
- Commission for Children and Young People
- Employee Assistance Program (which is available to all staff working at Raleigh St)

Policy evaluation and review-

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed as part of our cycle of self-evaluation each year. Raleigh St welcomes input from staff, children, families/carers, and the wider Community of Darebin.

Relevant authorities	Contact details
Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)	Child Protection Crisis Line (after hours) Ph. 13 12 78
Victoria Police Sexual offences and child abuse Investigation Team	000
National Child Abuse Helpline	1800 99 10 99 (9am-5pm AEST)

DET Quality Assessment and Regulation Division (QARD)	1300 307 415
--	--------------

Jurisdictional contacts	Contact details Business hours 8.45-5.00pm (Monday-Friday)
North Division Banyule, Buloke, Darebin , Campaspe, Central Goldfield, Gannawarra, Greater Bendigo, Hume, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Mildura, Moreland, Mount Alexander, Nillumbik, Swan Hill, Whittlesea, Yarra.	1. 2. 1300 664 977

Further information and support-

Jurisdictional contacts	Links
Child Safe Standards toolkit: Resource 1A Self-Audit tool	https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/resource-1a-self-audit-tool-child-safe-standards-word
PROTECT guidance:	3. https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/health/childprotection/Pages/ecguidance.aspx
An overview to the Victorian child safe standards, has information to help organisations understand the requirements of each of the child safe standards, including examples of measures organisations can put in place, a self-audit tool and a glossary of key terms:	http://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards
Cultural safety of Aboriginal children	https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/tipsheet-cultural-safety-aboriginal-children.pdf
Cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds:	https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/tipsheet-safety-children-cult-ling-diverse.pdf

Safety of children with a disability:

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/tipsheet-safety-children-disability.pdf>

Related Policies-

Interactions with children
Dealing with complaints
Children Protection Policy
Code of Conduct
Governance Policy

Source-

- Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
- Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. (2009).
- *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012*
- Child safe standards page of the Department of Health and Human Services' Service Providers: <http://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards>
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*
- *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (as amended 2014) (Vic)*
- Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference. (2005). Creating safe environments for children: Organisations, employees and volunteers: National framework.
- Creating child safe organisations page of the Department of Health and Human Services' Service Providers: <http://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/creating-child-safe-organisations>
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).
- Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2011).
- Failure to Disclose 2014
- Failure to Protect 2015
- *Family Law Act 1975*
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017)
- Mandatory Reporting: <https://aifs.gov.au/publications/families-policy-and-law/14-mandatory-reporting-laws>
- National Comparison of Child Protection Systems: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/national-comparison-child-protection-systems>
- Reporting abuse and neglect: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/reporting-abuse-and-neglect>

- Revised National Quality Standard. (2018)
- State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training). (2017). Early childhood guidance: Identifying signs of child abuse: www.education.vic.gov.au
- *The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic)
- *The Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*
- *The Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012*
- *Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic)

Review-

Date reviewed-	Modifications-	CoM endorsement date-	Next review date-
July 2019	Policy created for RSCCC based on CC Desktop template- KC	September 2019	