

## Child Safe Environment

### **Purpose**

All children have a right to live and play in an environment that is free from all forms of abuse including racial, cultural and religious ridicule, hatred or negativity. This includes Aboriginal children, children from a culturally and or linguistically diverse background and children with disabilities. E Y@PP promotes diversity and tolerance from all walks of life and cultural background.

We recognize that children are vulnerable members in our community, not having the power to stop abuse and relying on others to assist them. Therefore, Early Years at Phoenix Park is committed to the safety and well-being of all children accessing our service. We support the rights of all children and will act without hesitation to ensure a child safe environment is maintained at all times. We believe the prevention of child abuse is the responsibility of all members of the community. Therefore EY@PP plays an important role in preventing child abuse, reporting child abuse, identifying families at risk and supporting families and children.

We support and incorporate the Child Safe Standards into our environment:

**Standard 1:** Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements

**Standard 2:** A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety

**Standard 3:** A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children

**Standard 4:** Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel

**Standard 5:** Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

**Standard 6:** Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

**Standard 7:** Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

### Definitions

**Physical abuse** occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving, or grabbing

**Sexual abuse** is when a child or young person is used by an older or bigger child, adolescent, or adult for his or her own stimulation or gratification. There are two categories: contact or non-contact.

**Emotional and Psychological abuse** is a chronic attack on a child or young person's self-esteem. It can take the form of name-calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating the child or young person.

**Neglect** is the failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, and supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development are placed at risk

**Racial, Cultural and Religious abuse** is conduct that demonstrates contempt, ridicule, hatred or negativity towards a child because of their race, culture or religion.

**Reasonable Belief** is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

**Cyber safety/ Online Safety/Internet Safety** is the safe and responsible use of technology including use of the internet, electronic media and social media in order to ensure information security and personal safety.

## Procedures

**Standard 1:** *Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements*

### Staff Responsibilities

EY@PP staff, students and volunteers who have a reasonable belief that a child is experiencing Physical, Emotional, Neglect, Racial, Cultural and Religious abuse, are morally, and in some cases legally, obligated to report these concerns to the Manager/person-in-charge at EY@PP, who will in turn make a report to the Child Protection or Orange Door. Reporting child sexual abuse is now a community wide responsibility. It is a legal duty upon all adults to report information about a child's sexual abuse.

It is the staff's role to form a belief about the significant harm to the child. It is not the staff's role to substantiate whether harm has occurred or not. Staff are required to report their beliefs using the procedure outlined in this policy. See the Manager for reference books with lists of the indicators of abuse, information regarding support strategies for victims of abuse and professional contacts.

**Standard 2:** *A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety*

Child Safe Environment Policy is updated annually and provided on commencement of employment. The policy is shared with the whole service community with opportunities to provide feedback/input. This may occur during educator meetings and committee meetings.

**Standard 3:** *A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children*

A Code of Conduct is read and signed by new staff on commencement of employment. (attached). At the first staff meeting of the year a refresher of the code of conduct is conducted. Every staff member is required to resign the Code.

At the AGM the incoming committee of management are also given a code of conduct that they are required to sign. It states their first responsibility to children is providing a healthy, nurturing and responsive setting which is both safe and challenging. Each member is also given a Committee of Management Manual, that includes the Code of Conduct, as a reference tool.

Staff receive a Handbook when they commence and at the beginning of each calendar year. The Handbook contains information relevant to anyone working at EY@PP. It is a requirement of staff's employment to read the educator handbook and all other policies noted in the handbook.

The centre has clear expectations and agreements for safe, respectful and responsible behaviours at the service and digitally for educators, staff and families. These are stipulated in the Parent Handbook, Grievance Policy, Code of Conduct, Staff/Educator Handbook and discussions at meetings.

**Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel**

**Staff recruitment**

Management will provide best practice in recruiting, supervision and staff support. Safety information and policy requirements are included in staff orientation/induction. Staff will be provided with a handbook detailing the code of ethics, duty of care, code of conduct, relevant centre policies, etc. When employing staff the interview panel will check referees and working with children checks. (Refer to relevant procedures.)

In the circumstance that a staff member organizes to babysit children who use the centre. This is a private agreement between the parents and staff member and remains totally separate to the centre. In this instance staff will need to ensure confidentiality with regards to the centre, staff or children is maintained at all times.

Staff will be required to complete the Dept online module, Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations, each year, to support their understanding and provide strategies to practice safe behaviors, including cyber safety and physical safety (including being provided the relevant policy: Information and Communication Technology use with Children)

**Families and Community Partnership**

Through our "Health and Well Being" notice boards in the foyer (for parents) and staff room we display information about child safety. including topics such as Child protection, Hot cars, Sun smart, Drowning, Immunization etc.

Partnerships are established with relevant organization and health professionals including the MCH, Dentist, Star Health and Caulfield community Health Services. If a child is accessing a specific health professional the educators in partnership with the parents and the health professional supports the child's needs.

**Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse**

**Reporting Procedure**

**1. Responding to concerns**

- In the circumstance that a child discloses abuse to staff, listen carefully but do not ask questions of child to gain more information. If staff suspect an abuse has occurred do not question child or family.
- In the circumstances that an Adult discloses abuse about a child again listen carefully and only ask question that is relevant.
- In the circumstance you have observed indicators of abuse or neglect document all observations
- Ensure all relevant information and observations are documented in a professional non judgmental manner.
- Only take photos if asked by Orange Door or Child Protection worker. Instead sketch.

**2. Forming a belief on reasonable grounds**

- Once you believe a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm report your concerns to one of the managers
- If you are unsure discuss your concern with one of the managers

**3. Making a report of referral or report**

- Establish if a report or referral should be made.
- If unsure make referral to Orange Door and they will advise you on what to do.

- Ring protective services or police if you believe the child's life is in immediate danger.
- A report or referral can be made by either, a staff member, the manager or both.
- If the abuse is committed by a staff member or volunteer the centre is required to comply with the notifications to the Commission for Children and Young People under Reportable Conduct Scheme.

### **Privacy**

EY@PP can lawfully disclose information to Child Protection without breaching the *Victorian Information Privacy Act 2000* and the *Victorian Health Records Act 2001*. The personal information of the child can be disclosed to Child Protection if the agency believes there is a serious and imminent threat to an individual's life, health, safety or welfare, or an unlawful activity has been, is being or may be engaged in and use or disclosure of personal information is a necessary part of the investigation of the matter or reporting these concerns.

### **Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse**

#### **Visibility/Supervision**

The building is set up with high visibility of all spaces. There are windows between rooms and the office maintains an open door policy. Office staff conducts safety rounds at regular intervals throughout the day and there are limited opportunities for staff to be alone with children. During rest periods adequate lighting is to be maintained for supervision, such as a blind left open or light kept on.

Visitors are appropriately supervised and monitored. Visitors sign in upon arrival and departure. Visitors completing any maintenance work will be escorted to areas where children are present. The educators supervising the children will be informed of their presences. Visitors are only able to work independently in child free areas eg Laundry. On arrival Visitors are asked to present their Working With Children Check, if they have one.

All UMS staff (Maintenance company used by council) all have a working with children check.

#### **Excursions**

In the circumstance of excursions, staff will remain in view of all children throughout, extra staff will be organized to ensure adequate supervision, parent/s assisting is/are not to take children to the toilet. Parents with working with children checks will be encouraged to attend and help out. If a parent does not have a working with children check they will only be responsible for their own child. A risk assessment will be completed before the excursion takes place.

#### **Video/photography**

The use of photographs is regulated to ensure privacy is maintained. Permission is sought via the enrolment form prior to photos being taken in the centre. The purpose of the photos is clearly set out in the enrolment forms. Children will not be photographed if unclothed. Photos will be distributed to the appropriate families on their departure from the centre or otherwise shredded and destroyed. If a parent attends the centre for a special function, i.e. child's birthday, and would like to take photos or video, they must provide staff with prior warning. Their child must be the purpose and feature of the photography. Educator's mobile phones are not permitted in the children's play areas, to prevent the use of phones to take photos.

### **Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children**

#### **Children's privacy, body awareness and touching guidelines**

The age and developmental stage of children governs their level of body awareness. Staff will assist children in developing respect for their own bodies and respect for the personal space of others. Staff will help children set boundaries with regard to their own safety, respect children's privacy - providing

appropriate areas (bathrooms) for older children to get changed, and model appropriate clothing coverage.

Educators will also extend on child's empowerment in other safety areas by including information in the curriculum. Discussion on road safety, correct use of equipment and facility and accepting different child's values and beliefs. Educators will identify hazards with children and educate them on the best course of action.

### **Sources**

1. A guide for creating a Child Safe Environment, Commission for children and young people, 2018
  2. Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, Department of Humans Services, DEECD,
  3. Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
  4. Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) ACT 2015.
  5. ACECQA National Quality Standards 2018
  6. Belonging, Being and Becoming. The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia Commonwealth of Australia 2009
  7. Education and Care Service National Law Act 2010
  8. Educations and Care Services National Regulations 2011
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Date Created: 2011

Date Reviewed: March 2020



## EY@PP Code of Conduct (Child Safe Standards 3)

All staff, students and volunteers of Early Years @ Phoenix Park are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

**All personnel of Early Years @ Phoenix Park are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:**

- adhering to all relevant Australian and Victorian legislation, to Early Years @ Phoenix Park Child Safe Environment policy and to other organisational policies at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone with respect
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children, children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to an Early Years @ Phoenix Park Manager, and ensure any allegation is reported to child protection 131278 and/or police
- reporting any child safety concerns to Early Years @ Phoenix Park Manager
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe

**All personnel of Early Years @ Phoenix Park, staff, students and volunteers must not:**

- develop any 'special' relationships, offering gifts or special treatment with children that could be seen as favouritism
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical
- put children at risk of abuse
- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children or engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability
- have contact with a child or their family, eg babysitting, outside of our organisation without the Managers knowledge and/or consent. Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate
- have any online contact with a child or their family (unless necessary curriculum related or centre newsletter)
- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to Early Years @ Phoenix Park Manager.

*If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.*

I agree to adhere to this Code of Conduct:

Name: .....

Signature: .....

Date: .....