Child Safe Policy

POL-CP-23

If you believe a child or young person is at immediate risk of harm phone Triple Zero (000)

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Objective

This document affirms Deaf Children Australia's (DCA) commitment to providing a child safe and child friendly environment, where children and young people who come into contact with DCA or any DCA service are safe and feel safe and able to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

This policy sets out the requirements that DCA staff, contractors, volunteers and authorised persons engaged by DCA must provide a child safe and child friendly environment.

Scope

This policy applies to all DCA staff, volunteers, board members, parents, consultants and contractors at DCA. and applies to a broad range of situations where interaction with children may occur. This policy applies nationally.

DCA also includes DCA Plus and Sign For Work.

1. Statement of Commitment

DCA's Commitment to Child Safety accessible to all staff, volunteers, board members and the public in child friendly language and in Auslan and is as follows:

- We want children and young people to be safe, happy and empowered.
- We support and respect all children, and young people as well as our staff and volunteers.
- We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children and young people.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- We are committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks.
- We have robust human resources and recruitment practices to reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing board members, staff and volunteers.
- We are committed to regularly training and educating our board members, staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, children who

identify as LGBTIQA+ and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

- We have specific policies and procedures in place that support our board members, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

2. The Standards

The eleven Child Safe Standards applicable to this Policy are as follows:

1. Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued

2. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture.

3. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

4. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

5. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

6. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

7. Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.

8. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.

9. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

10. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.

11. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

These standards are law in Victoria, as of the 01/07/2022,

3. Deaf Children Australia's Child Safety Code of Conduct

DCA has a Child Safe Code of Conduct that all DCA staff, volunteers and the DCA board must agree to and sign annually. The Code of Conduct sets out the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and children and young people. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in DCA's physical and online environments.

All staff should demonstrate appropriate standards of behaviour towards children and young people; ensuring that their rights are respected, they feel safe and protected and their concerns are taken seriously.

4. DCA's ongoing commitment to Child Safety

Everyone involved at DCA has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who access DCA facilities and/or services is at the forefront of all that they do and every decision that they make.

DCA has dedicated Child Safety Officers who are trained to respond to any concerns, incidents or accusations raised regarding child safety within DCA. DCA encourages consultation with children and young people on relevant policies throughout the organisation.

All staff must ensure that at all times they display appropriate standards of behaviour towards children, ensuring that children's rights are respected, they feel safe and protected and their concerns are taken seriously.

Training

DCA ensures all new staff and volunteers have training in recognising and responding to child safety risks related to their role and place of work. In-house refresher training will

take place annually to ensure that staff understand DCA's ongoing commitment to child safety and their responsibilities in ensuring the safety of a child or young person. DCA will provide access to learning resources on how to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and LGBTQIA+ children and youth.

Recruitment

DCA has a stringent recruitment and selection policy and procedure with specific checks in place to screen out potential threats to children from outside the organisation. Child Safety questions are asked at all job interviews within DCA. Where threats are identified, they are dealt with swiftly and in line with relevant legislation.

5. Reporting and responding to a child safety concern or complaint

DCA takes all allegations of child abuse and reportable conduct seriously. DCA complies with relevant state, territory and commonwealth legislation including reportable conduct. Mandatory reporting and voluntary reporting guidelines, DCA ensures compliance with these legislative requirements where they exist and apply. The Participant Incident Procedure which incorporates reportable conduct and mandatory reporting guides staff in the correct process to follow should there be a concern, allegation or incident surrounding Child Safety.

DCA is committed to ensuring that such allegations are addressed in accordance with departmental processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse. It is important that all staff are aware of their obligations to report allegations of employee misconduct involving children and young people can be made against an employee even if the conduct occurred outside of their work.

DCA works to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers understand their obligations and know who to tell if they observe abuse, are a victim, or if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

All concerns, incidents or allegations must be immediately reported to a Child Safety Officer (see contact details within this policy).

Reportable Conduct

DCA complies with Reportable Conduct legislation in all states and territories where applicable.

Reportable conduct schemes require organisations to report and respond to allegations of child abuse and neglect by their workers and volunteers who are over the age of 18 who are or have been employed or volunteered for DCA as outlined in the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

In New South Wales and the ACT this includes reporting known convictions to the relevant statutory authorities.

As a result of this anyone who works or volunteers at DCA MUST IMMEDIATELY report any of the following allegations to the CEO or HR Coordinator

- a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child, whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the offence has been commenced or concluded, or
- sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of, a child, or
- physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child, or
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child, or
- significant neglect of a child

For information about reportable conducts for each state, please refer to the Reportable Conduct Policy and Procedure on SharePoint.

Complaints and disclosure procedures at Deaf Children Australia

DCA has also established internal processes to ensure that appropriate action is taken to respond to concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of children and young people. Complaints and disclosure procedures at DCA include:

- Client Incident Management
- Freedom from Abuse and Neglect
- Complaints and Compliments

- Employee Code of Conduct

Recording child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the code of conduct

For DCA to perform its functions under the Child Safe Standards, it may be required to collect personal information about an employee, consultant/contractor or volunteers and disclose that information to a third party. Personal information which is collected and/or disclosed about an individual is managed in accordance with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 and the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005.

Risk Management

Deaf Children Australia is committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to child safety across our whole organisation and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. We document, implement, monitor and periodically review our risk management strategies for child safety and ensure that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise. DCA's approach to risk management is documented in the Risk Management Policy and Framework and associated policies and procedures

6. Contacts

DCA Child Safety Officer

Email: childsafetyofficer@deafchildren.org.au

Phone: 03 9539 5300

7. Definitions

Child means a child or young person under the age of 18 years.

Child Abuse means any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 or the infliction on a child of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, or the serious neglect of a child.

Child Safety Officer is a person who will help lead the implementation of a child safe environment for children and young people. Child Safe Officers are people within the

organisation that children and young people and DCA staff can go to for help or to raise concerns. Appropriate training is provided to or arranged for Child Safe Officers.

Child Safe Standards in this policy listed are as defined in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 Vic.

LGBTQIA+ is an inclusive term that includes people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer, intersex, asexual, pansexual, and allies.

References

- Commissioner for Children and Young People - Victoria
- Working With Children Act 2005
- Worker Screening Act 2020
- Reportable Conduct Scheme
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (VIC)
- Crimes Act 1958 (VIC) in particular three new offences added under the Act – Failure to disclose offence, Failure to protect offence, and Grooming offence
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Children Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2016
- Child Safe Standards
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- OHCHR Convention on the Rights of the Child

Related documents

Current DCA Policies and Procedures that are listed on SharePoint with particular focus on:

- POL-CP-00 Quality Policy
- POL-GV-01 Board Charter and Governance Manual
- POL-CP-09 Freedom from Abuse and Neglect
- POL-CP-15 Risk Management Policy and Framework
- POL-CP-17 Codes of Conduct
- POL-CP-27 Industrial Relations Policy
- POL-CP-49 Child Safe Code of Conduct
- POL-CP-50 Reportable Conduct Policy and Procedure
- QP-CP-03 Complaints & Compliments Procedure
- QP-CP-04 Participant Incident Management
- REG-27 Child Safe Register