

Child Safe Policy

Drafted by	Katherine Hinton, Head of Corporate Services & People	Approved by	Board
Version	1	Approved date	13/11/24
Reviewed by	Ruth Holdaway, CEO	Review date	13/11/26

Introduction

Our Village Network Inc (“Our Village”) is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse. Our Village is committed to complying with the Child Safe Standards introduced by the Victorian Government, which set out the compulsory minimum standards for organisations that provide services for children and young people (or are used by children and young people), to help protect them from harm.

Everyone working at Our Village is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

Purpose

This policy demonstrates the strong commitment of Our Village to child safety and to ensure Our Village establishes and maintains child safe and child friendly environments.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and third parties.

Definitions

‘Child’: a person who is under 18 years of age

‘Staff’ includes: employees, persons seeking employment, students and interns.

‘Volunteers’ includes: anyone donating their time to Our Village

‘Third Parties’ includes: all contractors and third party suppliers

Policy

Our Village's Commitment

All children who visit Our Village and/or assist with volunteer activities have a right to feel and be safe.

Our Village is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children involved in its programs, and to providing a child-safe and child-friendly environment for all children and young people who engage with Our Village. Our Village is committed to complying with the Child Safe Standards introduced by the Victorian Government, which set out the compulsory minimum standards for organisations that provide services for children and young people (or are used by children and young people), to help protect them from harm.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse. Our Village has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at Our Village is responsible for reporting information about suspected child abuse.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between the Our Village and all staff, contractors, volunteers, associates, and members of the Our Village community.

Our Village supports and respects all children, staff, contractors and volunteers.

Any person who believes a child is at immediate risk of abuse must contact the police (telephone 000).

Our Village's Approach to Child Safety

In continuing to implement and promote a child-safe environment, Our Village will:

- encourage children who volunteer at Our Village to share their views, listen to them and respect their views
- assess and manage the risk of abuse to children who interact with Our Village, including through recruitment practices and online
- report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authority, whether or not the law requires reporting
- ensure children know the options available to them if they are concerned or feeling unsafe, and foster an environment where children are safe to raise such concerns
- have policies, procedures and supports in place to reflect these commitments, and review these regularly.

Related Documents

- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Child Safe Procedures](#)

Child Safe Procedures

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All staff, contractors and volunteers are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who engage with Our Village Network Inc (“Our Village”). All staff are expected to act in accordance with the Our Village Code of Conduct in their physical and online interactions with children and young people.

Children’s participation

School Groups

We invite school groups to volunteer in our warehouses. These school groups are required to comprise children from Year 9 or above, with one teacher to every ten students. Teachers are required to assist with student activities and supervise them in the warehouse at all times. This is made clear in all promotion and booking of school groups at Our Village.

On arrival, all students and accompanying staff members attend an induction covering all OH&S requirements and an overview of our organisation. One Our Village staff member is allocated per 10 attendees. Our Village staff are OH&S, Manual Handling, First Aid trained and are required to have valid Working with Children Checks.

At the time of booking, the [School Group Volunteering Clayton](#) form or [School Group Volunteering Geelong](#) form is sent to the booking contact person to complete and return to Our Village. In addition, the school booking contact may sometimes request a copy of the Certificate of Currency for Volunteering Insurance. The school booking contact may sometimes request to attend our premises to conduct a risk assessment if required as part of their school policy and/or insurance coverage - Our Village will always facilitate these processes.

As part of the volunteering experience, photos of the students undertaking the activities may be taken which may then be used on social media and or other promotional materials for Our Village. Photos are also provided to the school. We respect people's privacy and understand if students do not want to participate or do not have parental permission for their photograph to be taken or used. These students are not included when taking the photo. Names of students who will be excluded from

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photography are requested to be provided prior to attending so that we ensure privacy is upheld. If photos are taken on the day, as an additional privacy measure, Our Village staff ask for permission of the teachers onsite - any students that can't have photos taken are not photographed.

Individual Volunteering

Children aged between 15-17 years of age are able to volunteer independently at Our Village without their parent/guardian/carer onsite with them. However, to be able to volunteer independently between the ages of 15 and 17, parental or carer permission must be provided before the volunteering can commence. The documentation required to be completed is site specific to Clayton or Geelong:

- [W](#) Parental_Carer Consent Form Geelong.docx or
- [E](#) Our Village Parental Consent Form for Student Volunteers

Accompanying adult volunteer

Some children may accompany inducted adult volunteers as follows:

- Children aged birth to 1 year if they are in a sling or pram
- Children aged 8 years and older

In these circumstances, children onsite must be constantly supervised by their accompanying adult volunteer and are the sole responsibility of that volunteer. Children and their accompanying adult are assigned tasks that occur in areas that are considered low risk and allow the child to be constantly supervised (e.g they would not be asked to volunteer in the carpark with their child).

Recruitment practices

Our Village takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. The staff recruitment process includes police checks and all staff and inducted volunteers are required to have valid Working With Children Checks.

Child Safety responsibilities, including the Child Safe Policy and Procedures, and the Code of Conduct are included as part of new employee induction. Volunteers must agree to the Volunteer Agreement as part of their induction.

Reporting

All staff, volunteers and third parties are responsible for reporting child safety concerns to a manager or member of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) as soon as possible after receiving such information or forming a belief that a child is at risk.

If any staff member, volunteer or third party has a reasonable belief that reportable conduct may have occurred, then they must report the incident to the CEO or any member of ELT directly and immediately. If the incident potentially involves a criminal offence, the incident must also be reported to the local police station or by calling 000 after consulting with their manager if reasonably practicable.

Reportable conduct includes the following incidents:

- 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
- sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child.

Investigating

If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to investigate a report, all employees, contractors or volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the CEO will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the CEO may decide to conduct such an investigation. All employees, contractors and volunteers must co-operate fully with any internal investigation.

Any such internal investigation will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.

The CEO will make every effort to keep any such internal investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of staff may need to be consulted in relation to the investigation.

After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the CEO shall coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process as deemed appropriate.

Responding

If it is alleged that a staff member, contractor or volunteer may have committed an offence or breached the organisation's policies or its Code of Conduct, the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted.

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If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of the organisation's policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. The findings of the investigation will be reported to any external body as required.

Privacy

Our Village will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Our Village will have safeguards and practices in place to ensure that any personal information considered or recorded remains confidential.

In accordance with privacy laws, everyone is entitled to know how the personal information will be recorded, what will or can be done with it, and who may be able to access it. Requests of this nature should be made to the Head of Corporate Services and People.

Reviewing

Every two years, and following every reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether the organisation's child safe policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children participating in the organisation's programs/activities.

Related Documents

- Code of Conduct
- Child Safe Policy