



CHILD SAFE POLICY

POLICY INTENT

To provide a clear framework of responsibility for the safety of all children, including Aboriginal, culturally, gender and/or linguistically diverse, or those with a disability, who may come within the bounds of the agency or the agency's work.

POLICY STATEMENT

UMFC maintains all relationships and undertakes all agency activities based on our values of *Participation, Respect, Excellence, Justice and Honesty*.

UMFC has zero tolerance for child abuse and harm to children, which can include adult to child harm as well as child to child harm. All children and young people who access UMFC services have a right to feel and be safe, and to be treated with respect. We are committed to promoting Aboriginal cultural safety, culturally, gender and/or linguistically diverse cultural safety, and the safety of children with a disability. We are committed to providing a welcoming and safe environment, and working towards the best interests of children and young people at all times through supporting a child safe culture throughout the organisation.

POLICY RESPONSIBILITIES

We commit to informing children and young people about their rights as recommended by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) including:

- the right to participate and be heard
- the right to be safe and not harmed by anyone
- the right to live and grow up healthy
- the right to express their views and have a say about decisions that affect them, and
- the right to information, such as information about the policies and procedures that affect them.

UMFC is committed to meeting the eleven Victorian Child Safe Standards 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 empowered 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 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 Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
11. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

Organisational leadership and governance will lead, model and embed our organisational culture of child safety to support children and young people by ensuring:

- child safety is a core element of public and internal messaging
- policies and procedures relating to child safety are made available through internal and external communications platforms enabling staff, volunteers and children and young people to readily access these documents
- child safety is supported in all environments, including physical and online spaces either operated by UMFC, or through third parties
- processes exist to prioritise child safety and promote shared responsibility at organisational and governance levels
- reporting of issues, concerns, incidents and systemic failures relating to child safety is actively encouraged and supported at all levels of the organisation, ensuring leadership and the Board, where appropriate, are aware of issues and can activate continuous improvement processes to ensure systems, programs and services are safe
- results of reviews associated with child safe practices within UMFC are reported to staff, volunteers, community, families and children and young people
- children and young people are provided with access to information, support and complaints processes that are culturally safe, easy to understand, and age and culturally appropriate
- recruitment processes select appropriate staff and volunteers, and ensure they are informed regarding critical processes, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations associated with ensuring child safety
- staff, carers, Board directors and volunteers are trained in child safety, and understand and practice appropriate behaviour, including with Aboriginal children, culturally, gender and/or linguistically diverse children, and children with a disability
- particular attention is paid to the needs of children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex
- Aboriginal children are supported by a culturally safe and inclusive organisation, enabling expression of culture, and ensuring that racism is not tolerated
- the requirements of the reportable conduct scheme are met
- that if an allegation of abuse concerns an Aboriginal child, culturally, gender and/or linguistically diverse child, or child with a disability, particular measures will be taken to support the child sensitively and appropriately.

Staff, volunteers, Board directors and carers will:

- behave appropriately with children as articulated in the Code of Conduct
- demonstrate safe behaviour and relationships with Aboriginal children, culturally, gender and/or linguistically diverse children, and children with a disability
- be aware of actions they should take in the event of an incident or allegation, including the type of contact that should be reported, who is responsible for reporting, and to whom the report should be made

Child safety is supported by:

- appropriately managed information sharing and record keeping
- management of risk to children being embedded in the risk management framework
- rigorous, culturally safe complaints and concerns process that ensures prompt and thorough response in line with legal obligations and principles of natural justice
- training provided to staff, directors and volunteers on a regular basis ensuring understanding of obligations and responsibilities to support children and young people, and to identify signs and indicators of harm to children
- relevant training to equip staff and volunteers to communicate with children and young people, in ways that are age, maturity, culturally and capability appropriate.

We recognise the importance of friendships and peer relationships in the lives of children and young people. As an organisation, we seek to support those relationships to assist children and young people to be connected and supported while being safe.

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