

 CENTRE for PARTICIPATION	Child Safe Standards Policy
Policy number #34	Version 2.0
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Our commitment to child safety

The Centre for Participation is committed to child safety. We support, listen to and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

Our commitment to the Standards:

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.*

Foundation Steps – Centre for Participation is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse [CALD] backgrounds, circumstances and needs. We are committed to providing a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experience of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.

Centre for Participation has developed a draft Reconciliation Action Plan to ensure Aboriginal cultural input in design and development of service delivery. Centre for Participation will provide children in general and Aboriginal children specifically, with a safe, nurturing and positive environment where they are comfortable with being themselves, expressing their culture, their spiritual and belief systems and they are supported by volunteers and/or staff who respect their Aboriginality and therefore encourages their sense of self and identity.

Centre for Participation has a standard practice of recognising the traditional owners of the lands on which we meet at the beginning of every meeting or event held at the Centre.

Centre for Participation also shows inclusiveness and encourages people to feel welcome by flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags and by a welcome in language on our Welcome Wall.

Staff and volunteers at Centre for Participation have been able to access Professional Development on Cultural Awareness and Cultural Sensitivity, both in general Aboriginal history and local cultural awareness in relation to the 5 Aboriginal clans in the Wimmera Area (Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Japagulk peoples).

A public commitment to the cultural safety of children in general and Aboriginal children specifically, is available and displayed in our foyer and on our website.

Further steps:

Updating our linked policies and procedures in our HR manual:

- Code of Conduct

- Complaint handling policy
- Risk management plan
- Human resources, recruitment and screening policy
- Disciplinary policy
- Policies and procedures on record keeping, information sharing and external reporting.

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

We proactively manage risks to children in our leadership, governance, and culture and diligently apply Victorian Child Safe Standards (2021 & 2023) across all our services. Our Child Safe Policy and Standards is shared with staff and available to reference to at any time via our Staff Management Database Roubler.

As part of our commitment to Child Safety we have implemented the “Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations online training” for all staff to complete.

Our code of conduct for staff and volunteers embeds the Child Safe Standards and specifically mentions mandatory reporting requirements.

All staff and internal volunteers have a current Working with Children Check and a Police Check.

Our public commitment to the cultural safety of children in general and Aboriginal children specifically, is available and displayed in our foyer and on our website.

Future steps: Updating our linked policies and procedures as per Standard 1.

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

We respect children and young people’s privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities. We carefully manage and safely secure information relating to children’s safety and wellbeing across our governance, risk management, information sharing, and record keeping arrangements.

Children accessing services at Centre for Participation are informed about their rights to safety, information and participation and informed about the internal complaints process.

At Centre for Participation we thrive to create community led participation opportunities, which means participants, including children and young people, are encouraged to be involved in the development and implementation of programs.

Staff and volunteers are provided with information to help them understand, recognise and act on signs of child abuse and harm. Both through Centre for Participation policies and procedures and mandatory staff training in relation to Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations

Where appropriate we provide access to sexual abuse prevention programs and other relevant information to children in an age-appropriate manner.

Future steps: Updating our linked policies and procedures as per Standard 1.

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

We actively involve the families and their children in the promotion of child safety and seek their input about policy and procedure decisions that impact on children and young people. Children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making, service design and development, thereby strengthening confidence and engagement.

Centre for Participation supports children from all different family structures and background and we respect this wide variety of relationships including extended family structures and kinship structures. Parents, carers and families are encouraged to be involved in our organisation and its programs to build and maintain an inclusive culture which is respectful of different kinds of families and supports children to feel safe and to be safe.

Children under the age of 16 will need parental consent to participate in our services and programs.

Parents, carers and other family members will be made aware of our child safe policy, statement and our public commitment to child safety.

Future steps: Updating our linked policies and procedures as per Standard 1.

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

Centre for Participation, our staff and volunteers, understand children and young people's diverse circumstances and provide support, a culturally safe environment and respond to those who are vulnerable. We provide a safe environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, children and young people with a disability, those who identify as LGBTIQ+, children and young people from vulnerable or out of home care situations and the cultural safety of any other children who attend our Centre, or are in the care of staff, volunteers and clients.

Centre for Participation is a proud supporter and ally for the LGBTIQ+ community and displays the Pride Flag at all times in our front foyer.

To promote the feeling of belonging a welcome wall has been created to welcome people in their own language (including Aboriginal language) to our Centre. Our Centre is multicultural and some translation can be provided in house but external translating services can be accessed if needed.

Centre for Participation is an all-inclusive organisation, which means we are accessible to all, including good access for people living with disabilities and we encourage all service users, participants and clients to be involved in the design and delivery of our programs.

Centre for Participation upholds equity for all children and prevents child abuse and harm resulting from discrimination based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion, sex, intersex status, gender identity or sexual orientation.

Our public commitment to the cultural safety of children in general and Aboriginal children specifically, is available and displaced in our foyer and on our website.

Future steps: Updating our linked policies and procedures as per Standard 1.

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

Centre for Participation has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers. We background and referee check all personnel including volunteers, at recruitment for evidence of potential risks to children and young people. This will include (but is not limited to), National Police Checks, Working with Children Check, character references and NDIS/National Disability Insurance Scheme checks (where relevant to the position). Working with Children Checks are renewed every 5 years and Police Checks are conducted every 3 years for all staff and volunteers.

Centre for Participation's ongoing quality improvement and staff professional development ensures appropriate induction and awareness of the Child Safe Policy and Statement. Staff and volunteers are aware of their responsibility in providing a (culturally) safe environment for all children and young people while at Centre for Participation or in their care. All staff and volunteers have appropriate management support in record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.

As part of our commitment to Child Safety we have implemented the "Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations online training" for all staff to complete.

Future steps: Updating our linked policies and procedures as per Standard 1.

7. *Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.*

Centre for Participation has an accessible, child focused complaints handling policy which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of leadership, staff and volunteers, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report. All staff, volunteers and services users have access to this easy to understand complaints policy and the complaints process is culturally safe to all.

As part of our commitment to Child Safety we have implemented the "Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations online training" for all staff to complete. We support and encourage staff to report in situations of suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

Centre for Participation ensures privacy and confidentiality in complaints processes and keeps records in line with record keeping policies and procedures.

Future steps: Updating our linked policies and procedures as per Standard 1.

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

At Centre for Participation staff and volunteers are trained and supported to effectively implement our Child Safe Policy and Statement and our mandatory reporting requirements. Both staff and volunteers receive training and information to recognise the indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and young people. As part of our commitment to Child Safety we have implemented the “Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations online training” for all staff to complete. Staff need to acknowledge attendance to the training via our Roubler staff management system and attendance records are kept.

At Centre for Participation we have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child’s safety, which are followed rigorously. Staff and volunteers receive management support to do so.

Future steps: Updating our linked policies and procedures as per Standard 1.

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

Centre for Participation (and its management, staff and volunteers) promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people both in a physical and online environment. Staff and volunteers are aware of, and can mitigate the risks, in the online and physical environments without compromising a child’s right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.

Centre for Participation and its programs have risk management templates for each program in place. Risk Management is also conducted for individual events.

Future steps: Updating our linked policies and procedures as per Standard 1.

10. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.

Centre for Participation has specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our management team, staff and volunteers to achieve the Child Safe Standards. Our regular review, continuous quality improvement strategies and evaluation processes will ensure up to date policies and procedures, staff awareness and knowledge of policies and procedures and the embedding of the Child Safe Standards into all program policies and procedures, both on a high level and a practical / on the ground level.

Through our review, evaluation, continuous improvement strategies and complaints and feedback mechanisms, complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed and reviewed to identify causes and systemic failures to be addressed internally in policy, procedures and practical actions. This ensures a rigorous evaluation of implementation and imbedding of the Child Safe Standards throughout our organisation.

This Child Safe Policy has an annual review date, unless best practice guidelines and new government directions need us to review sooner.

Our incident and complaints register will be able to provide us an overview of incidents if

occurred, their nature and risk mitigation steps to take to prevent incidents from happening in the future.

Records are kept in line with privacy and confidentiality guidelines and 7 year record keeping policies and procedures.

Future steps: Updating our linked policies and procedures as per Standard 1.

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

Centre for Participation's policies, procedures and program work plans address all Child Safe Standards. The Child Safe Standards and Statement are easily accessible online via our Staff Management System Roubler.

Our public commitment to the cultural safety of children in general and Aboriginal children specifically, is available and displayed in our foyer and on our website.

Our management team champions and models compliance with the Child Safe Standards and staff and volunteers in our organisation are a critical part of creating a child safe organisation.

Future steps: Updating our linked policies and procedures as per Standard 1.

Child Safe Statement:

Centre for Participation has zero tolerance of child abuse of all types, in person or online. Allegations of harm, abuse and other child safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently in line with our policies, procedures and mandatory reporting requirements.

Centre for Participation takes complaints seriously and we respond promptly and thoroughly. We make sure that our complaints processes are accessible to children and young people and their families, so they understand their rights in this process. Centre for Participation is committed to providing (culturally) safe physical and online environments for children and young people from all backgrounds, including but not limited to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, children and young people from CALD backgrounds, LGBTQIA+ children and young people, children and young people from out of home or foster care backgrounds and any other (vulnerable) children.

Centre for Participation encourages involvement, participation and input of all children and young people in design and development of programs and culturally safe environments.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000 and ask for Victoria Police.

Scope

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants at Centre for Participation. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance at Centre for Participation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

1. promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children.
2. promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
3. ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.
4. Children from LGBTQIA+ backgrounds and communities.

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children at Centre for Participation.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct, the co-design and development of programs and the implementation of programs.

Training and supervision

Training and education are important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Staff and volunteers of Centre for Participation will be required to undertake child safe training on induction and relevant refresher training when necessary. As part of our commitment to Child Safety we have implemented the "Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations online training" for all staff to complete.

Centre for Participation culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills, protect children from abuse and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, the safety of children with a disability, those from LGBTQIA+ communities and any other (vulnerable) children and young people.

New employees and volunteers will be inducted to ensure they understand the Centre for Participation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to the organisation's code of conduct). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Both staff and volunteers will provide their current Working with Children Check and a current Police check upon recruitment. Police checks are required every 3 years.

Legislative responsibilities

Centre for Participation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual

offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.¹

- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.²
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.³
In accordance with Centre for Participation's records management policy, all reports of child abuse will be recorded in the incident reporting system. We are committed to maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of children and their families. Records on matters relating to child abuse or child-related incidents will be monitored by the Board to ensure they are appropriately managed and risks are identified and mitigated.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Centre for Participation takes all allegations of child abuse, neglect, and sexual assault very seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly.

Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations or potential risk to children and young people. Centre for Participation works to ensure all children, families, staff, and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and/or if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

Centre for Participation will ensure we meet our obligations regarding reporting, privacy, and employment law in these matters. Complaints and incidents will retain a child safe focus regardless of whether children have been involved or not.

Centre for Participation has a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if there is a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

Review

The Board will provide governance oversight for the continuous improvement of this policy, its implementation and for reporting and audit obligations.

This policy will be reviewed annually after the implementation of the Victorian Child Safe Standards on 1st July 2022.

Centre for Participation will review and make necessary adjustments and improvements to this policy and its implementation following significant incidents or when new government guidelines become available.

Centre for Participation will ensure that families and children can contribute to this policy's development and will develop communication processes that allow people to contribute relevant comments, suggestions, recommendations, and ideas to improve this document. This will enable us to build a strong and resilient culture of child safety across the broader community.

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Centre for Participation actively works with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities, LGBTQIA+, people with a disability and other relevant stakeholder to continually improve our access and our physical and online safety for all children.

Authorisation

Signature of Chairperson

Name of Chairperson/Chief Executive Officer (whichever is applicable)

Date ____ / ____ / ____

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Relevant Centre for Participation Documents

- HR Manual
- Policy #18 Integrated Risk Management Policy
- Policy #26 Whistleblower
- Policy #31 Personnel Checks Policy
- Policy #16 Mandatory Reporting
- Policy #2 Concerns and Complaints

Relevant Supporting Legislation and Government documents

- Betrayal of Trust Inquiry, Victoria 2013
- Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017
- Review of the Victorian Child Safe Standards, 2019
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (VIC)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (VIC)
- Crimes Act 1958 (VIC)
- Wrongs Act 1958 (VIC)