CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT
Early Years Services

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure an environment that is free, as far as practicable, from risk to health and safety for all Educators, children, parents/guardians, and other visitors to the services in relation to the buildings, equipment, and maintenance and programs. City of Stonnington acknowledges the importance of creating a child safe organisation.

2. Policy

City of Stonnington understands that maintenance of the services buildings, children's play areas and all equipment used are important aspects of a quality service. Early Years Services have a duty of care to always ensure the safety of children, and Educators in their services, maintaining a child safe organisation where children are safe and feel safe.

Definitions:
Duty of care: is a common law concept that refers to your responsibility to adequately protect children in your care from harm. It applies to all Educators and staff members within any Victorian early childhood service, and it is usually expressed as a duty to take reasonable steps to protect children from injury that is reasonably foreseeable.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Early Years Coordinator
- Team Leaders
- Educators
- Administration Officers
- Parents/Guardians
- Students on placement
- Volunteers
- Agency Educators engaged at the service

4. Responsibilities

The following roles are responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy:

- Early Years Coordinator
- Team Leaders
- Administration Officer

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- Educational Leaders
- Educators
- Health and Safety Representative (HSR)
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5. Procedure

Safety Checks of Buildings, Grounds and Equipment
- Team Leaders and/or designated Educators will complete daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual safety checks in line with Occupational Health and Safety requirements for assessing hazards and minimising risks within the buildings or any of the equipment
- Educators must conduct the daily safety check of the outdoor space prior to allowing children access to ensure any hazards are identified and removed
- Educators should remove items, or equipment needing attention from use or ensure the building area is secure and report to the Team Leader
- Educators will maintain the environment, ensure floors, and surfaces are clean and kept clear of clutter, including sweeping floors and wiping down tables
- The Team Leader will report maintenance requests through the Urban Maintenance System (UMS) online portal to request either a replacement or repair by the Building Maintenance Department
- Educators are to alert Team Leaders if maintenance is still outstanding to allow for follow up with UMS to ensure jobs are complete in a timely manner
- Team Leaders will instruct contractors to ensure any tools; power leads and materials are kept out of reach of children. Where possible, contractors should undertake repairs away from children and make sure when leaving after completion of the work the area is clean and safe
- Team Leaders will need to make sure any maintenance or building work involving noise, dust, odours, or obstructions are planned to minimise disruption to the daily operation of the service
- Educators should thoroughly check the area before allowing children back into the play space
- The Early Years Services Health and Safety Representative will complete Occupational Health and Safety site inspections every 3 months at each service

Toys and Equipment Safety
- When selecting resources for purchasing focus will be on safety, durability, and appropriateness for the age group that resources are for
- When new equipment is purchased a *Pre-Start Equipment Safety checklist* will be undertaken on these items to identify any risks. The *Pre-Start Equipment Safety Checklist* is to occur prior to items being introduced to the children
- When new equipment is introduced, Educators discuss amongst themselves any identified risks and how these items are used within the environment then demonstrate this with children if applicable
- Team Leader and Educators will ensure that adequate furniture is available to meet the physical and developmental needs of children attending the service
- Children's toys and equipment are required to meet *Australian Standards* and are regularly checked and cleaned by Educators

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- Toys and equipment damaged by wear and tear, are considered hazardous and should be removed from the play area until repaired. These items should be reported to the Team Leader
- When there is a group of children of various ages and developmental levels consideration will be given to the resources and play experiences provided to ensure they are appropriate and safe for the whole group
- The sandpit must be covered each evening with a heavy-duty cover
- Electrical cords should be secure out of children's reach and all electrical outlets covered with protective caps

Centre Security
- Each services main entrance has a coded keypad entry system, permanent and casual Educators and parents/guardians are provided with the access code. On receiving the door code Educators and parents/guardians are informed of the confidential nature of this code
- Agency relievers must only be provided the access code if they are engaged for a significant block of time
- The coded keypad entry system code is changed every 12 months or as necessary
- Contract cleaners are provided with the access code to ensure cleaning of the service can be maintained
- External emergency exit gates always remained locked and are only used as an exit point in an emergency or as an alternative exit for excursions
- If services have an alarm installed the code is provided to permanent Educators and contracted cleaners
- Educators should follow opening and closing procedures as outlined for their service ensuring all children are collected and signed out at the end of each day and the service is securely locked when leaving
- Educators must complete the *Staff Attendance Record* each day noting the times of arrival and departure from the premises throughout the day
- Parents and Educators are reminded that the front gate and the entrance door MUST be closed properly after entering or exiting the premises to ensure maximum safety for all children
- Any unauthorised people arriving will be asked to produce identification and their reason for being at the service e.g., builders, council officer, or to collect a child etc
- At the discretion of the Team Leader, Educators will receive a key to the service, the Team Leader must maintain a record of who has been allocated a key and all keys returned upon ceasing employment
- Emergency and evacuation procedures are rehearsed every 3 months and the Team Leader must ensure everyone present at the time participates in the evacuation

Child Safety – Situational Environmental and Opportunistic Risks
- Team Leaders are responsible for ensuring that Risk Management Plans consider child safety risks, these risks are added to risk plans and that appropriate mitigation strategies put in place
- Team Leaders review new or changed physical environments to assess child safety risks, considering the diversity of the children that may be affected by the risk

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- Team Leaders are responsible for ensuring regular discussion, use and working knowledge of relevant child safety policies and procedures i.e., *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Employee Code of Conduct*, *Child Safety Code of Conduct* and *Child-Related Reportable Conduct Policy*
- Team Leaders and Educators will ensure that all reporting obligations under the *Reportable Conduct Scheme* are adhered too
- All employees will monitor who is on the premises, i.e., ensure visitors and contractors sign in and understands the expectations for child safety
- Educators will arrange furniture and equipment layout to reduce secluded areas and/or obstructions to line of vision (i.e., ensuring windows are uncovered) as appropriate
- Team Leaders and Educators will consider how to minimise time periods where Educators are by themselves with children (i.e., around opening and closure times) unless essential to service provision
- Team Leaders and Educators will consider whether people need to work in pairs, groups and/or in line of vision of others when working with children
- Team Leaders and Educators will ensure children's safety and wellbeing by checking clothing and shoes are suitable for the environment and activities they are partaking in, for example not wearing thongs outside while running

Working with Children (WWC) Checks
- Team Leaders or Administration Officers must request, and sight Working with Children Check (WWCC) from contractors/visitors on entry to the service. All contractors/visitors are required to sign in and out in the visitor's book with Team Leader/Administration Officer countersigning that WWCC has been sighted
- During the screening process upon employment Educators are required to provide evidence of a current Working with Children (WWC) check as part of the application process in accordance with the *Worker Screening Act 2020*
- A candidate will not be permitted to commence work until a valid WWC has been obtained and provided to the service
- Once a candidate is selected and documents provided Team Leader/Early Years Coordinator must check the status of their Working with Children (WWC) Check online via www.workingwithchildrencheck.vic.gov.au website to ensure Educator's status is up to date and current before an offer of employment is confirmed
- If a candidate has a Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration and has provided a VIT card this is used as an alternative to the Working with Children (WWC) check. The details must be checked via the Victorian Institute of Teaching register on www.vit.vic.edu.au website to ensure the Educators registration is current before an offer of employment is confirmed
- Team Leaders regularly check and record Educators Working with Children (WWC) Check status online via the status checker on Working with Children Check website to check for changes of Educators employed within City of Stonnington
- Team Leaders check and record the status of Educators registered with Victorian Institute of Teaching regularly via the www.vit.vic.edu.au website to check for changes of Educators employed within City of Stonnington
- Employed Educators will be unable to engage in direct child-related work if their Working with Children (WWC) Check lapses. If Working with Children (WCC) Check lapses, while being processed, Educators will be unable to return to direct

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child-related work until the Team Leader/Coordinator can access confirmation via the status checker on <u>Working with Children Check</u> website that Educator's status is up to date and current
- City of Stonnington will not allow people charged with, convicted, or found guilty of sexual, violent or drug offences specified in clause two of Schedule 5 of the *Worker Screening Act 2020* to work with or care for children

Promoting Safety within the Program
- Educators will guide and assist children by promoting a safe inclusive environment where children can develop a strong sense of belonging and connection to the service community
- Each child's background and culture will be respected, encouraged, and actively supported within the program and opportunities provided for families to share information or celebrations from their culture
- Information regarding the educational program and children individual learning will be share within the service community via the approved online communication platform to promote further engagement with families
- Educators will strive to foster strong respectful relationships with children, fellow Educators and all families aiming to create a safe culture within the service
- Opportunities allow for children to discuss aspects of the service or physical environment that make them feel uncomfortable and/or unsafe
- Educators provide opportunities to develop knowledge of body safety to empower children to begin to understand the concept of consent
- Planned and/or unstructured learning opportunities support children to develop self-awareness, awareness of others, emotional regulation, decision making, and social skills
- Educators will use strategies which promote positive and responsible behaviour, and respond to bullying, discrimination, racism, and harassment appropriately
- The educational program provides activities which engage, challenge and support children to recognise and respond to hazardous situations

Professional Development and Support
- Educators undertake child protection training annually through the *Victorian Government Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM)* online learning system
- Educators complete Child Wise Training every 2 years on topics such as Child Safe Standards and Child Safe Fundamentals or other specifically tailored training arranged by the Early Years Coordinator
- Team Leaders and Educators are aware of current child protection legislation and understand they have a legal and moral obligation to protect and keep children safe
- Team Leaders and Educators have sound knowledge regarding Child Safe Standards and ensure compliance with each standard while undertaking their role within City of Stonnington Early Years Services
- Team Leaders and Educators refer to the *Child Safety Code of Conduct for Educators, Child Safety Code of Conduct for Parents and Guardians* or the *Child Safety Code of Conduct for Children and Young People* for clarification and guidance

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- City of Stonnington employs a Child Safety Officer who can be contacted for any questions, concerns and guidance around Child Safety, and Child Protection.
- Each service has a nominated Child Safety Representative who meets to discuss relevant topics or issues quarterly with the City of Stonnington's Child Safety Officer and Early Years Coordinator

6. Relevant Legislation, Policies & Sources

Body Safety Australia [*https://www.bodysafetyaustralia.com.au/*](https://www.bodysafetyaustralia.com.au/)

Child- Related Reportable Conduct Policy

Child Safe Standards - [*https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/being-a-child-safe-organisation/*](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/being-a-child-safe-organisation/)

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Child Safety Code of Conduct

[*Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Act 2021*](#)

City of Stonnington Occupational Health and Safety Manual

Commission for Children and Young [*CCYP | Reportable Conduct Scheme*](#)

Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy

Delivery and Collection of Children

Department of Health and Human Services [*https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/resources-child-safe-standards*](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/resources-child-safe-standards)

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011 SI 653) - Version 17th April 2023

Emergency and Evacuation Policy

Employee Code of Conduct

Excursion and Safe Transportation of Children Policy

Interactions with Children Policy

Nutrition and Mealtimes Policy

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National Quality Standards

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

Sleep and Rest Policy

Supervision Policy

Workers Screening Act 2020

Victorian Government Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) Information Sharing and MARAM Online Learning System: Log in to the site (infosharing.vic.gov.au)

Victorian State Government Working with Children Check Victoria www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au

Victorian Institute of Teaching www.vit.vic.edu.au

7. Related Services Forms

OHS Checklists
OHS General and Task Risk Assessment
OHS Pre-Start Equipment Safety Checklist
OHS Safe Work Procedures
OHS Workplace Inspection Checklist
Medical Condition Risk Minimisation Plan
Visitors Book

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