

Child Safety Policy

134-311

Version Number: 1.1

Approving Authority: Board of Directors

Date of Approval: December 2016

Review Dates: April 2019

Date of Next Review: April 2021

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Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Banyule Community Health (BCH) is clear in our organisational responsibility to prevent and protect the safety of children.

Scope: This policy applies to all Banyule Community Health Board, workers, contractors and co-located workers. The term workers is inclusive of volunteers and students.

Policy Statement: Banyule Community Health believes that all children should have the right to feel safe and be safe all of the time.

Banyule Community Health acknowledges the important role that organisations play in leading child safety at all levels within our community. We acknowledge that physical, sexual, emotional, religious, cultural and racial abuse and neglect occurs, and we commit to take responsibility to prevent and protect children.

Banyule Community Health recognises that children are vulnerable, and require organisations to implement a range of strategies to ensure they are safe, listened to and have access to trusted adults. Child safety strategies can include a range of preventative and protective measures that have application across the entire organisation.

Banyule Community Health has a long term commitment to the health and wellbeing of children, with a range of specialised services that support the growth, development, education, cultural connection and wellbeing of children. BCH commits to learn from past practices, and to have in place, systems and processes that meet 'child safe standards'. Children in our community are made up of diverse groups with many unique experiences. Banyule Community Health understand that the journeys of children can be challenging and will work to ensure culture is respected and safety always paramount.

Cultural identity and safety is fundamental to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Banyule Community Health will work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to ensure children feel safe and respected within the local environment and create opportunities for children to be heard and supported within their culture.

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Children with disabilities can be more vulnerable to abuse due to their isolation and possible lack of access to community services. Banyule Community Health commits to ensuring children with disabilities experience responsive, respectful and nurturing service

Definitions:

Child

The words 'child' and 'children' in this policy refers to children and young people up to the age of 18 years. This definition is consistent with the national framework, Commission for Children and Young People Act, the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* and the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*. The term 'child' is inclusive of anyone under 18 years of age.

Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP)

We are an independent statutory body that promotes improvement in policies and practices affecting the safety and wellbeing of Victorian children and young people.

Aboriginal

The term 'Aboriginal' in this guide is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Serious Misconduct

Is defined as the wilful or deliberate behaviour by a BCH worker that is inconsistent with the continuation of the contract of employment. It includes conduct that cause's serious and imminent risk to the health or safety of a person; or the reputation and viability of BCH.

Abuse

Abuse constitutes any act committed against a child involving physical violence, sexual offences, serious emotional or psychological abuse, serious neglect. (An overview of the Victorian child safe standards, Nov 2015)

Harm

The use of the word 'harm' is often used to describe an event that is seen as possibly less detrimental than 'abuse' but is clearly not in the child's best interest or promoting their safety and wellbeing.

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Types of Harm and Abuse:

Physical

Defined as intentionally causing, or threatening to cause, physical injury to a child, or inadvertently causing injury as a consequence of physical punishment or physically aggressive treatment of a child. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures (CCYP).

Sexual

A child is sexually abused when any person uses their authority or power over a child to engage in sexual activity. (CCYP).

Emotional and psychological

This occurs when a person engages in inappropriate behaviours, such as rejecting, ignoring, humiliating, isolating, threatening or verbally abusing a child, or allowing others to do so. Because this kind of abuse does not leave physical injuries, it is often hidden and underestimated (CCYP).

Neglect

Defined as failing to meet a child's basic needs, such as providing adequate food, drink, shelter, clothing, supervision, hygiene and medical attention (CCYP, 2015, p.11).

Racial, cultural, religious

This is conduct that demonstrates contempt, ridicule, hatred or negativity towards a child because of their race, culture or religion. It may be overt, such as direct racial vilification or discrimination, or covert, such as demonstrating a lack of cultural respect (attitude and values) and awareness (knowledge and understanding) or failing to provide positive images about another culture (CCYP, 2015, p.11).

Grooming (sexual abuse)

When an adult purposely creates a relationship with a child under 16 years, either face to face or online, with the intent of a subsequent relationship is known as grooming.

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Guiding Principles: Banyule Community Health adopts the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and is guided by its policy statements *that all children should have the right to feel safe and be safe all of the time.*

Objectives: Banyule Community Health works within the 7 Child Safe Standards established by the Victorian State Government in response to The Betrayal of Trust report, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Childhood Sexual Abuse and the Commission for Children and Young People Report ‘..as a good parent would’ report.

The 7 standards are :

1. Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements
2. A Child Safe Policy or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
3. A Code of Conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
4. Screening, supervision, training and other human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
5. Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
6. Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
7. Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

Responsibilities It’s important to acknowledge that Child Safety is the responsibility of all workers and volunteers with Banyule Community Health.

Chief Executive Officer is responsible for:

- oversight of the Child Safety Policy and Procedure
- driving and embedding the culture of BCH being a child safe organisation

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- ensuring systems are in place to ensure safety of children on the premises of BCH
- reporting allegations of abuse to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP).

General Management Team are responsible for :

- awareness, planning and reporting in line with the Child Safety Policy and Procedure
- ensuring child safe risks are identified, mitigated and reported
- investigation and follow up of incidents relating to children
- escalating issues to CEO
- ensuring the staff who report to you have completed training in child safety
- ensuring appropriate recruitment screening processes are used

Child Safe Liaison Officers are responsible for:

- acting as the first point of contact for consultation of child safety concerns or allegations of abuse within BCH
- championing child safety and promoting an organisational culture that values and respects children
- providing informed advice and guidance to other staff on organisational processes to support child safety.
- Assist alleged victims and their families to access counselling and support services.
- Provide support to affected staff through BCH's Employee Assistance Program.

Workers are responsible for:

- Ensuring their Working With Children Check is current
- Adhering to the BCH Code of Conduct
- Reporting suspected child abuse in line with duty to disclose and failure to protect legislation

Reporting obligations for West Heidelberg Community Legal Service workers in relation to sexual offences against a child

All adults must report a reasonable belief that a sexual offence against a child has been committed. The *Crimes Act* was amended by the *Crimes*

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Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014 (Vic), to establish a new offence for failing to disclose sexual offences committed against children under 16 years of age. However, lawyers are exempt from this to the extent that the obligation to report is not contravened if the information on which the report would be based is privileged. Not all information that lawyers obtain in the course of practice is privileged. A determination of whether or not information is privileged would need to be made by the lawyer and their legal supervisor. The Legal Supervisor for the WHLS is the Principal Solicitor.

Policy Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed every two years or as required by the General Management Team

Legislation

Child & Wellbeing Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012

Related Documents

Assessment and Care Procedure
Confidentiality and Privacy procedure
Staff Recruitment Policy and Procedure
Student Placement Policy and Procedure
Police check and WWCC Procedure
Volunteer Policy and Procedure
Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
An overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards, State of Victoria, Department of Health & Human Services, Nov 2015

