

Child Safety policy



Serve It Up's Child Safety Policy sets out our commitment and approach to creating and maintaining a culturally safe and child safe organisation for children and young people.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors and other people connected to the school, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people.

1. Statement of commitment

Serve It Up is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families. Serve It Up is compliant with the 11 Child Safe Standards and is committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

2. Child Safe Standards

The 11 Child Safe Standards are listed below. Organisations who are required to comply with the Standards need to implement all aspects of the 11 Standards.

Standard 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Code of conduct

Code of conduct when interacting with children

Our Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

Acceptable behaviours

As staff and volunteers are involved in child-related work individually, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- upholding the RTO's statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- treating students and families with respect both within the RTO environment and outside the environment as part of normal social and community activities.
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child

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- encourage the expression of culture, supporting cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- encourage the expression of culture, supporting cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the CEO/COO and/or Training Manager, understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse.
- If child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.

Unacceptable behaviours

Any staff and volunteers, involved in child-related work must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts)
- exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational or service delivery context
- ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
- discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance or delivering the education curriculum
- treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity. – racism will not be tolerated within the organisation
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to schoolwork or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- photograph or video a child in an RTO environment except in accordance with policy or where required for duty of care purposes
- in the RTO environment or at other schools where students are present, consume alcohol or take illicit drugs under any circumstances

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4. Roles and responsibilities

Leadership team

Our leadership team (comprising the CEO, COO and Training Manager) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

Leadership staff will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

RTO staff

All staff will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training and always follow this child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our Code of Conduct
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, including following the four critical actions
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

5. Child Abuse

Reporting child abuse is a community-wide responsibility. Child abuse includes any act committed against a child involving:

- Physical violence;
- Sexual offences;
- Serious emotional or psychological abuse; and
- Serious neglect.

Call the police on 000 if you have immediate concerns for a child's safety.

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All Registered Training Organisation (RTO) staff are required to report to police if they know or reasonably believe that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 18. It is a criminal offence (failure to disclose) to fail to comply with this obligation across jurisdictions.

What is a 'reasonable belief'?

A 'reasonable belief' is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed when:

- A child states that they have been sexually abused;
- A child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- Someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused;
- Observations of the child's behaviour or development leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused; or
- Signs of sexual abuse led to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

If a person 16 years or older provided you with the information and they do not have an intellectual disability and they do not want the information reported to the police, an individual is then not required to report to police.

6. Allegations and complaint handling process

Serve It Up takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly with staff escalating to management as soon as the complaint is made, ensuring action is taken immediately. Staff are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families and staff know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

If a child discloses an incident of abuse

- Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared others, such as with their parent/carers, specific people in your organisation, or the police.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete or complete it together.

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- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to your training manager and CEO, as well as police or child protection as relevant.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately by completing the incident report, which will go to the training manager and CEO so they can record the information on the student management system, VETtrak.

If a parent/carer says their child has been abused or raises a concern

- Explain that Serve It Up has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the Serve It Up management, the police or child protection.
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.
- Be aware that:
 - Individuals from Aboriginal, culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse.
 - Individuals with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident.

Staff need to be sensitive to these issues and meet individuals' needs where possible. If staff believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing they must still act.

7. Reporting

What types of conduct are reportable?

There are five types of 'reportable conduct' listed in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005:

- Sexual offences (against, with or in the presence of, a child);
- Sexual misconduct (against, with or in the presence of, a child);
- Physical violence (against, with or in the presence of, a child);
- Behaviour that is likely to cause significant emotional or psychological harm;
- and
- Significant neglect.

A reportable allegation can be made about any person over 18 years of age who is an employee or volunteer of Serve It Up. Allegations can be made about the conduct of people even if:

- They do not have direct contact with children; or
- The conduct occurred outside of their work.

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Trainers and staff are required to:

Once a trainer or staff member has any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a student, they must report to their training manager and CEO their concerns. This should be verbally at the time of the incident.

Trainers and/or staff members should refer to the [FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS](#) as outlined in the induction manual.

The incident report form must be completed within 24 hours. The form is available in Serve It Up Teams.

The incident report will be sent to the training manager and CEO with all relevant information necessary should include the following:

- date of incident or concern
- full name, date of birth, and residential address of the child or young person
- the details of the concerns and the reasons for those concerns
- the individual staff member's involvement with the child and young person
- details of any other agencies who may be involved with the child or young person, if known.
- the date name and position of the person who made the report and the person who received the report

The CEO is required to:

- respond to a reportable allegation made against a staff member or volunteer from their organisation, by ensuring that allegations are appropriately investigated
- report allegations which may involve criminal conduct to the police
- if child is participating in a training course as organised by their school, relevant information will be shared with the relevant staff members.
- notify *Commission for Children and Young People* of allegations within 3 business days after becoming aware of the allegation
- give *Commission for Children and Young People* certain detailed information about the allegation within 30 days after becoming aware of the allegation
- ensure that their organisation has systems in place to:
 - prevent reportable conduct from being committed by a worker or volunteer within the course of their employment
 - enable any person to notify the head of a reportable allegation
 - enable any person to notify *Commission for Children and Young People* of a reportable allegation against leadership staff
 - investigate and respond to a reportable allegation against a staff of volunteer from that organisation.

The CEO must use the *Commission for Children and Young People* online form "Notify and update reportable allegations"

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It is a criminal offence for a head of an organisation to fail to comply with the three-day and 30-day notification obligations without a reasonable excuse.

8. Risk Management

Serve It Up ensures the protection of children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments.

Training and supervision

Serve It Up culture aims for all individuals to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

Serve It Up has specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team and RTO staff to achieve these commitments. We support RTO staff through ongoing supervision to ensure they understand our organisation'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.

Working with Children Checks

All Serve It Up RTO staff are required to provide, as a component of the recruitment process, a current Victorian Working with Children Check (WWCC) to ensure suitability in meeting Serve It Up's legislative and contractual obligations.

Serve It Up staff will be notified when renewal of the WWCC is required. Staff are required to ensure the renewal process is completed without delay. Staff whose WWCC lapse will be unable to undertake duties involving working with children.

Regular reviews

Serve It Up reviews this policy annually and following any significant incident, should it occur.

Serve It Up also reviews students surveys and feedback each month to ensure that the classroom is a safe and inclusive environment.

9. Recordkeeping

Serve It Up is committed to keeping full and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns. All child safety complaints, concerns, incidents and near misses are recorded in our incident report and details stored in our student management system, VETtrak. We record and keep the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints. This includes findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken.

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10. Useful links

Below are useful links for students and staff alike covering different aspects of child safety:

- Emergency Services (Police) 000
- [Kids Helpline](#) – 1800 55 1800 – support children with confidential counselling
- [Sexual assault crisis hotline](#) - 1800806292 – confidential crisis counselling service for people who have experienced both past and recent sexual assault
- [Safe steps](#) – 1800 015 188 - 24/7 family violence response centre –
- [PROTECT website](#) – Information on child protection in Victoria
- [1800RESPECT](#) – confidential information counselling and support service for those impacted by domestic, family or sexual violence
- [The Orange Door](#) – provides support and safety planning and connection to other services such as mental health, financial aid, counselling and accommodation
- [Queerspace](#) – provides counselling, case management, advocacy and other support services for those in the LGBTIQ+ community
- [Bravehearts](#) – website dedicated to the prevention of child sexual abuse
- [VACCA](#) – Support aboriginal communities by offering program and education in all areas of life
- [Commission for children and young people](#) – Information on child safe standards, resources for children and young people and information on their rights
- [Safety of children with a disability \[PDF 250KB\]](#)
- [Safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds \[PDF 229KB\]](#)
- [Cultural safety for Aboriginal Children \[PDF 435KB\]](#)
- Foundational Theories and Knowledge - Supporting children and young people who identify as LGBTIQA+ Practice Paper

11. Version Control

Date	Version	Description of changes	Who
15.06.2022	1	Creation of new child safety policy based on RTO requirements in child safe standards	RR
16.01.2023	2	Updated policy to include reported via online incident report and a useful links section	RR