

# Child Safety Policy & Procedure

Version date: 16/12/2020

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Approved by Executive Management Committee

EMC Minutes: 20 August 2020



## Purpose

Very Special Kids is committed to ensuring the children in our care are kept safe. Comprehensive systems are in place to protect children and to create a child friendly environment where children feel safe, are well cared for and have fun.

Very Special Kids has a responsibility to report any cases of suspected child abuse to the relevant authorities if there is a reasonable belief that a child is at risk.

## Definitions

- VSK; Very Special Kids
- VSK Child; any child receiving services from Very Special Kids
- Child safety concerns: these include but are not limited to:
  - Disclosure of abuse or harm
  - Allegation, suspicion or observation of abuse or harm
  - Breaches of the VSK Code of Conduct
  - Environmental safety issues
- Child Protection Education Officer; a VSK employee with designated responsibility for acquiring expertise in child safety and protection matters, and sharing that knowledge and expertise with other VSK employees and volunteers
- CEO; VSK Chief Executive Officer
- Reportable conduct: includes 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; or significant neglect; as defined in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*

## Scope

- This policy applies to all employees, contractors, volunteers and VSK family members
- This policy applies to all children engaged with VSK

## Designated Responsibility

- Policy authorisation: CEO
- Policy implementation: Executive Management Committee
- Policy owner/maintenance: General Manager Planning & Improvement

## Policy

VSK is committed to child safety. All children who come to VSK have a right to feel and be safe. Pro-active measures are taken to protect all children from abuse, particularly those at higher risk including children with a disability, Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. VSK employees and volunteers are adequately equipped to recognise and respond appropriately to child safety concerns. VSK has zero tolerance for child abuse and will take all allegations and concerns seriously, responding to them in accordance with the processes detailed in this policy and the VSK Mandatory Reporting Policy.

## Procedure

### Recognising, reporting and responding to child safety concerns

Should any child, parent or VSK employee or volunteer have any child safety concerns regarding a VSK child, they should adhere to the following process:

1. Call "000" if the child is in immediate danger
2. If the safety concern relates to an incident involving a VSK employee, volunteer or contractor whilst the child is in VSK's care, the relevant service manager should be notified as soon as possible. The service manager will then:
  - Offer support where possible to the child, family members, the employee/volunteer against whom an allegation may have been made and the reporting person
  - Contact the General Manager Planning & Improvement who together with the service manager will:
    - Clarify the nature of the concern and document all details on an incident form
    - Decide in accordance with legal requirements and duty of care whether the matter should/must be reported to the Police or Child Protection, and make the report as soon as possible if required (refer to Mandatory Reporting Policy for details)
    - Commence disciplinary action as per Code of Conduct Policy
    - Document the outcome of investigations and actions taken to reduce the risk of a similar concern arising again (eg. policy and procedure amendments)
3. If the safety concern identified involves allegations of reportable conduct (carried out against any child at any location) by a VSK employee, volunteer or contractor, the CEO should be notified as soon as possible. The CEO will report this allegation to the Commission for Children and Young People within **3 business days**, conduct an investigation and report back to the Commission in accordance with the requirements stipulated under the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme.
4. If the safety concern is identified by a VSK employee or volunteer and relates to potential harm to the child in the family environment, the matter should be discussed with their clinical supervisor and a decision made in accordance with legal requirements and duty of care whether the matter should/must be reported to the Police or Child Protection. Any report should then be made as soon as possible (refer to Mandatory Reporting Policy for details).

VSK has designated Child Protection Education Officers in the Hospice and Family Support Team who are available to educate employees and volunteers about child protection matters and to provide advice where appropriate.

### Training & Supervision

All employees and volunteers who interact with VSK families will undertake regular supervision and annual training on child safety and mandatory reporting via the VSK online training platform. Employees and volunteers who have regular contact with families will also receive training, as well as cultural competency training to ensure that culturally diverse and aboriginal families feel respected, valued and fairly treated during all their interactions with VSK.

### Recruitment Practices

VSK applies best practice processes in the recruitment and screening of all staff and volunteers. All employees and volunteers are interviewed and reference checked, and are required to have a Police Check and Working with Children Check. The VSK Code of Conduct clearly articulates VSK expectations for appropriate behaviour with children, and all employees and volunteers must agree to abide by this Conduct at the time of their appointment, and annually via the on-line training system.

### Risk Management

VSK recognises the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur and uses this to inform policies, procedures and activity planning. Risks of abuse to VSK children are managed in accordance with the VSK Risk Management Policy and input is sought from staff and families to identify potential risks to child safety, and to implement appropriate strategies to minimise these risks.

### Concerns

Any concerns relating to VSK's leadership in regard to child safety should first be raised with the VSK Complaints Manager in accordance with the VSK Complaints & Feedback Policy. Should these concerns not be satisfactorily resolved, the Commission for Children and Young People can be contacted.

### **Policy effectiveness**

Policy effectiveness will be monitored by:

- Quarterly KPIs monitoring compliance with Working with Children Checks and Police Checks for all staff and volunteers
- Quarterly review (by the Clinical Risk and Governance Committee) of the number and details of any child safety incidents recorded

### **References**

- Child Safe Standards (Victoria)
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005
- Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme
- VSK Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting Policy
- VSK Complaints and Feedback Policy
- VSK Performance Counselling and Disciplinary Action Policy
- VSK Code of Conduct Policy

### **Revision History**

<b>Version</b>	<b>Change Date</b>	<b>Reference and detail of changes</b>
V1 2017_06_16	June 2017	Policy created
V2 2017_10_13	October 2017	Policy modified to incorporate Reportable Conduct Scheme requirements
V3 2020_8_4	August 2020	Policy modified towards improved clarity re process