



Policy E33 Child Safety Responding and Mandatory Reporting Policy

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures Murray ACE has in place to respond to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse and to ensure that all staff and members of the community understand and follow the various legal obligations that apply to the reporting of child abuse to relevant authorities.

SCOPE

This policy applies to complaints and concerns relating to child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, RTO staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the RTO.

DEFINITIONS

Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- physical violence inflicted on a child
- sexual offences committed against a child
- grooming of a child by an adult
- family violence committed against or in the presence of a child
- serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

The definition of child abuse is broad and can include student to student incidents and concerns, as well as behaviour committed by an adult.

Grooming

Grooming is a criminal offence under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) and is a form of child abuse and sexual misconduct. This offence targets predatory conduct undertaken by an adult to prepare a child, under the age of 16, to engage in sexual activity later. Grooming can include communicating (including electronic communications) and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent or carer.

RTO staff member

For the purpose of this policy an RTO staff member includes a contractor engaged by the RTO or RTO council to perform child-related work.

POLICY

Murray ACE understands the key role our RTO plays in protecting children from abuse. We have a range of policies and measures in place to prevent child abuse from occurring at our RTO or during RTO activities.



Information for students

- All students should feel safe speaking to any staff member to raise any concerns about their safety or any other concerns that they have.
- If a student does not know who to approach at Murray ACE, they should start with their trainer or the manager.
- All students should feel safe to speak to any staff member to raise any concerns about their safety, the safety of others or any other concerns

Identifying child abuse

To ensure we can respond in the best interests of the student when complaints or concerns relating to child abuse are raised, all staff and relevant volunteers must:

- understand how to identify signs of child abuse and behavioural indicators of perpetrators - for detailed information on identifying child abuse and behavioural indicators of perpetrators refer to **Identify child abuse**.
- understand their various legal obligations in relation to reporting child abuse to relevant authorities
- follow the below procedures for responding to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse, which ensure our RTO acts in the best interests of the student and complies with both our legal and policy obligations.

Procedures for responding to an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse.

RTO staff and volunteer responsibilities

Immediate action

If an RTO staff member or volunteer witnesses an incident of child abuse, or reasonably believes, suspects or receives a disclosure or allegation that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused, they must:

- If a child is at immediate risk of harm, call 000 for urgent medical or police assistance where required to respond to immediate health or safety concerns.
- Notify the Manager as soon as possible, who will ensure our RTO follows the steps in these procedures.
- If the Centre Manager is unavailable, Administration will take on this role.
- If the concerns relate to the conduct of any staff above, notify either the police or relevant authority.

Reporting to authorities and referring to services

- As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant RTO staff have been informed, the staff member who has formed the belief must report all incidents, suspicions, and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible
- If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing you must still act. This may include making a referral or seeking



advice from Child FIRST or The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support) DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police.

Contacting parents or carers

- Murray ACE management must ensure parents and carers are notified unless advised otherwise by DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police, or there are other safety and wellbeing concerns in relation to informing parents/carers.

Ongoing protection and support

- The appropriate steps are taken by the RTO to protect the child and other children from any continued risk of abuse. These steps must be taken in consultation with any relevant external agency or Department staff such as DFFH Child Protection and/or Victorian Police. Ongoing protection will also include further reports to authorities if added information comes to light or further incidents occur.

Recordkeeping

The Centre Manger will ensure that:

- detailed notes of the incident, disclosure, allegation, or suspicion are taken using the Incident complaint form.
- detailed notes are taken of any immediate or ongoing action taken by the RTO to respond to the incident, disclosure, allegation, or suspicion
- all notes and other records relating to the incident, disclosure, allegation, or suspicion, including the RTOs immediate and ongoing actions, are stored securely on file in locked cabinet.

Communication

This policy will be communicated to our RTO community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on RTO website www.macesh.vic.edu.au
- Included in staff induction processes for relevant staff
- Discussed in an annual staff briefing/meeting
- Hard copy available from RTO administration upon request

Related Documents or links Nil		
Date Endorsed by Committee of Management		
Date of Review	In consultation with:	
17/06/2024	Leanne Shannon-Kelson, De-Anna Rullo	New document