

Child Safe – Code of Conduct

Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

VMCH is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, our commitment is publicly communicated on our [website](#). All children and young people who come to VMCH have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of the children and young people in our care will always be our first priority. VMCH will not tolerate any form of child abuse or harm.

This Code of Conduct sets expectations for how staff, volunteers, and contractors at VMCH should behave around children and young people. This helps children and young people participate safely in our care and have fun.

All board members, management, staff, and volunteers (and contractors working with children and young people) of VMCH are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards, and in the company of, children and young persons.

Standards of behavior around children and young people

As a member of the VMCH community I am responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children and young persons, **I WILL**;

- Act in accordance with VMCH's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, and this Child Safe - Code of Conduct at all times.
- Take all reasonable steps to protect children and young people from abuse.
- Take disclosures of harm or abuse made by a child or young person seriously.
- Listen to children and young people and respond to them if they feel unsafe.
- Treat all children and young people with respect, regardless of race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, cultural background, financial situation, disability or other characteristics.
- Welcome all children and their families and carers by being inclusive.
- Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families feel safe, included and welcome at VMCH and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights.
- Participate in all compulsory training and professional development including training on child safety and wellbeing.
- Work with children and young people in an open and transparent way (so that other adults always know what work I am doing with children and young people).
- Ensure children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously and welcome the participation of parents and carers in these decisions.
- Dress in clean, appropriate clothing and follow any dress code standards or guidelines (including avoiding clothing that is revealing or that includes offensive language or pictures).
- Listen to and value children and young people's ideas and opinions.
- Always ensure that children or young people that demonstrate assaultive or sexualized behaviours are supervised when other children or young people are present.
- Ensure as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child or a young person.

Report any child safety concerns or breaches of this Code of Conduct to your Team Leader, Coordinator or Manager or a Child Safe Champion immediately.

Category 03 Clients
Set Safeguarding Individuals
Owner Chief Legal and Risk Officer/Company Secretary

Approved By Board of Directors
Approved Date 27/10/22
Review Date 27/10/25

I WILL NOT:

- condone or participate in illegal, unsafe, abusive or harmful behaviour towards children or young people – this includes physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, grooming, neglect or sexual misconduct.
- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse or harm.
- exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues.
- use hurtful or offensive behaviour or language with children or young people.
- fail to report information to police if I know a child has been abused.
- touch children in a way that is unnecessary or unsuitable and falls outside what is reasonable to engage in the activities of VMCH.
- persistently criticise and/or denigrate a child or young person.
- deliberately prevent a child or young person from forming friendships.
- verbally assault a child or young person or create a climate of fear.
- offer children and young people alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs.
- show children or young people pornographic images.
- share details of sexual experiences with a child or young person.
- use sexual language or gestures in the presence of children or young people.
- expose a child or young person to sexual acts of any kind.
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or young people or do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves such as changing clothes or assisting with toileting if a child or young person does not require assistance.
- develop 'special' relationships with specific children or young people or show favouritism through the provision of gifts, food, money or unnecessary or unsuitable attention or affection.
- have unauthorised contact with children and young people online, on social media or by phone.
- take photographs, screenshots or share images of children or young people involved in activities that are not authorised by VMCH and with the informed consent of the child's parent or guardian.
- be alone with a child or young person when there is no professional reason for doing so.
- display any behaviour or participate in conversations, in person or 'on-line', which could be construed as inappropriate or disrespectful to those who may overhear or view it. This includes displaying opinions or making comments that may degrade, ridicule, intimidate or bully a child or young person.
- discriminate against any child or young person because of culture, race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, financial situation, disability or other characteristics.
- have contact with a child or young person or their families outside of VMCH's programs and activities without your Team Leader, Coordinator or Manager's knowledge and consent.
- communicate (including online) with a child or young person about romantic, intimate, or sexual feelings.
- use a computer, mobile phone, camera, or other device to exploit or harass a child or young person.
- use a camera to record a child or young person while they are dressing, bathing, or using the bathroom.
- use private text messages to communicate with a child or young person where open communication is possible.
- ignore or disregard any child safety complaints, suspected abuse, disclosures, or breaches of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- Attend work when under the influence or effects of illegal drugs or alcohol.
- Consume alcohol on the premises without the prior knowledge and consent of a member of the Executive Leadership Team.
- Discuss with children or young people topics of an adult or sexualised nature, including an inappropriate joke.

Category 03 Clients
Set Safeguarding Individuals
Owner Chief Legal and Risk Officer/Company Secretary

Approved By Board of Directors
Approved Date 27/10/22
Review Date 27/10/25

Protecting and reporting

By observing these standards, you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to your Team Leader, Coordinator or Manager.

PLEASE NOTE:

- 1. Failure to protect:** If any person in a position of authority within our organisation becomes aware of a substantial risk that a child may become the victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with the organisation (for example, an employee, contractor, or volunteer), and they have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, then they must take all reasonable steps to do so. A person in authority who negligently fails to take appropriate action to address the risk may be charged with the criminal offence of 'failing to protect' and may face a term of imprisonment.
- 2. Failure to disclose:** If an adult reasonably believes a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16, they must report it to Victoria Police by calling 000 or going to their local police station. Failure to disclose the information may be a criminal offence.

Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who has a reasonable belief of abusive activity must immediately advise their manager about their concern. Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties to notify relevant authorities of a reasonable belief of abuse such as the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), the police, the Commission for Children and Young People and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. You must familiarise yourself with VMCH's Managing and Reporting Child Safety Incidents and Concerns Policy which provides further detail on reporting obligations and the handling of complaints and concerns.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse **phone 000**.

If you breach this Child Safe - Code of Conduct you will face disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or cessation of engagement with VMCH.

Acknowledgement and signing

I have read this Child Safe - Code of Conduct and VMCH's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and I agree to abide by their terms.

X

Name:

Date:

Category 03 Clients
Set Safeguarding Individuals
Owner Chief Legal and Risk Officer/Company Secretary

Approved By Board of Directors
Approved Date 27/10/22
Review Date 27/10/25