

“Child Friendly” Information on the Right to be Safe

VMCH takes a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and is fully committed to ensuring that its strategies, policies, procedures and practices meet all Child Safety Standards as specified in Ministerial Order No. 460 (2018) and the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.

Context for Staff and Parent/Carers

The Australian Human Rights Commission 2016 ‘Rights of the Child’

The Australian Government has promised to make sure that all children and young people growing up in Australia have these rights:

- i. The right to be treated fairly no matter what
- ii. The right to be safe and not harmed by anyone
- iii. The right to have a say about decisions affecting you
- iv. The right to be cared for and have a home
- v. The right to live and grow up healthy
- vi. The right to have a good education

Pursuant to the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment Act 2015 (Vic)*, VMCH is required to comply with the 7 Child Safe Standards contained in Ministerial Order No. 460 (2018). The standards require organisations, such as VMCH, to have in place:

1. Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including 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 resources 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; and
7. Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

In complying with the Child Safe Standards VMCH must promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, promote the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and promote the safety of children with a disability.

Message to children about their right to be safe

This information is important as it tells you some of the things you can do if someone is hurting you or your friends or making you feel unsafe and anxious.

1. What are your rights?

You have the right to be safe and not harmed by anyone.

It is wrong for anyone to threaten you, hurt you or touch you in a way that makes you feel unsafe, uncomfortable or scared.

No one should behave in this way including those in your family, at VMCH or outside VMCH.

Remember that a person doesn't have to physically hurt or touch you to be doing the wrong thing and making you feel unsafe.

Even if you are not sure, if something doesn't feel right you should tell an adult who can help you.

2. Your body belongs to you

What is The Underwear Rule?

It's simple: you should not be touched by others on parts of the body usually covered by underwear and you should not touch others in those areas.

This rule helps you to understand that your body belongs to you and no one should touch it without permission.

There is a difference between safe and unsafe touching and between good and bad touching

Inappropriate and unsafe touching is wrong and against the law.

If you are not sure whether someone else's behaviour towards you is acceptable, you should ask a trusted adult for help.

3. No! Go! Tell!

All children need to know how to quickly and loudly say No to inappropriate touch, to Go away from the unsafe situation, and to Tell a trusted adult as soon as possible.

Screaming, kicking and self-defence skills can be very useful as child abusers are usually scared of being caught.

It is very important that you keep telling trusted adults until you feel listened to and believed and can feel safe again.

4. Bad secrets and good secrets

All children need to know the difference between a bad secret and a good secret (a nice surprise).

Secrecy is a main tactic of people who are child abusers.

They might try anything from bribes (giving you stuff), to serious threats.

Some children get confused about keeping secrets because they don't want to 'tell tales' but every secret that makes you feel anxious, uncomfortable, fearful or depressed is a bad secret.

Bad secrets should never be kept but told straight away to an adult you can trust.

5. What if someone I know makes me feel unsafe?

Some children, especially younger ones, don't understand that someone who knows them or is part of their family could abuse or hurt them.

There need to be strict rules for all children about telling trusted adults about anyone who gives them stuff, asks them to keep secrets, or tries to spend time alone with them.

6. What if a stranger makes me feel unsafe?

All children should know about safety rules as child abusers may seem friendly and caring. They can be males or females, young or old.

Never get into a car with anyone you don't know, take money or gifts from them, or agree to go anywhere with them without your parents' permission.

If a stranger suggests any of these things you must remember No! Go! Tell!

Most strangers are not dangerous but if you meet one who might be, you need to get help from parents, carers, teachers, policemen, people in shops, or families with children.

Children should know about the tricks that kidnappers use, such as telling a child that their parents have had an accident and that they will take them to the hospital. They might say that your parents have told them to pick you up and drive you home and they might even know your name or your parent's names.

Never believe these kinds of stories without first checking with a person you trust.

7. Safety Network

It's very useful to choose a small group of people that you can trust and who will listen and help you when you have a problem or are worried about something.

It's best to have a safety network of one or two people who live with you and one or two people outside the family.

Remember never to give up on finding help until the problem has been listened to and fixed and you feel safe again.

8. What will happen if I tell an adult at VMCH that I feel unsafe, or that my friend feels unsafe?

Adults at VMCH will listen to your concerns and make sure that you don't have to deal with these by yourself.

Sometimes they may have to tell others about your concerns so that a solution can be found and you or your friend can be protected.

9. What if I can't talk to anyone at VMCH?

If you don't feel comfortable about talking to anyone at VMCH, you can talk to someone in your safety network: your parent or an aunt, uncle, a step-parent, a grandparent or any other adult you can trust.

Remember: you don't need to deal with things on your own.

10. There are other places where you can get help

Visit eHeadspace (which provides an online and telephone support service)

www.eheadspace.org.au or 1800 650 850

Call KidsHelp Line on 1800 55 1800

Visit www.kidshelpline.com.au for 24 hour support

Call or visit your local police station or call 000