

Child Safe – Code of Conduct

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

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 as noted below.

All members of the VMCH community are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children and young persons by:

- adhering to VMCH's 'Commitment to Child Safety' Policy (**see attached [Policy](#)**), at all times and upholding this Child Safe - Code of Conduct at all times;
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children and young persons from abuse;
- treating all members of the school community with respect;
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children and young persons, particularly if they are disclosing that they or another child or young person have been abused and/or are worried about their own safety or the safety of another child or young person;
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and young persons e.g. by never questioning an Aboriginal child's or young person's self-identification;
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children and young persons with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds e.g. by having a zero tolerance of discrimination;
- ensuring at all times that children/young people that demonstrate assaultive or sexualized behaviours are supervised at all times when other children/young people are present;
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children and young persons with a disability e.g. during personal care activities;
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child or young person;
- reporting all child safety complaints, suspected child abuse, disclosures of child abuse, or breaches of the Commitment to Child Safety Policy to your Team Leader /Coordinator/ Manager and ensure that any allegation is reported to child protection or the Victoria police;
- reporting any child safety concerns to your Team Leader/Coordinator/Manager;
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child or young person is safe, contacting 000 if a child is at immediate risk of abuse or harm and follow the Child Safe – Reporting Procedure, Incident Management Policy, Incident Reporting and Investigations Summary Chart and the Client Incident Management Guide (for DHHS funded services only); and
- encouraging children and young persons to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

VMCH personnel must not:

- develop any 'special' relationships with children or young persons that could be seen as favouritism e.g. offering gifts to, or giving special treatment to, particular children or young persons.

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Approved Date 17/12/20
Review Date 17/12/23



- exhibit behaviours with children or young persons which may be construed as unnecessarily physical e.g. arm around a child when reading to them.
- Making close physical sexual touch/contact, such as inappropriate tickling and wrestling openly or pretending to accidentally expose a child to nudity, sexual material and sexual acts (this in itself is classified as child sexual abuse but can also be a precursor to physical sexual assault).
- put children and young persons at risk of abuse e.g. by locking doors.
- undertake tasks of a personal nature that a child or young person can do for themselves, such as personal care or changing clothes.
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children or young persons e.g. personal social activities.
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children or young persons.
- 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. In particular children and those children from Aboriginal and diverse cultural backgrounds. This includes displaying opinions or making comments that may degrade, ridicule, intimidate or bully a child.
- discriminate against any child or young person because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability.
- have contact with a child or young person or their families outside of VMCH's programs and activities without your Team Leader/Coordinator/Manager's knowledge and consent.
- have contact with children 'on line' via email, social media networking sites, by text message or other means without authorisation of a Senior Manager.
- ignore or disregard any child safety complaints, suspected abuse, disclosures or breaches of the Commitment to Child Safety Policy.
- Attending a service 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 Senior Leadership Team.
- Photograph or video a child without the consent of the parent or legal guardian.
- Controlling a child through threats, force or use of authority (this can make a child fearful to report unwanted behaviour).

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

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.

I agree to adhere to this Child Safe - Code of Conduct:

Name:

Signature:

Date:

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