

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

CHIPS is committed to providing a safe environment for all children and protecting them from any form of harm, including abuse. All children who participate in CHIPS' programs and activities have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority.

CHIPS aims to create a child safe, child friendly, positive, encouraging and supportive environment where children feel safe, have fun, become empowered and experience joy, healing and restoration. CHIPS has a zero tolerance to child harm and abuse. CHIPS recognises that discrimination can harm children and treats all children with dignity and respect. CHIPS is committed to following safety procedures aimed at preventing harm, particularly regarding activity planning, the use of facilities and equipment, medical and health needs, and general care.

Scope

EVERYONE at CHIPS has a role in identifying and managing risks of child harm and abuse.

EVERYONE at CHIPS is responsible for promoting the safety, wellbeing and empowerment of children.

This Code of Conduct sets out expectations for how staff, volunteers, children and other individuals involved in or with CHIPS should behave around the children in our care. This helps children participate safely in CHIPS' programs and activities.

Having behavioural standards to manage the risks to children during our programs and activities is important. This Code of Conduct identifies:

- positive child safe behaviours that we require staff, volunteers and other individuals to demonstrate; and
- behaviours that we consider unacceptable and not permitted during any of our programs and activities.

Not following the standards of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is a breach of this Code of Conduct and will result in disciplinary action. Some behaviours on their own may not be a serious breach of the Code of Conduct, but together may indicate a concerning pattern of behaviour that poses a risk to the safety of children. Our disciplinary policy provides further information on processes that will be followed if breaches are identified.

CHIPS' staff, volunteers and other individuals involved in or with CHIPS must always follow these standards of behaviour, including when at CHIPS, attending or participating in our programs and activities, in any of our online platforms, and when engaging with CHIPS participants / children and their families.

Child Abuse will not be tolerated and is considered a serious breach of this Code of Conduct. Child Abuse includes:

- a) Any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence, or grooming offences under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958.
- b) The infliction, on a child, of physical violence or serious emotional or psychological harm.
- c) The serious neglect of a child.

As an individual involved in the care of children on behalf of CHIPS, I WILL:

1. take all reasonable steps to prevent and protect children from abuse and uphold CHIPS' commitment to the protection of children in all CHIPS' programs and activities.
2. work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of CHIPS.
3. take disclosures of harm or abuse made by a child seriously.
4. listen and respond immediately to any concerns or allegations of abuse.
5. raise concerns with management, if risks to child safety are identified. Report and act on any concerns or observed breaches of this Code of Conduct.
6. participate in all compulsory training and professional development including training on child safety and wellbeing.
7. treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas and opinions, regardless of race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, cultural background, financial situation, disability, or other characteristics.
8. consider the different needs of all children at CHIPS, support them to participate fully in programs and help them and their families feel included.
9. make Aboriginal children and families feel included and welcome at CHIPS and support Aboriginal children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights.
10. never be racist towards anyone at CHIPS and report any instances of racism I become aware of.
11. help CHIPS to be a place where people of all cultures feel safe and included.
12. listen to children and respond to them if they feel unsafe.
13. value children and young people's ideas and opinions.
14. promote friendships and encourage children and young people to support their peers.
15. involve children and young people in decisions about the activities they participate in at CHIPS and welcome the participation of parents and carers in these decisions.
16. report any conflicts of interest I have (such as an outside relationship with a child) that may affect my ability to perform my role.
17. model appropriate and respectful adult behaviour and dress appropriately and modestly.
18. respect the privacy of children, their families and teachers/carers, and only disclose information to people who have a need to know.
19. inform parents and carers if there are situations that need to be safely managed (eg, driving a child, one on one sessions etc).
20. ensure breaches of this Code of Conduct are reported to CHIPS' Child Safety Officer immediately.
21. comply with all relevant Australian and Victorian legislation and CHIPS' child safe policies and procedures.
22. uphold the rights of children and always prioritise their needs.
23. contact Victoria Police if a child is in immediate risk of abuse by calling 000.

As an individual involved in the care of children on behalf of CHIPS, I will NOT:

1. condone or participate in illegal, unsafe, abusive or harmful behaviour towards children – this includes physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, grooming, neglect, or sexual misconduct.
2. ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse or harm.
3. exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues.
4. use hurtful or offensive behaviour or language with children.
5. unlawfully discriminate against any child because of age, race, religion, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or disability.
6. fail to report information to police if there is a disclosure of abuse or harm or an allegation, suspicion or observation of abuse or harm.
7. give children any inappropriate attention or seek to use them in any way to meet the needs of adults.
8. touch children in a way that is inappropriate, unnecessary or unsuitable and falls outside what is reasonable for CHIPS' programs and activities.
9. criticise and/or denigrate a child, be negative, degrading or sarcastic.
10. deliberately prevent a child from forming friendships.
11. verbally assault a child or create a climate of fear or intimidation.
12. offer children and young people alcohol, cigarettes/vapes or other drugs.
13. use alcohol or drugs at a CHIPS activity, be under their influence, have them in my possession, or bring them to a CHIPS event.
14. show children pornographic images.
15. engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children, such as sharing details of sexual experiences.
16. use sexual language or gestures in the presence of children.
17. initiate unnecessary physical contact with children, hug children inappropriately, or do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves, such as changing clothes or toileting.
18. develop a "special" relationship with a specific child that could be seen as grooming, favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention.
19. have unauthorised contact with children and young people online, on social media, instant messaging, personal emails or by phone.
20. take photographs, screenshots or share images of children involved in activities that are not authorised by CHIPS.
21. leave a CHIPS activity/session without notifying the leader or co-ordinator.
22. be alone with a child when there is no professional or sanctioned reason for doing so.
23. transport children in private vehicles, without the express written permission of the child's parent or carer and CHIPS.
24. enter bathroom or changing facilities without first knocking.
25. do anything in contravention of CHIPS' policies, procedures or this Code of Conduct.

Physical contact with children and young people

All children and young people are entitled to determine the degree of physical contact they have with others. There may be occasions where displays of affection are natural - children and young people should not be shunned if they initiate and demonstrate their need for comfort, bearing in mind the age of the child and the circumstances. Care should be taken so that the level of contact is appropriate and MUST NOT occur in private.

You must ensure that any intentional physical contact you have with children is necessary and appropriate, and explain the reasons for the contact (eg, administration of first aid, administration of medications, assisting a child fitting a harness, etc).

What if I am not sure?

This Code of Conduct cannot anticipate every possible circumstance, but if you are in doubt, it may be helpful to ask yourself the following:

- Does it feel like the right thing to do?
- Am I acting in the child's best interest?
- What would my fellow CHIPS colleagues expect me to do in this situation?
- What would be the reaction if this was reported publicly?
- What impact would this have on the reputation of CHIPS?

If I suspect that this Code of Conduct has been breached by another person, I will:

- Act to prioritise the best interests of the child or children.
- Promptly take actions to ensure the child or children are safe.
- As soon as possible report the incident or concerns using CHIPS' complaint process.
- Maintain the privacy of those involved, following CHIPS' record keeping, privacy and information sharing guidelines.

Complaints about a breach of this Code of Conduct must be reported immediately to our Child Safety Officer, Catherine Wieckmann at enquiries@chips.org.au or phone 9702 5528.

Some breaches of this Code of Conduct may need to be reported to the Victorian Police, or to the Commission for Children and Young People. Our Complaint Handling Policy provides more information about our reporting obligations to external authorities as well as describing protections and confidentiality provisions for anyone making a report. The policy can be found on our website chips.org.au.

Staff and volunteers who breach our Code of Conduct will also be subject to disciplinary action. This can include increased supervision, appointment to an alternative role, and suspension or termination from employment or volunteering capacities. Detailed descriptions of breaches can be found in our Recruitment and Disciplinary Policy. This is also available at chips.org.au.

“Failing to Protect” and “Failing to Disclose”

PLEASE NOTE: If any person in a position of authority at CHIPS becomes aware of a substantial risk that a child may become the victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with CHIPS (eg, an employee 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.

Further, if any 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. Failing to disclose the information may be a criminal offence.

DECLARATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – CHIPS’ CHILD SAFE CODE OF CONDUCT

I have read and understood the CHIPS Code of Conduct and agree with CHIPS’ commitment to at all times provide an environment that is safe for children and young people.

I agree to completely abide by the expectations and requirements of this Code of Conduct.

SIGNATURE

FULL NAME:

SIGNATURE: **DATE:**