

PART A - INTRODUCTION

CHIPS acknowledges the Bunurong/Boonwurrung people of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Owners of the land on which we operate. We acknowledge and respect their contributions, experience and knowledge as First Nations people. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.

Purpose

This policy has been written to demonstrate the strong commitment of the CHIPS Board, staff and volunteers to child safety and wellbeing, and to provide an outline of the practices we have developed to keep everyone safe.

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 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.

CHIPS is committed to upholding and demonstrating the Child Safe Organisations National Principles.

Scope

This policy applies to all Board members, staff, volunteers, children and other individuals involved in or with CHIPS. This includes any individual who conducts work for, or is connected to CHIPS, in a paid or unpaid capacity.

This policy applies to all activities conducted by CHIPS which involve, result in, or relate to contact with children, including but not limited to camps, day programs, chaplaincy and other support.

Responsibilities

CHIPS Board and Management

The CHIPS Board and management staff have the role of making sure CHIPS prioritises children's safety and wellbeing and that action is taken when anyone raises concerns about children's safety and wellbeing.

The CHIPS Board and management staff will champion and model a child safe culture at CHIPS. CHIPS encourages anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern. The CHIPS Board and management staff will work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable to raise concerns.

Staff and Volunteers

EVERYONE at CHIPS has a role in identifying and managing risks of Child Harm and Abuse. The CHIPS Board has directed that staff and volunteers must conduct risk assessments and take action to manage risks in accordance with this policy. The CHIPS Board has also directed that appropriate child safety training for staff and volunteers is identified and completed.

The CHIPS Board will conduct an annual review of how effectively CHIPS is delivering on its child safety and wellbeing commitments. The input of a variety of people involved with CHIPS will be sought as part of this review. These reviews will be reflected in meeting minutes.

Code of Conduct

CHIPS has a Child Safe Code of Conduct. Staff, volunteers, children, and other individuals involved in or with CHIPS must comply with the Code of Conduct at all times. Breaches of the Code of Conduct will result in disciplinary action, which may include termination of a person's involvement with CHIPS.

Definitions

"Child" or **"Children"** means anyone under 18 years old.

"Child Harm and/or Abuse" means any physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, grooming, neglect, or exposure to violence and any form of discrimination including racial, cultural, religious and to those with a disability.

"Child Protection" means protecting individual children identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

"CHIPS" means Christians Helping in Primary Schools, Inc.

"Cultural Safety" means an environment that is safe for people. This means there is no assault, challenge or denial of a person's identity and experience.

Access to the Policy

This policy can be accessed upon request via email at enquiries@chips.org.au or available on CHIPS' website at chips.org.au.

Policy Status and Review

This policy was originally approved by the CHIPS Board on 17th November 2016 and came into effect on that day.

The policy is due to be reviewed and updated every two years thereafter by the CHIPS Board. CHIPS undertakes to seek views, comments and suggestions from children, parents, carers, school communities, staff and volunteers as part of this process.

Should you require further information or assistance regarding this policy, please contact CHIPS via email at enquiries@chips.org.au.

PART B - IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VICTORIAN CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

Cultural Safety for Aboriginal Children

CHIPS has established and will maintain a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.

- A child's ability to express culture and enjoy their cultural rights is encouraged and actively supported.
- CHIPS' Board, staff and volunteers acknowledge and appreciate the strength of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and young people.
- Any demonstration of racism is identified, confronted and not tolerated. Any instances of racism are addressed with appropriate consequences.
- CHIPS supports and facilitates the participation and inclusion of Aboriginal children, young people and their families in CHIPS' programs and activities.
- CHIPS policies, procedures, systems and processes, together, create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal children, young people and their families.

A Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in CHIPS' leadership, governance and culture.

All children who participate in CHIPS' programs and activities, as well as CHIPS' Board, staff, and volunteers have the right to feel safe and be safe. The safety and wellbeing of the children in our care will always be our first priority.

- The CHIPS Board, staff and volunteers aim to create a child safe, child friendly, positive, encouraging, and supportive culture and 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 facilitates the implementation of child safety and wellbeing policies in all its dealings.
- The CHIPS Code of Conduct provides guidelines for the Board, staff, volunteers and families on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities, how to comply and what happens if there is a breach of the Code of Conduct.
- CHIPS is committed to risk management strategies aimed at identifying and preventing harm (particularly regarding activity planning, the use of facilities and equipment, medical and health needs and general care) to mitigate risks to children and young people.
- The CHIPS Board, staff and volunteers are regularly trained on and understand their obligations on information sharing, record keeping and governance arrangements to create a child safe culture at all levels within CHIPS.
- CHIPS is committed to upholding and demonstrating *Victoria's New Child Safe Standards*.

Taking Child Participation and Empowerment Seriously

Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

- CHIPS' staff and volunteers actively encourage all children participating in CHIPS' programs and activities to express their views about their safety, needs, personal growth, and anything else that is important to them.
- CHIPS respects children's rights to choose how they participate, where possible within boundaries, to ensure the safety of everyone present.
- CHIPS listens to children's opinions and suggestions, especially on matters which directly affect them.
- CHIPS recognises the importance of friendships and encourages support from peers and school communities to help children and young people feel safe and less isolated.
- Children and young people are offered access to relevant, related information in an age-appropriate way.
- CHIPS teaches children about what they can do if they feel unsafe.
- CHIPS' staff and volunteers are trained to recognise signs of harm and facilitate child friendly ways for children to express their views, participate in decision making and raise their concerns.
- CHIPS has strategies in place to develop a culture which facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and young people.
- CHIPS provide opportunities for children and young people to participate and is responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening confidence and engagement.

Involving Families and Communities

Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

- Families and carers are invited to participate in decisions affecting their child. This may be through written communication such as permission forms and through any discussions which may be required prior to activities.
- School communities are consulted and invited to participate in decisions affecting their students who attend CHIPS' programs and activities.
- CHIPS engages and openly communicates with families and the community about its Child Safe approach and relevant information is accessible via the CHIPS website and in CHIPS' communications.
- Families and communities are encouraged to have a say in the development and review of CHIPS' policies and practices. Children and families are also encouraged to have a say in the content and development of CHIPS' programs and activities. This may be through feedback sought after participation in programs.
- Families, carers and the community have access to CHIPS' policies and procedures concerning CHIPS' operations and governance via the CHIPS website and in program application packs.

Respecting Equity and Diversity

Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

CHIPS' programs and activities are based on Christian values and are run in a culturally and religiously sensitive manner. To do this, CHIPS:

- Does not proselytise, evangelise or attempt to impose Christian beliefs on children and families.
- Gives schools information about the content of the programs and activities they choose to participate in.
- Gives families and carers information about the Life Gets Better program and its content prior to a child attending.
- Promotes the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.
- Welcomes children with a disability and their families and acts to promote their active participation.
- Seeks to recruit staff and volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Gives children and young people access to information, support and complaints processes in ways which are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.
- Pays particular attention to the needs of children and young people with disability, children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and those from the LGBTQIA+ community.
- CHIPS pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal children and young people and provides/promotes a culturally safe environment for them.

Ensuring That Staff (and Volunteers) Are Suitable and Supported

People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

CHIPS applies thorough and rigorous standards in the recruitment and screening of all staff and volunteers.

- CHIPS' recruitment activities, including advertising, referee checks, interviews and staff and volunteer pre-screening, emphasises child safety and wellbeing. CHIPS' commitment to Child Safety and screening requirements are included in all advertisements and explained at interviews.
- All CHIPS staff and adult volunteers are required to have a current Working With Children Check (WWCC), teacher's registration, or police officer credential in accordance with the WWCC legislation.
- CHIPS' volunteers aged 16 and 17 must obtain a WWCC. Volunteers under 16 years old will have CHIPS conduct a referee check and provide adult supervision for them.
- CHIPS seeks to recruit suitable staff and volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds. CHIPS seeks to attract and retain caring staff and volunteers who CHIPS trains and equips to safely support and encourage the children attending its programs and activities.
- CHIPS' Board, staff and volunteers have current WWCC's or equivalent background checks (ie: Police Checks), which are routinely re-screened for changes or expiry.
- All CHIPS Board, staff and volunteers receive appropriate induction and are aware of their responsibilities to children and young people, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.

- Ongoing supervision and people management is focussed on child safety and wellbeing.
- CHIPS provides support and supervision, so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated.
- CHIPS invites staff and volunteers to give feedback about its programs and activities regarding child safety at any time, as well as through post-activity feedback surveys.
- CHIPS has developed Codes of Conduct to provide guidance to staff and volunteers, all of whom receive training in the requirements of their Code and are required to indicate their commitment by signing it.

Child-Focussed Complaint Systems

Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focussed.

CHIPS has an accessible, child-focussed complaint handling policy which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of the CHIPS Board, staff and volunteers, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct, to act and report.

- Effective complaint handling processes are understood by children and young people, families and carers, schools, the CHIPS Board, staff and volunteers and are culturally safe.
- Complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly.
- CHIPS has policies and procedures in place which address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and co-operates with law enforcement.
- CHIPS teaches children about what they can do if they feel unsafe. Children are encouraged to report any safety concerns or complaints to any CHIPS leader or event co-ordinator.
- Reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.
- CHIPS listens to and acts on any concerns that children, or their parents or carers might raise with CHIPS. They are invited to do this at any time, as well as through post-activity feedback surveys.
- Catherine Wieckmann is CHIPS' Child Safety Officer with the specific responsibility of responding to any concerns or complaints about Child safety made by staff, volunteers, schools, parents, or children.

Staff (and Volunteers) Knowledge, Skills and Awareness

Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.

CHIPS' staff and volunteers:

- Are trained and supported to effectively implement our Child Safety and Wellbeing policy, including support for staff and volunteers who disclose harm.
- Receive training and information to recognise indicators of child harm, including harm caused by other children and young people.
- Receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people.
- Receive training and information to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing.

Safe Physical and Online Environments

Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

- CHIPS' Staff and Volunteers are required to identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities. This is done through risk management plans and assessments for each of CHIPS' programs and activities.
- The online environment is used in accordance with CHIPS' Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and practices.
- Where third party facilities and programs are used, CHIPS has procedures in place to receive and review the risks assessments and plans applicable to those third parties and facilities.

Review of Child Safe Policies and Practices

Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.

CHIPS is committed to the regular review, evaluation and improvement of its child safe practices.

- Regular reviews are conducted at least annually by the CHIPS Board and the CHIPS Child Safety Officer, to report on and monitor CHIPS' implementation of the Child Safe Standards.
- CHIPS encourages children, families, communities, the CHIPS Board, staff and volunteers to engage in the review process, and to provide feedback on review outcomes. This involvement, for example, may be through surveys provided to the children, families and volunteers after activities and programs, or via email feedback.
- Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed immediately to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.
- CHIPS will inform the CHIPS Board, staff and volunteers about the findings and actions taken in response to the reviews.

Documenting Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures document how CHIPS is safe for children and young people.

CHIPS' Policies and procedures regarding child safety and wellbeing are documented and easy to understand. Best practice models and stakeholder consultation informs the ongoing development of CHIPS' policies and procedures.

The CHIPS Board, staff and volunteers understand and implement CHIPS' policies and procedures, and model compliance with the policies and procedures.

Relevant Legislation and Standards

- ***Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*** (including Child Safe Standards)
- ***Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)*** (including reporting to Child Protection)
- ***Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)*** (including failure to protect and failure to disclose offences)
- ***Wrongs Act 2958 (Vic)*** (including Part XIII – Organisational liability for child abuse)

Related CHIPS Policies and Procedures

CHIPS' policies and procedures related to Child Safety and Wellbeing include:

- Code of Conduct
- Complaint Handling Policy
- Risk Management Plan for each activity
- Human Resources, Recruitment and Screening Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Policies or Procedures on Record Keeping, Information Sharing and External Reporting