

Child Safe Policy

Our commitment to child safety

healthAbility is committed to child safety.

We want all children to be safe, happy and empowered.

We support and respect all children, as well as our employees and volunteers.

We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust Policies & Procedures.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

healthAbility is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

healthAbility has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all employees and volunteers.

healthAbility is committed to regularly training and educating our employees and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We support and respect all children, as well as our employees and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, employees and

volunteers to achieve these commitments.

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

Our children

This Policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants at healthAbility. We aim to involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance at healthAbility, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

Our employees and volunteers

All of our employees and volunteers must agree to abide by our Code of Conduct which specifies the standards required when working with children.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all employees and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our employees and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our employees and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of all children.

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.



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Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. Our organisation understands that when recruiting employees and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people.

Fair procedures for employees

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to all employees. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide

updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be employees, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our employees and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, employees and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).



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