

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Background Information

If any person believes a child is at immediate risk of child abuse or harm, telephone 000.

Kids First is committed to promoting and protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of all children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse and harm. Our vision is that:

"All children and young people thrive in resilient, strong and safe families and communities."

This policy underpins Kids First's vision, mission and values to support and improve the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and families, and places children's best interests at the heart of all decisions made at services delivered by Kids First.

Requirements regarding reporting internally to Kids First and externally to other organisations (such as Victoria Police) are included in the Child Safety Reporting Procedure.

Purpose

This Policy aims to:

- ensure Kids' First meets its responsibilities for the safety, protection and wellbeing of children and young people;
- create and foster an organisational culture that places child safety at the forefront of Kids' First's operations, and in which children feel valued, respected and cared for;
- ensure Staff are aware of their responsibilities to prevent and report child abuse and harm to children occurring within all Kids' First Environments;
- provide Staff with information and guidance regarding exercising the judgements involved with reporting risks of significant harm to children and the action that should be taken where a person suspects child abuse or harm within all Kids' First Environments;
- establish controls and procedures for preventing child abuse or harm and detecting it when it occurs within all Kids' First Environments;
- provide a clear statement to Staff forbidding child abuse or harm;
- provide assurance that any and all suspected child abuse or harm will be reported and fully investigated; and
- place an emphasis on genuine engagement with and empowerment of children.

Scope

This Policy applies to all Staff engaged by Kids First, including Staff in direct or non-direct client-related roles at a Kids First centres and sites, or in an outreach capacity.

This Policy applies to all Kids First Environments and all interactions with children, including:

- physical contact;
- face to face contact;
- contact by post or other written communication;
- contact by telephone or other oral communication;
- contact by email or other electronic communication (including online video calls and contact through social media).

This policy applies to all children who receive a service from Kids First.



Term	Definition
CCYP	The Commission for Children and Young People as established by the <i>Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005 (Vic)</i> .
"Child", "children" or "young person"	means a child or young person who is under 18 years of age, unless otherwise defined by law or noted in this Policy or Child Safety Procedure.
"Child abuse or harm"	means conduct towards, against, with or in the presence of a child, or threatening to engage in such conduct, which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) physical violence; (b) conduct of a sexual nature, including a sexual offence against a child and grooming behaviour; (c) serious emotional or psychological harm; or (d) serious neglect of a child.
"Child Safety"	means matters related to Kids First's duty of care to children in its care, protecting all children from harm, managing the risk of child abuse or harm, taking steps to prevent the occurrence or reduce the occurrence of child abuse or harm, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.
"Child Safety Officers" or "CSOs"	means people appointed by Kids First to listen, discuss and clarify issues raised by Staff and children in relation to actual or suspected child abuse or harm.
Clients	Children, young people and families accessing or intending to access Kids First services. Other parties may, by association, be included as clients (such as carers or advocates).
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, formerly known as the Department of Health and Human Services.
Duty of care	Kids First has a duty of care to take reasonable care to protect children and clients from reasonably foreseeable risks of harm while involved in Kids First activities or at Kids First Environments.
Failure to disclose	Is a criminal offence pursuant to Section 327 of the <i>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)</i> which states that all adults must disclose to Victoria Police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has, or will be, committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 years.
Failure to protect	Is a criminal offence pursuant to Section 49O of the <i>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)</i> which states that: If a person: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has power or responsibility to reduce or remove a substantial risk that a child will become victim to a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with Kids First; and • knows that there is a substantial risk that that person will commit a sexual offence against a child, they must not negligently fail to reduce or remove that risk.



	<p>All Kids First Staff should assume they are a person who has power or responsibility to reduce or remove a substantial risk of child sexual abuse by nature of their position.</p> <p>Reporting internally and to police is recommended. Refer to the Child Safety Reporting Procedure.</p>
<p>Grooming</p>	<p>Is a criminal offence pursuant to Section 49M of the <i>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)</i> and constitutes reportable conduct under the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Grooming is communication by words or conduct with a child or young person, with the intention to facilitate the child being engaged or involved in the commission of sexual abuse.</p> <p>Grooming is predatory conduct to gain trust from a child and the people surrounding the child with the intention to commit later sexual abuse. Examples of grooming behaviour may include but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • giving gifts or special attention to a child, young person, parent or carer to make the person feel special or indebted to the perpetrator; • making close physical contact which may or may not be sexual in nature such as cuddling, tickling, wrestling or play fighting; • intentionally or inadvertently exposing the child or young person to nudity, sexual material or sexual acts including telling jokes which may be sexual or inappropriate; • exposing children and young people to pornography or inappropriate conversations about sexuality and nudity; • controlling a child through threats, force, or use of authority making the child feel fearful to report the unwanted behaviour. • attempting to be alone with a child. • initiating interactions with a child outside of the work environment eg such as befriending on social media platforms <p>No sexual conduct needs to occur for grooming to be occurring. Kids First Staff should treat grooming is a type of child abuse.</p>
<p>Indicators of harm</p>	<p>Indicators of harm can be behavioural or physical. Indicators of harm vary for different types of child abuse and can co-occur with multiple types of child abuse.</p> <p>Examples of indicators of harm include but are not limited to:</p> <p><i>Physical violence:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unexplained bruises, burns, welts, cuts grazes or scratches (or vague or unlikely explanations) • avoidance of physical contact, or disproportionate reactions or limited emotion displayed • unexplained absences and decline in academic performance



- wearing clothing that is unsuitable for the weather conditions (to hide injuries)
- substance abuse, self-harm or suicide attempts

Sexual offences:

- signs of pain, itching or discomfort in the genital or rectal area
- sexualised behaviours
- withdrawal, low self-esteem, suicidal ideation, self-harm
- manifestation of psychological diagnoses including anxiety, depression and substance misuse.
- presence of sexually transmitted diseases
- frequent urinary tract infections
- pregnancy (actual or suspected)
- self-mutilation
- displaying age-inappropriate sexual behaviour or knowledge
- promiscuity or inappropriate expressions of affection
- sudden fears of specific places or particular adults
- obsessive and compulsive washing
- complaining of headaches, stomach pains or nausea
- sleeping difficulties
- poor self-care or personal hygiene
- regressive behaviours such as bedwetting and speech loss
- substance abuse, self-harm or suicide attempts

Emotional or psychological harm:

- delays in emotional, mental or physical development
- speech impairments such as stuttering or being selectively mute
- rocking, thumb-sucking or other infantile behaviours
- eating disorders
- exhibiting high anxiety or symptoms of stress
- poor self-image or low self-esteem
- displaying aggressive, demanding or attention-seeking behaviour
- compulsive lying or stealing
- unexplained mood swings or depression
- poor social and interpersonal skills
- excessive neatness or cleanliness
- substance abuse, self-harm or suicide attempts

Neglect:

- Frequent hunger, or stealing or begging for food
- Poor hygiene
- Lack adequate or suitable clothing
- Refusal or reluctance to go home
- appearing dirty and unwashed
- unattended health problems
- appearing pale and weak



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inadequate shelter or unsanitary living conditions. • aggressive or self-destructive behaviour • involvement in criminal activity • poor, irregular or non-attendance at school • limited positive interaction with parents, carers or guardians • poor academic performance • delays in emotional, mental or physical development • substance abuse
<p>Kids First Environment</p>	<p>means all physical and virtual environments and places made available or authorised by Kids First for use by a child, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the offices, buildings, centres and sites of Kids First; • buildings operated by external agencies where Kids First provides services including the Orange Door • online Kids First Environments (including email, portals, intranet systems, telecommunication, social media and other online communications); and • other locations provided by Kids First for a child's use (such as locations used for excursions and other events eg Bush Kinder, transition to school visits, community expos)
<p>Mandatory reporting</p>	<p>Mandatory reporting is an obligation on a class of professionals pursuant to Section 184 of the <i>Children Youth and Families Act 2005</i> (Vic), which requires adults to report to DFFH a reasonable belief that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a child is in need of protection because the child has suffered or is likely to suffer from significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse, and • the child's parents cannot or will not protect the child. <p>Refer to the Child Safety Reporting Procedure for further details and procedure for mandatory reporting.</p>
<p>"Reasonable belief", or "belief on reasonable grounds"</p>	<p>A "reasonable belief" or belief on "reasonable grounds" is the threshold for reporting under multiple child safety obligations, including mandatory reporting and the Reportable Conduct Scheme.</p> <p>A "reasonable belief" is a belief based on facts, that would lead a reasonable person in the same position to form a similar belief. A reasonable belief is more than suspicion, and must have some objective basis for the belief. A 'reasonable belief' does not require certainty.</p> <p>A person is likely to have a "reasonable belief" that a child is at risk of harm, a child has been subjected to abuse or reportable conduct has occurred if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they observe or otherwise witness the conduct or abuse themselves; • a child tells them they have been physical or sexually abused, or a disclosure to that effect;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a child tells you they know someone else who has been abused; • they receive information from another source, including another person who has witnessed or observed the abuse or conduct; • your observations of the child's behaviour or development lead you to believe the child is at risk of harm, the child has been abused, or reportable conduct has occurred; • indicators of harm lead you to believe the child is at risk of harm, the child has been abused, or reportable conduct has occurred.
Staff	means Kids First employees, directors, contractors, board members, students, interns and volunteers.
WWCC	means a Working with Children Check issued pursuant to the <i>Worker Screening Act 2020</i> (Vic).

Guiding Principles

This Policy is based on the following guiding principles:

- Kids First has a zero tolerance for child abuse and harm.
- All forms of child abuse and neglect cause harm to children and young people.
- The best interests, safety and wellbeing of children and young people are paramount.
- All children and young people have a right to be safe and protected from harm and abuse and have equal rights to protection from abuse and neglect.
- Child safety is a shared responsibility of all adults in the community.
- All Kids First Staff have a duty to report risks, complaints of abuse and harm, disclosures, observations of concern or indicators of harm or a reasonable belief that a child or young person is suffering abuse or harm, and must comply with the Reporting Procedure.
- Kids First has and will consider the opinions of children and young people when developing child safety policies and procedures to promote engagement with and the empowerment of children and young people by discussing with children in age appropriate ways as part of group discussions and individual conversations with children.
- Kids First will ensure that families participate in decisions effecting children and young people, and will openly communicate with families, carers and the community about its approach to child safety and ensure that information about child safety including information about making a complaint is readily available and accessible.
- Kids First will take into account the diversity of all children and young people, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and children who are vulnerable, and make reasonable efforts to accommodate them.
- Kids First is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for



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children living with a disability and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children.

- Professionals working with children and young people have legal and ethical responsibilities to support the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children

Responsibilities

The safety of children is everyone's responsibility. All staff who are concerned for the safety or wellbeing of a child must report their concern to their direct line Manager or Team Leader and log a child safeguarding report on RiskWizard. [including any child safety concerns reported by clients, children, families or communities.

All Staff

All staff:

- have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety of children and young people from child abuse and harm, and the risk of child abuse or harm;
- are responsible for identifying child abuse or indicators of harm and taking steps to prevent, reduce or eliminate that abuse, harm or risk;
- must promote child safety at all times and provide a safe environment for all children and young people; and
- must telephone 000 if they believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse.

All staff are required to:

- read and comply with this Policy, the Child Safety Codes of Conduct and Child Safety Reporting Procedure;
- take all reasonable steps to maintain an environment that prevents child abuse or harm to children and young people;
- respond to a child or young person disclosing an incident of child abuse or harm in a child-focused manner, with sensitivity and professionalism;
- take all reasonable steps to empower children and young people, listen to their views and enable them to participate in decisions that affect them;
- treat families with respect and dignity, commit to regular and ongoing communication with families and regularly seek feedback from clients;
- participate in child safety induction and ongoing training as directed by Kids First;
- report any concerns about actual or suspected child abuse or harm, and any identified indicators of harm and risks of harm, according to the Child Safety Reporting Procedure; and
- immediately report any breach or suspected breach of this policy by Staff to their direct Manager.

Kids First

Kids First commits to:

- complying with the Child Safety Standards published by the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People;
- ensuring children and young people, families and communities are aware of the Kids First child safety policies and procedures;

Kids First encourages all children and young people, families and communities to report any concerns for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people to Kids First.

- considering the opinions of children and young people when developing child safety policies and procedures to promote engagement with and the empowerment of children and young people;
- ensuring families participate in decisions effecting their child, and openly communicating with families, carers and the community about its approach to child safety and ensure that information about child safety including information about making a complaint is readily available and accessible;
- considering the diversity of all children and young people, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and children who are vulnerable, and make reasonable efforts to accommodate them;
- protecting the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. Kids First will take all reasonable steps to ensure a culturally safe environment is provided to all children and young people and that racism is not tolerated within the organisation; and
- providing a safe environment for children and young people:
 - living with a disability;
 - who are unable to live at home, by understanding that not all children and young have the support of parents and families to report concerns, sign permission slips, or respond in a timely manner to communication;
 - who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex, and gender diverse and queer, and other vulnerable children;
- providing a safe environment for all children and young people by making all reasonable changes and adjustments to ensure participation, providing accessible policy documents which are age appropriate and has zero tolerance of discrimination and provides an inclusive environment.

Kids First will ensure, as far as possible, that Staff are aware of:

- their responsibilities to create and maintain child safe environments, including a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people;
- their obligations under this Policy;
- the appropriate standard of conduct and behaviour required by Kids First, including as explained in applicable Codes of Conduct; and
- Kids First's commitment to empowering children and young people about their rights, including the right to feel safe, be informed and participate in decisions affecting them.

The CEO

The CEO of Kids First is responsible for:

- managing and overseeing the response and investigation of reports of child abuse and harm to children or young people;
- preventing, identifying and mitigating child safety risks, including the risk of child abuse or harm, within all Kids First Environments;



- making reports and adhering to obligations under the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme and the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*;
- ensuring Staff are aware of this Child Safety Policy, the Child Safety Codes of Conduct, the Child Safety Procedure and their overall child safety obligations, including the obligation to report suspected child abuse or harm;
- ensuring appropriate policies and procedures are in place, including effective internal control systems for the detection of child abuse and harm and risks of significant harm to children;
- providing support for Staff in undertaking their child safety obligations;
- ensuring that this Child Safety Policy, the Child Safety Codes of Conduct and the Child Safety Procedure is reviewed and updated every two years and after every child safety incident; and
- monitoring compliance with the Child Safety Policy, Procedure and Child Safety Codes of Conduct.

Child Safety Officers, Managers, Team Leaders

Child Safety Officers, Managers and Team Leaders are responsible for:

- having knowledge of child safety issues and obligations;
- inform and make staff aware of policies in relation to child safety;
- to be a key contact for others or their team members who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of child abuse or improper behaviour
- to provide support to staff in managing and reporting suspected child abuse
- staff who receive a disclosure, allegation or complaint regarding child abuse must respond in a compassionate and confidential manner that puts child safety first.

Reporting and responding to risks of harm to children

Kids First is committed to ensuring children and young people who access Kids First's services and programs are safe.

When Kids First suspects a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm, Kids First will respond to that suspicions in a manner which prioritises child safety and is child focused.

All Staff are required to follow the Child Safety Reporting Procedure, which sets out how Staff must discharge their obligations under various child safety laws, including:

- Duty of care;
- Failure to disclose;
- Failure to protect;
- Mandatory reporter requirements;
- The Reportable Conduct Scheme; and
- Client Incident Management (for early years services).

These child safety laws and schemes are explained in the definitions of this policy and the Child Safety Reporting Procedure.

Kids First will comply with all obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme and any other applicable laws, and will provide information to government agencies including police.

Including the child and family in the process of reporting

Kids First supports the rights of children and young people and their families, to be informed of a concern prior to reporting. However, where there is a concern which requires reporting to Police or Child Protection, Kids First Staff will make the report and



be guided by Police and/or Child Protection as to whether and when children and families are subsequently notified.

Staff are responsible for using their professional judgement to determine if and when a parent will be informed of a report being made, subject to the guidance of external agencies including the Police and Child Protection. Child safety is the paramount consideration, and Staff must not inform children, parents or families where this may create a risk of harm to the child or another person.

Responding to allegations and complaints

All allegations or complaints about child abuse raised by children, parents, carers or Kids First Staff are taken seriously and responded to thoroughly and in a timely manner. Any allegations or complaints involving Kids First Staff are reported to the CEO within 24 hours.

Staff who receive a disclosure, allegation or complaint regarding child abuse must respond in a compassionate and confidential manner that puts child safety first, comply with this Policy and refer to the Child Safety Reporting Procedure. Staff must call 000 if there is an immediate risk of harm.

Recordkeeping

Staff must report all concerns of actual, alleged or suspected child abuse or harm, and identified risks of child abuse or harm, in RiskWizard by completing a Child Safeguarding Report. The RiskWizard report requires Staff to include places, times, dates, names of people, observable behaviours or evidence of harm. Refer to the Child Safety Reporting Procedure for more information.

Incident Reports recording in RiskWizard are automatically communicated to the CEO, Director People Culture and Performance and General Manager, Quality Risk and Performance and inform Kids First's immediate response to address the actual or risk or harm, and broader risk management processes.

RiskWizard stores these records securely and indefinitely. All records relating to child abuse and child safety, including allegations, complaints, breaches of this policy, reports of disclosures to police or other regulators, investigation reports, and decisions and actions taken by Kids First in relation to child safety are required to be retained indefinitely.

Staff should not keep records of incidents concerns or indicators of harm in other locations (such as personal diaries) as this reduces Kids First ability to respond to these identified risks, and increases the risk those records will be lost or otherwise subject to a privacy breach.

Kids First Staff must comply with the Kids First Codes of Conduct applicable to them.

Before working with children, Staff must read, understand and agree to comply with the applicable Child Safety Code of Conduct as part of Kids First's child safety induction and training.

Early Years and Client Services have distinct Codes of Conduct, due to the different acceptable behaviours related to the different functions of these services.

Kids First Staff are also required to comply with Kids First Australia Organisational Values, which is an overarching code of conduct that applies to all Kids First Staff.

Empowerment of children

Kids First:

- provides inclusive and engaging environments for children;
- acknowledges the benefits of involving children in decision making and promotes meaningful participation;
- acknowledges and appreciates the strengths of diversity of children, including cultural diversity and the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and young people;
- acknowledges the rights of children assists them to make meaningful contributions be balancing the need to provide guidance while respecting independence; and
- is responsive to the needs of children and encourages feedback.

Recruitment

Kids First has robust recruitment processes to ensure only suitable and qualified people are engaged to work with children. These processes include:

- including our commitment to child safety in all job advertisements, at the commencement of interviews and referee checks;
- examining applications and engaging in interviews with 3 panel members
- conducting reference checks;
- screening applicants to ensure they have valid WWCC and are otherwise suitable to work with children (including commitment to child safety and Kids First's values); and
- informing all applicants that involve child-connected work of Kids First's child safety practices (including this policy).

Risk Management

Kids First understands there may be risks to child safety associated with its services and programs in relation to:

- the supervision of children;
- images or videos taken of children and young people during a program, service or event;
- online environments in which children and young people engage with Kids First staff; and
- excursions where children are taken off site and may engage with members of the public.



- Community centres where children services are co-located and children may engage with members of the public

To mitigate or prevent these risks, Kids First:

- requires Staff to comply with this Policy, Codes of Conduct and the Child Safety Reporting Procedure;
- reviews its risk register annually and after a critical incident to assess systemic issues;
- monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls;
- makes child safety a part of its risk management strategy, including in its recruitment, screening and performance management activities;
- ensures appropriate training is conducted at least annually;
- providing a safe physical environment, ensuring Kids First environments are free from identifiable OHS hazards and minimising locations and opportunities to be alone with a child;
- plan activities, services and programs so no child is left alone (or is out of sight) with a contractor, volunteer, student, parent, guardian or visitor.

Training and Supervision

Kids First has strategies to ensure all Staff are adequately supervised, trained and supported to understand their obligations and responsibilities to create a child safe environment. These strategies include:

- induction and annual refresher training for all Staff to support their understanding of this policy, their reporting obligations and the Child Safe Standards.;
- ongoing performance management and supervision of educators in Kids First Early Years Centres; and
- compliance with the policy is monitored by General Manager, Quality Risk and Performance.

Training provided by Kids First regarding child safety is:

- is tailored to the complexities of Kids First's work with children;
- includes how Staff must respond to child safety issues, incidents and concerns, including reporting obligations and immediate steps to reduce risk of harm; and
- includes information about information sharing and recordkeeping.

Breaches

Staff must immediately report any breach or suspected breach of this Policy, the Codes of Conduct or Child Safety Reporting Procedure to their direct Manager and GM Quality Risk and as soon as possible.

Staff may have other reporting obligations and should refer to the Child Safety Reporting Procedure.

If Kids First becomes aware of a suspected breach of this Policy, the Codes of Conduct or Child Safety Reporting Procedure, Kids First will:

- take immediate steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of any child who may be a risk of child abuse or harm in relation to the breach which may include standing the staff down pending the investigation outcome;



- treat the suspected breach seriously, including by conducting an investigation (either internally or externally);
- ensure all investigations are conducted in a manner which affords procedural fairness, are child focused, and where required, are compliant with the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Following an investigation of a suspected breach, any person who is found to be in breach of this Policy, the Codes of Conduct or Child Safety Reporting Procedure may face disciplinary action (including termination of their engagement with Kids First).

Communication

Kids First communicates its child safe practices, and this Policy with its community by:

- sharing the Policy on the Kids First website;
- displaying the Policy on noticeboards;
- providing a copy of the Policy upon request

Privacy

Kids First recognises the importance of protecting privacy of individuals. Kids First is committed to handling, recording and storing personal information according to its Privacy Policy and applicable privacy laws.

Information relating to child abuse, harm or child safety may be disclosed to other regulators or police when authorised or required by law. For example, Kids First may receive subpoenas, or share information under the Child Information Sharing Scheme or Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme.

Quality Improvement

Kids First welcomes feedback from all members of its community, including children and young people and families, on how it can improve its risk management approach to better protect the safety of children. Please direct feedback to qualityadmin@kidsfirstaustralia.org.au.

Kids First monitors implementation and compliance with this policy as part of its risk management for child safety and performance management of staff.

This policy is scheduled for review every two years from the date of approval, or more frequently if appropriate, for example after a significant child safety incident.

Responsibility

Refer Responsibilities section within this policy

Document Owner(s)

GM Quality Risk and Performance

Approver(s)

Executive



Overview Flowchart

This flowchart summarises the Child Safety Reporting Procedure.



Introduction

This Procedure applies to all Staff of Kids First and in all Kids First Environments. These terms are defined in the Child Safety Policy.

Kids First is committed to ensuring children and young people who access Kids First's services and programs are kept safe from harm and the risk of harm. When Kids First suspects a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm, Kids First will handle that suspicion in a manner which prioritises child safety.

All Staff are responsible for reporting reasonable beliefs that a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm in accordance with this procedure.

Step 1: Determine whether the child or young person is in immediate danger

If a Staff member believes a child is at an immediate risk of abuse, they must notify police immediately by telephoning 000.

If a Staff member determines that a child is in immediate danger, the Staff member must stay with the child (if in their presence) and take all reasonable steps to ensure their safety. These steps may include:

- removal or intervention if the child or young person is in immediate danger, including taking the child to a safe environment whilst waiting for police response;
- provide a calm environment for the child and provide reassurance which is child focused;
- respect the child or young person's privacy by minimising who is aware of the situation and respecting the child's right to confidentiality;
- reassure the child that they are safe and they will be supported.

Step 2: Consider whether there is an obligation to report externally

All types of child abuse

A Staff member who forms a belief on reasonable grounds that a child needs protection from child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or neglect) **must** make a **voluntary report** to DFFH.

Physical injury or sexual abuse

A Staff member who, while carrying out their duties, forms a belief on reasonable grounds that a child needs protection because the child has suffered or are likely to suffer from significant harm because of **physical injury or sexual abuse**, and the child's parents cannot or will not protect the child:

- **must** disclose that information to the police or the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) if they are a **mandatory reporter**; or
- may **voluntarily** disclose that information to the police or the DFFH if they are not a mandatory reporter. Staff should consider their duty of care.

Mandatory reporters are not required to report if they reasonably believe all the reasonable grounds for their belief have already been reported to DFFH. However, Kids First encourages mandatory reporters to report to DFFH regardless to ensure DFFH is aware of all information and perspectives.

Sexual offence only

An adult and forms a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child under the age of 16 years by an adult, **must** make a report to the police as soon as practicable. (This is the failure to disclose offence.)

A Staff member who is aware of a substantial risk that a child will become the victim of a sexual offence committed by another adult associated with Kids First **must not negligently** fail to reduce or remove that risk. Reporting to DFFH or police is one way to reduce or remove that risk. (This is the failure to protect offence.)

Allegations against Kids First Staff

The CEO of Kids First must report any reportable allegation made against a Staff member to the CCYP within 3 business days of becoming aware of the allegations in accordance with the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Staff members must advise their Manager, Team Leader or Child Safety Officer if they become aware of a reportable allegation which includes reportable conduct or conduct which may include reportable conduct, even if the conduct occurs outside the course of a person's employment. This is a requirement under the reportable conduct scheme.

Suspicious, allegations, disclosures or complaints regarding a Staff member must be reported in the same way as if it arose in relation to a person outside Kids First.

Definitions for Step 2:

Term	Definition
CCYP	the Commissioner for Children and Young People
Failure to disclose	Under section 327 of the <i>Crimes Act 1958</i> (Vic), all adults must disclose to Victoria Police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has, or will be, committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 years.
Failure to protect	Under section 490 of the <i>Crimes Act 1958</i> (Vic), if a person: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has power or responsibility to reduce or remove a substantial risk that a child will become victim to a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with Kids First; and • knows that there is a substantial risk that that person will commit a sexual offence against a child, they must not negligently fail to reduce or remove that risk. All Kids First Staff should assume they are a person who has power or responsibility to reduce or remove a substantial risk of child sexual abuse by nature of their position. Reporting internally and to police is recommended. Refer to the Child Safety Reporting Procedure.
Mandatory reporter	includes a:



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person registered as a teacher or early childhood teacher; • the approved provider or nominated supervisor of or a person with a post-secondary qualification in the care, education or minding of children who is employed by or engaged by a children's service; • person with a post-secondary qualification in youth, social or welfare work who works in the health, education or community or welfare services field; • youth and child welfare worker; and • registered psychologist.
<p>Reportable allegation</p>	<p>when a person forms a reasonable belief that a staff member has engaged in reportable conduct or conduct that may include reportable conduct then a reportable allegation has been made.</p> <p>A person may form a reasonable belief when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a child makes a disclosure; • a complaint or allegation has been made to Kids First; • a person witnesses reportable conduct; • a person has received information from a credible source; • an adverse notice has been received about a persons WWCC; or • a person has been questioned, investigated, charged, prosecuted or found guilty of a criminal offence relating to children.
<p>Reportable conduct</p>	<p>Reportable conduct includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of a child • sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child • physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child; • behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm to a child; or • significant neglect of a child.
<p>Reportable Conduct Scheme</p>	<p>The reportable conduct scheme requires the CEO of Kids First notify the CCYP of reportable allegations committed by employees, office holders, volunteers and contractors, within 3 days of forming a reasonable belief of the reportable allegation. An investigation must be conducted, and the CCYP must be notified of an update on the investigation within 30 days and must be provided with the final investigation report and findings at the conclusion of the investigation.</p>



Step 3: Make an external report, if required

Involving the child and/or family – empowerment

Kids First supports a child and the family's right to be informed of a concern prior to a report being made. Kids First Staff will inform the child and/or family as appropriate where this does not cause any risk of harm to the child or the reporter. (See also Step 3 above.)

If a Staff member determines they **must** make a report, or should make a **voluntary report** (under Step 2), the Staff member should use the contact details for the various relevant authorities below.

DFFH

- during business hours by contacting the relevant Division Intake team (determined by the location of the child – see <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts>):
 - North Division intake: 1300 664 977;
 - South Division intake: 1300 655 795;
 - East Division intake: 1300 360 391;
 - West Division intake - metropolitan: 1300 664 977;
 - West Division intake - rural and regional: 1800 075 599; or
- if between 5:00pm and 9:00am Monday to Friday, or at any time on a weekend, by calling the After Hours Child Protection Emergency Service on 13 12 78; or

Victoria Police

- by dialling 000 if it is an emergency;
- by making a report through Crimestoppers;
- by contacting your local police station (contact details available at: <https://www.police.vic.gov.au/location>); or
- by contacting the Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT) in your area (contact details available at: <https://www.police.vic.gov.au/sexual-offences-and-child-abuse-investigation-teams>).

For mandatory reporters

Mandatory reporters **must** make a report to DFFH **each time** they become aware of any further grounds for their belief a child may have suffered or is likely to suffer harm as a result of a physical injury or sexual abuse.

Mandatory reporters cannot delegate this responsibility. Even if you know someone else has made a report previously, mandatory reporters are still required to report **each time** they become aware of **further grounds**.

Step 4: Make an internal report (Risk Wizard)

Staff members must make internal reports, by submitting an Incident Report via Risk Wizard each time they:

- identify an indicator of harm (see the definition and examples in the Child Safety Policy) regarding a child or group of children;
- identify a risk of harm to a child or group of children;
- receive a disclosure that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer harm;
- have a reasonable belief a child has suffered or is likely to suffer harm;
- have a reasonable belief a Staff member of Kids First is involved in a reportable allegation (see step 2 for the definition of reportable allegation); or



- form a reasonable belief a Kids First Staff member has breached the Child Safety Policy, Codes of Conduct or this procedure.

These reports must be made **as soon as possible** and, in any event, on the same day. Staff who make a report externally under step 3 are **strongly encouraged** to also make an identical internal report via RiskWizard. Staff who witness an incident or identify a risk of harm are required to make an Incident Report. Staff cannot rely on managers submitting reports of their behalf.

What to include in a report

Risk Wizard's Incident Report requires Staff to include:

- details of the indicators of harm: what did you see?
- if applicable, photos of injuries only when injuries are on a part of the body where the photo would not itself constitute child abuse material (Don't take photos of genital areas.)
- date and time of incident (or when indicator of harm was identified, or reasonable belief formed);
- name(s) of child(ren) involved;
- name(s) of adult(s) involved;
- name and contact details of any other witnesses to the incident;
- steps taken to address risk of harm; and
- Whether the report involves a possible '**reportable allegation**' – refer to the definition in Step 2.

Step 5: Responding to internal reports

Internal reports via Risk Wizard are managed by the Quality, Risk and Performance (QRP) team. When PCP is notified a child is, or may be, at risk of harm, or has suffered harm, they must:

- take immediate steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of any child who may be at risk; and
- confirm the concern has been reported, and/or assist the Staff member to may are necessary external reports.

All Kids First Staff are responsible for implementing reasonable directions from the QRP team regarding immediate steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children.

At this stage, the Director People, Culture and Performance or General Manager Quality, Risk and Performance are responsible for informing the CEO (Head of Entity) of reportable allegations, so the CEO can report to CCYP within 3 days as required by the reportable conduct scheme.

Step 6: Reportable Conduct Scheme

If the CEO forms a reasonable belief that a current Staff member (employee, volunteer or contractor) of Kids First has committed reportable conduct, or engaged in misconduct that may involve reportable conduct, irrespective of whether the conduct is alleged to have occurred in the course of the Staff member's engagement or employment with Kids First, the CEO must:

- make a notification of the reportable allegation to CCYP within three business days of a person forming a reasonable belief;
- seek external guidance and legal advice regarding conducting an investigation internally or externally;



- provide CCYP with updates as required under the reportable conduct scheme (including a 30 day report and notification of outcome and findings); and
- cooperate with all regulatory authorities in relation to the investigation, including DFFH, police and CCYP, and other regulatory bodies as required.

Stand down and interim disciplinary action

When allegations or concerns related to conduct by a staff member that could give rise to a risk of harm to a child, Kids First may, at its discretion:

- stand the staff member down while an investigation is conducted (which will involve removing or limiting their contact with children, and liaising with authorities);
- direct the staff member to return any keys, passes or equipment and to provide any access codes or passwords; or
- develop a safety plan which limits the staff member's contact or activities with children and young people;
- take any other steps whilst the investigation is being conducted to ensure that child safety is paramount

Step 9: Cooperate with regulatory authorities and other involved parties

Kids First Staff will cooperate with any investigation by the police or DFFH. Staff who receive correspondence from regulatory authorities must direct this to General Manager Quality, Risk and Performance and/or the CEO. When a police officer or child protection practitioner from DFFH attend Kids First premises, a member of the leadership team must request to see identification before permitting them to have access to the child or young person.

Kids First will notify Working with Children Check Victoria of child safety reports against Kids First Staff (including reportable allegations against Staff).

Engagement with the child and family

Support will be provided to the child(ren) as deemed appropriate. Engagement with the child and family should be maintained, where appropriate, not likely to increase any risk of harm to the child, and to involve the child and family in decisions about what support they might need.

Kids First will not interview the child(ren) further or otherwise investigate until the police and/or the DFFH have provided it with written permission to do so.

DFFH or the police may conduct interviews of Kids First children and young people without their parents' knowledge or consent.

Step 8: Investigation

For reportable allegations, Kids First **must** conduct an investigation. For other child safety reports, Kids First **may** conduct an investigation. Investigations by Kids First will only be conducted after Kids First receives clearance from any relevant regulatory authorities (for example, police have closed their investigation and provided notice that Kids First can commence its investigation).

The CEO will appoint an appropriate person to conduct the investigation. This may be an internal or external investigator.



The investigation will be undertaken according to the principles of procedural fairness, and when relevant, comply with the requirements of the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Staff must cooperate with investigations and make themselves available for interviews as required.

Step 9: Privacy

Kids First will respect a child's privacy, and the privacy of all individuals involved in reports and investigations. This means acting consistently with the Australian Privacy Principles and Kids First Privacy Policy.

As much as is reasonably possible, all individuals' privacy is to be protected. Individuals who make reports or disclosures of abuse and individuals who are the subject of allegations are all entitled to privacy.

Step 10: Investigation finalised

Following an investigation, findings and recommendations should be made and considered by Kids First. The findings of the investigation will be reported to any external body as required, such as the CCYP under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Kids First has full discretion to put in place safety management plans or take disciplinary action when it forms a reasonable belief that it is not safe for a Staff member to interact with children, due to Kids First's duty of care following an investigation.

Kids First will endeavour to offer support to Staff and members of the community where appropriate.

Step 11: Evaluation

Kids First Board of Directors will be notified as needed. Policies and procedures may need to be reviewed.

The QRP team must review any safety plans put in place regarding a risk of child abuse or harm as appropriate.