

**Purpose:**

To ensure that all are aware of, and take responsibility for, Child Safety and that they understand their reporting responsibilities.

**Target Audience:**

All Board of Management, employees, students, volunteers, contractors and all other adults connected to EDMH.

**Background:**

The Department of Health and Human Services requires all hospitals to implement Child Safe Standards following the Victorian Government's response to the recommendations of *Betrayal of Trust*; the report of the Parliamentary Enquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other non-government organisations. Organisations that provide services for children are required to have embedded policies, procedures and an organisational culture of child safety. Protecting children from abuse is everybody's business.

The Department of Justice have implemented new criminal charges to protect children.

- **'Failure to disclose' offence**

A new offence came into effect on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2014 for adults who fail to disclose child sexual abuse to police. The new offence applies to all adults, not just professionals who work with children. Any adult who holds a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child in Victoria must report that belief to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse for not reporting.

- **'Failure to protect' offence**

A new 'failure to protect' offence came into effect on 1 July 2015 that applies to people within organisations who knew of a risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

- **Grooming Offence**

A grooming offence is now in effect to target individuals who communicate with a child or their parents with the intent of committing child sexual abuse.

**OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY**

Edenhope & District Memorial Hospital is committed to child safety.

We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, our staff and volunteers.

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EDMH aims to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

EDMH has zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.

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

Our organisation has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

Our organisation is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

#### **OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

This policy guides staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct 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 staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

#### **RECRUITMENT**

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation

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understands that when recruiting staff 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 valid 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. Police record checks are only used for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given to opportunity to provide further information and context.

#### **FAIR PROCEDURES FOR PERSONNEL**

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. 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 using our incident reporting system, 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 staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure and 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.

#### **RISK MANAGEMENT**

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). 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 (for example, any doors that can lock).

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We understand that in small rural communities there are intersection relationships (sporting clubs etc.) Employees need to use their professional discretion and understanding of child safe requirements to guide their use of social media, transport and communications with children.

**REGULAR REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

**ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS**

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Executive Management and the EDMH Child Safe Officer are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff 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 or grooming of children if we have reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above)

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