

# CHILD SAFETY POLICY & CODE OF CONDUCT

## Policy statement

Allambee Camp has thousands of children attending camp for day or overnight stays each year. We are committed to best practice to protect children from harm, no matter what gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background. **We have zero tolerance for child abuse.**

Allambee Camp respects all visitors and staff. Allambee Camp is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Island children and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to provide a safe environment for children with a disability.

Everyone working at Allambee Camp is responsible for the safety and protection of the children within our care. This includes reporting suspected child abuse.

Child protection is the shared responsibility between Allambee Camp management and all employees. Further, all adults must be vigilant and be aware of any indications of abuse or non-accidental injury. All staff are to make themselves familiar with the role of the Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO) and report any suspicions immediately, no matter how trivial it may seem or who the alleged perpetrator/victim is.

All staff hired by Allambee Camp must have a current Working With Children Check, and a clear understanding of their responsibilities and how they should operate within an appropriate Code of Conduct, as well as what their 'duty of care' is and how this relates to their position.

We will endeavour to safeguard children by:

- Adopting this Child Safety Policy
- Developing a child safe environment through clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations and suspicions of child abuse
- Development of a Code of Conduct for all staff members
- Following careful selection procedures for recruitment including all position advertisements stating our commitment to child safety
- Providing effective training to all staff/volunteers on this Policy, the Code of Conduct, and clear information as to what constitutes child abuse
- Providing effective management for all staff/volunteers through supervision and support
- Promoting inclusion and a feeling of safety extending further than this Policy and Code.

**If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.**

## Purpose & Commitment

The purpose of this Child Safety Policy & Code of Conduct is:

- To facilitate the prevention of any child abuse occurring within Allambee Camp.
- To facilitate a clear process of reporting if child abuse in any form is suspected prior to a child's visit to Allambee Camp.
- To continue working towards an organisational culture of child safety.
- To promote open discussion of child safety issues within the organisation.
- To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities with regards to child safety.

- To provide guidance to all staff/volunteers/other adults with regards to child safety including in respect to cultural diversity and children with disabilities.
- To send out a clear statement forbidding any abuse.
- To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.
- To comply with all laws, regulations, and standards relevant to child safety in Victoria.
- To maintain confidentiality principles

## **CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT**

These guidelines are here to protect children and staff alike. This Code of Conduct lists behaviours that are acceptable and those that are not, but is by no means exhaustive and all staff should remember to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to their position. When individuals are clear about expectations and are educated as to why it's so important to uphold this Code of Conduct, they are more likely to act appropriately in all circumstances. By doing so, Allambee Camp's environment becomes more transparent and all people are more accountable for their actions. Where a staff member breaches this Code, Allambee Camp may take formal action.

All staff and contractors should be guided by the following advice. If it is necessary to deviate for any reason, you should only do so after discussion with, and approval of, your manager.

- Treat children with respect at all times.
- Behave as a positive role model at all times.
- Promote safety, welfare and wellbeing of all children.
- Promote safety, participation, and empowerment of all children with a disability.
- Promote cultural safety, participation, and empowerment of linguistically and culturally diverse participants.
- Help provide a safe and supportive environment for all individuals to interact and socialise.
- Never make suggestive remarks or discriminatory comments to a child.
- Do not engage in or tolerate bullying, humiliating, or vilifying of a child, either by adults or other children.
- Respect children's right to privacy, never enter a room where a child may be changing clothes or may not be fully dressed, without first clearly getting their consent to enter.
- Never promise to keep a secret about any sensitive information that may have been disclosed to you by a child.
- Make sure you are never alone with a child, especially in dormitories or rooms. It is advisable to tell another staff member where you are and that your group is supervised. If a situation arises when you are talking one on one with a child ensure that you are in a public area and can be seen by others.
- Never offer a lift to a young person in your own vehicle. If a lift is required to seek medical assistance or in an emergency there must be preferably 1 other adult, if this is not possible at least 1 other child must be present.
- Do not touch children unless required to do so in order to fulfil your duties and there is another adult present, i.e. assistance with putting on safety equipment should still be kept to a minimum. Avoid hugging, piggybacks, play fights, sitting on lap etc. or any other physical contact.
- Do not engage in or allow any adult based conversation in the company of children i.e. drinking, fighting or sexually provocative games.
- Do not consume illegal drugs at work. Staff should have no residue of illegal drugs in their system when at work.
- Do not consume alcohol at work. Staff must have a blood alcohol concentration of 0.00 to attend work.

- Do not express personal views on culture, race, ethnicity, politics, or sexuality in the presence of children.
- Never allow favouritism or reject any individuals.
- Do not single out 'trouble makers'.
- Never allow inappropriate behaviours including ignoring, humiliating, isolating, threatening or verbal abuse by any adult or children.
- Do not engage in or tolerate inappropriate physical activity involving children, including inappropriate rough physical play, or physical means to discipline/control a child.
- Avoid situations where your approach or treatment of a young person could be misinterpreted i.e. an arm around shoulder etc.
- Avoid situations where you may be put in a compromising situation.
- Never exchange personal details such as home address, email, or Facebook, for example, with a young person.
- Do not take or publish, photos, movies, or recordings of a child without parental/carer consent.
- Never post information online that could lead to the identification of a child.
- Never contact or arrange to meet a young person you have met through Allambee Camp for any reason not related directly to your role at Allambee Camp.
- You must always refer any disclosure of information to the Allambee Camp Designated Child Protection Officer; it is not your job to investigate. On discussion with the DCPO you may however be asked to communicate again with the young person.
- Always report any breaches of the Code of Conduct to a management staff.
- Always report concerns of child safety to the DCPO, and ensure that your legal obligations to report externally are met.
- Where an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure that as quickly as possible the child is safe.
- **If you believe a child is in immediate danger call 000.**
- Respect privacy of children, their families, and others by only disclosing information to people who have the authority and a direct need to know the information.
- Never ignore or disregard any suspicion or disclosure in relation to child abuse.
- You may never receive information in confidence. If a child discloses information about abuse, whether concerning themselves or a third party, our staff must immediately pass this information on to the DCPO who is then obliged to pass information on to one or other individuals/parties depending on the circumstances. It is advised that staff/ DCPO record in writing all discussions & actions as soon as possible after a disclosure or event.
- It is important to remember that it can be more difficult for some children to talk about something than others i.e. children who have experienced prejudice and discrimination through racism may well believe that people from other ethnic groups or backgrounds do not really care about them. They may have little reason to trust those they see as authority figures and wonder whether you will be any different.
- Children with a disability may have to overcome additional barriers before disclosing abuse. They may well rely on the abuser for daily care and have no knowledge of alternative sources. They may have come to believe they are of little worth and simply comply with the instructions of adults. All of us at Allambee Camp must be present as a supportive and positive adult influence.

## **Responding to a child making a disclosure or allegation of abuse**

- **Stay** calm.
- **Listen** carefully to what is being said.
- **Do not** express shock or opinion over what is being alleged or how it should be dealt with.
- Find an appropriate, early opportunity to explain that it is likely the information will need to be shared with others in order to help – **do not promise to keep secrets.**
- **Allow** the child to continue at his/ her own pace.
- **Ask questions for clarification only**, and at all times avoid questions that are leading or suggest a particular answer.
- **Reassure** the child that they have done the right thing by telling you and helping Allambee Camp become a safer place for children.
- **Comfort** the child if they are distressed.
- **Tell them** what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared.
- **Record in writing** what has been said using the child's own words as soon as possible. Make it clear when you are using the child's words. Note the date, time, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and ensure that you sign and date the record.
- **Do not delay** in passing this information onto the DCPO.

Once information has been passed on to the DCPO the DCPO may require the confidant to go back to the child and discuss some matters further. The purpose for this is to ensure that the necessary information is gathered to assist in making a decision and to assist DHHS (Department of Health and Human Services) should they be involved at a later time.

Examples of what the confidant may be asked to find out with regards to the disclosure can include but is not limited to:

- When the alleged abuse last happened
- Where was the child hit / other
- What was used to hit the child (object, hand – open or closed)
- What were the events leading up to the alleged abuse
- Who else is in the family unit / who lives at home
- Who else knows
- Have they spoken to anyone else about the alleged abuse

***This page should be printed so that each volunteer and staff member can keep a copy for their own records and reference.***

## **Responsibilities**

Child Safety is everyone's responsibility. Allambee Camp management has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse.

The management team is responsible for ensuring that there are appropriate and effective internal control systems, and that suitable policies, procedures, and Child Safety Code of Conduct are in place.

The DCPO of Allambee Camp is responsible for:

- Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse
- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers are aware of the relevant laws, organisational policies, procedures, and Code of Conduct.
- Ensuring that all adults within Allambee Camp's extended community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures.
- Providing support for staff in undertaking their child safety responsibilities.

All managers are responsible for:

- Promoting child safety at all times.
- Educating employees about the prevention and detection of child abuse.
- Facilitating the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abuse.

All staff and volunteers must:

- Familiarise themselves with relevant laws, Allambee Camp's Policies, Procedures and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and comply with all requirements.
- Report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities.
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

The manager must ensure that:

- A copy of this Policy and Code of Conduct is available in the office for staff and one copy in the dining room for teachers/group leaders.
- An up to date copy is available on the website ([www.allambeecamp.com.au](http://www.allambeecamp.com.au)).
- An up to date copy is maintained in staff information booklet.
- The section on 'Responding to a child making a disclosure or allegation of abuse' is printed and given to new staff on arrival and existing staff during the annual refresher course. This is in order for them to keep a copy as reference.
- The "Flowchart: Child safety reporting process" is laminated and affixed to walls in the dining hall and office.

## **Definitions**

**"Child"** means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

**"Child protection"** means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.

**"Child abuse"** means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (i.e. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child.

**"Disclosure"** means when a child speaks about an alleged abuse.

**"A reasonable ground for belief"** is when given all relevant considerations under objective assessment that child abuse has or will occur. Considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was

communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator. A reasonable belief is formed if a "reasonable" person believes that;

- a) The child is in need of protection.
- b) The child has suffered or is likely to suffer "significant harm as a result of physical injury".
- c) The parents/carers are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

**A "reasonable belief"** is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

**A "reasonable belief"** might be formed if:

- d) A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused.
- e) A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (it is possible in this case that the child may be talking about themselves).
- f) Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child may have been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be; and/or
- g) Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

### **Reporting**

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

If any person has grounds to suspect abusive activity in Allambee Camp they must immediately notify the appropriate child protection service or the police. They should also advise their supervisor or the DCPO about their concern.

In cases where a disclosure is made to any staff the guidelines within this policy and code of conduct must be followed and reported to the DCPO as soon as practical after the disclosure.

### **Mandatory reporting requirements:**

<b>Legislation</b>	<b>Mandated reporters</b>	<b>When must a report be made?</b>	<b>Who is a child?</b>
<i>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)</i>	Any person over 18 years or older	A mandated reporter must make a report if they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child by another person of or over the age of 18 years.  NB. Exceptions may apply	A person under 16 years old.
<i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Registered medical practitioners, midwives and registered nurses</li> <li>- Teachers registered or granted permission to teach under the Education, Training and Reform Act 2006</li> <li>- Principals</li> <li>- Police</li> </ul>	A mandated reporter must make a report if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse;</li> <li>- The parents cannot or will not protect the child and;</li> <li>- The belief is formed in the course of practising his/her position of employment.</li> </ul> NB. Exceptions may apply	A person under 17 years old.

### **Voluntary reporting:**

<b>Legislation</b>	<b>Voluntary reporters</b>	<b>When can a report be made?</b>	<b>Who is a child?</b>
<i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)</i>	Any person	A voluntary reporter may make a report if the person has a significant concern for the wellbeing of child.	A person under 17 years old

Child safety complaints, disclosures, breaches of the Code of Conduct, and accidents will be archived on site at Allambee Camp. Records will be kept in staff files, school files, or elsewhere in the camp office, whichever most relevant. Reference must be given to the relevant authority before carrying out any disposal actions.

A record must be taken and kept of:

- any action taken,
- any internal investigations,
- any reports made to statutory authorities or professional bodies.

### **Recruitment**

Allambee Camp recognises that a Working With Children Check is just a starting point in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children.

Allambee Camp's job advertisements will all state our commitment to child safety.

When recruiting new staff and volunteers Allambee Camp will assess:

- motivation to work with children
- understanding of professional boundaries
- attitudes to children's rights and how they can be upheld
- values
- responses from referees

### **Administration**

This Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct must form part of the induction process for all new employees, contractors and casuals, as well as annual refreshers prior to the start of each season. All staff must sign off at the start of employment and after annual refreshers that they have read and understood the Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct.

Refer to the manager's administration responsibilities under "Responsibilities".

Any further training required must be addressed as and when required.

## FLOWCHART: Child safety reporting process

Allambees Camp is committed to the safety and protection of Children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse and discrimination.

