

Child Safety Policy

Policy Owner:	Head of People & Culture	Policy Year & Version:	2023, v3.0
Executive Sponsor:	Chief Operating Officer	Date Approved:	8/08/2023
Approval Authority:	The Director	Next Review Date:	April 2025

Overview and Purpose

Children are at the heart of everything we do. We ensure that our activities are provided in an environment that is caring, nurturing and safe for all children and young people under 18. MCRI and VCGS have **zero-tolerance towards abuse and neglect** of children. This policy supports our approach to keeping children and young people safe in all that we do.

Scope and Application to Personnel

This Policy applies to both salaried and non-salaried employees of Murdoch Children's Research Institute ("MCRI") and includes employees of the Victorian Clinical Genetics Services ("VCGS"), collectively "the Institute". It extends to all Board members, Staff, Contractors, Volunteers, Students, Honorary and Affiliate appointments, Implementing Partners, Collaborators and to any other person who is notified that this Institute Policy applies to them.

This Policy applies to all activities in the organisation involving children and young people, including images and video.

Principles

Considerate: the participation of children and young people in our research and activities must:

- bring them no harm;
- be voluntary and informed, considering their age, maturity, and capacities;
- be responsive to their individual needs, including respect for culture, diversity and abilities;
- be meaningful and ethical;
- address power imbalances;
- include continuous improvement.

Safe: the Institute has zero tolerance towards the abuse of children and young people. We create a safe environment and minimise the risk of child exploitation and abuse by:

- implementing robust recruitment screening processes;
- regularly assessing, managing and reviewing child safety risks across the organisation, including with our partners and affiliates;
- establishing accessible reporting processes;
- empowering children and young people to participate in the decisions that affect them;
- informing children and young people of their rights to safety;
- educating and training our staff and partners on child safety.

Immediate Reporting: it is mandatory to immediately report any suspected or alleged case of child exploitation, abuse or policy non-compliance to the designated Child Safety Officer.

Clear Commitment: we communicate our commitment through our recruitment, onboarding, learning and development, team meetings and by ensuring all relevant individuals have access to this Policy.

Embrace diversity and inclusion: we value and respect equity, diversity, and inclusion for children and young people by recognising and responding to the individuality of the children and young people we interact with including their strengths and vulnerabilities.

Responsibilities and Key Accountabilities

Each person in the Institute must understand and manage the child safety and wellbeing risks within their responsibility when making decisions. It is the responsibility of each team member or representative of the Institute to:

- Understand and comply with this policy, and all other relevant policies and procedures
- Complete all induction and ongoing compliance training as required
- Ensure that content of digital images and videos is appropriate and appropriate consent is obtained
- Behave in line with MCRI's Code of Conduct
- Seek the guidance of their manager if they are unclear about anything related to this policy; and
- Act if they breach this Policy or become aware of a child or young person experiencing abuse or harm.

Some Institute members have additional responsibilities as outlined in the table below:

Position	Responsibility
Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain oversight over the effectiveness of the Child Safe program
Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorse this policy and promote commitment to the policy and Child Safe program • Communicate with teams about the importance and expectations of child safety initiatives • Ensure adequate resources are allocated to develop, implement and improve the Child Safe program
People Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure team members, contractors and other stakeholders within the Manager's team responsibility understand their obligations, are capable and supported to meet them • Ensure these people undertake child safe training at induction and refresh knowledge at least annually • Ensure appropriate recruitment, screening and employment practices for the Institute Personnel and representatives that their team inducts • Communicate with their teams about the importance and expectations of child safety initiatives • Support stakeholders and team members involved in matters of concern, incidents or breaches of the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person as required
Child Safety Officer (Head of People and Culture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable owner of this Policy with responsibility to develop, implement, review, maintain and enforce the Child Safe policy and procedure • Act as a key contact for the Child Safe program and as the Child Safety Compliance Officer • Maintain any relevant accreditations or licenses • Respond to any child safety related complaints, lead the investigation of breaches and incidents within reporting procedures, legislative and DFAT requirements • Establish compliant record-keeping and reporting practices • Provide oversight of the training program • Immediately report all allegations of child exploitation or abuse to DFAT where DFAT funding is involved.
People and Culture team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct all relevant pre-employment checks or equivalent for all employees and provide referees in accordance with the pre-employment screening and Child Safety Procedures • Ensure the suitability of employees who will be working closely with children is assessed during interviews and in reference checks

Position	Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all Working with Children Checks and National Police Checks are up to date as required • Support the investigation of breaches and incidents as required
Children and Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay within the proximity of parents and guardians where possible • Are encouraged to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights • Are encouraged to feel safe to speak up and trust that they will be heard • Behave with courtesy and consideration for others • Are encouraged to ask questions to clarify their rights, participate in any relevant decision making and provide feedback to MCRI/VCGS

Dispute Resolution and Breaches

All instances or complaints of child harm or abuse must be reported and are responded to in line with the Child Safety Reporting Process below and described in the procedure linked below. If a person is deemed to have breached of this policy, or poses an unacceptable risk to children, that person must not be allowed to work with children.

The Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) is the oversight body for the Child Safe Standards that Victorian organisations providing services or facilities to children must achieve.

Enquiries

This Policy is available on our website and intranet. For further information please contact the People and Culture team on peopleandculture@mcri.edu.au or the Institute Child Safety Compliance Officer, the Director of People and Culture.

Compliance with the Policy

If the Institute has a reason to believe that a person subject to the policy has failed to comply with it, it will investigate the circumstances. If it is found that this person has failed to follow the policy, the Institute will consider the circumstances, legal implications, Code of Conduct and may take action against them. This may include seeking to terminate their relationship with the institute.

Related Documents and Procedures

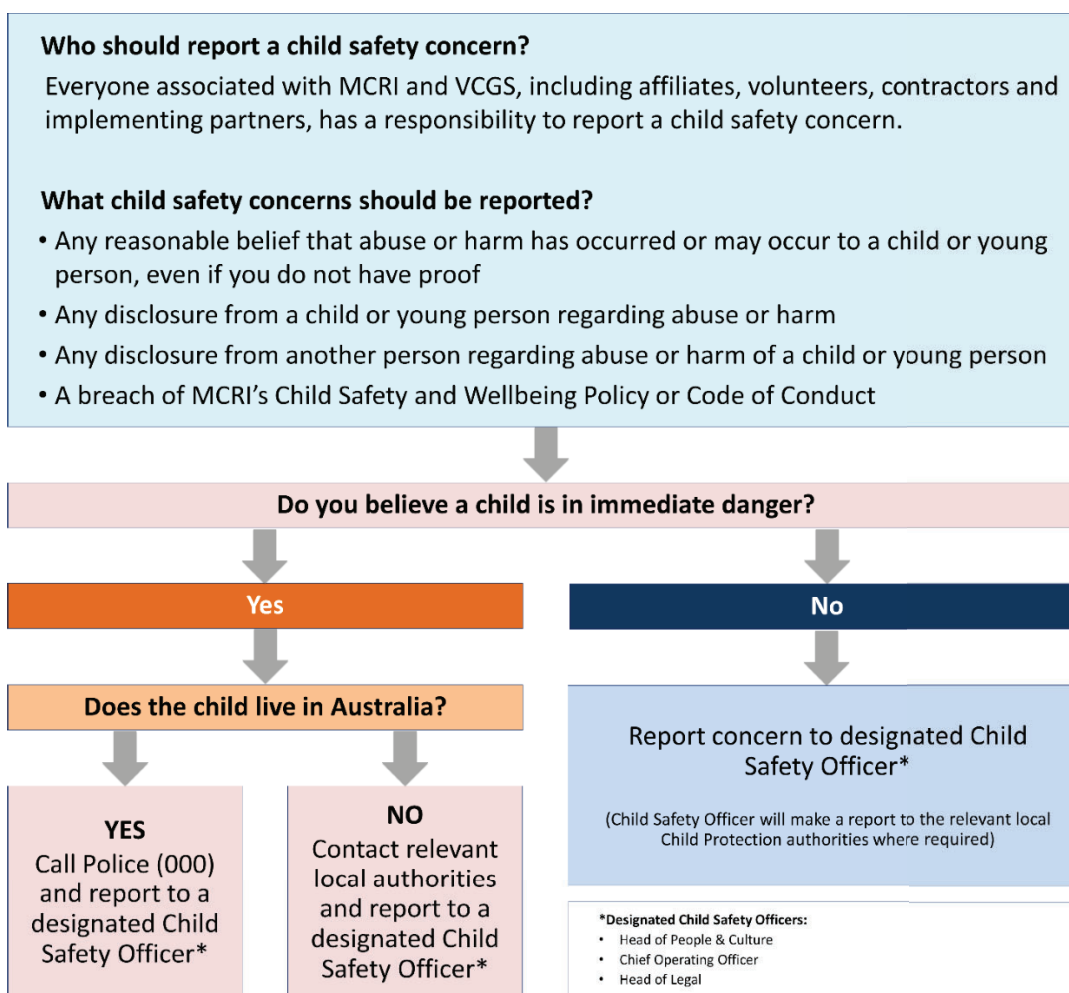
- [Child Safety Procedure \(Internal\)](#)
- Further related policies and procedures are listed in the Child Safety Procedure linked above

Related Legislation and Industry Codes

- **Victorian Legislation**, including: Victorian Child Safety Standards; Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 (Vic); Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic); Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Victoria); Adoption Act 1984 (Vic); Children and Justice Legislation Amendment (Youth Justice Reform) Act 2017 (Vic); Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012 (Vic); Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic); Family Violence Protection Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2017 (Victoria); Children Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2018 (Victoria); Child and Wellbeing Safety (Information Sharing) Regulations 2018 (Victoria).

- **Working with Children Legislation** including: Child Employment Act 2003 (Vic); Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic).
- **Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)** including: DFAT Child Protection Policy; Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Child Protection Minimum Standards.
- **Federal legislation including:** Australian National Principles for Child Safe Organisations; Crimes Act 1914; Modern Slavery Act 2018; United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; Criminal Code Act 1995.

Child Safety Reporting Process



Australian Child Protection Contacts		
State	Governing Authority	Contact
Australian Capital Territory	Department of Community and Family	General Public – 1300 556 729 Mandated Persons – 1300 555 728
New South Wales	Department of Communities and Justice	13 21 11
Northern Territory	Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities	1800 700 250
Queensland	Department of Children, Youth, Justice and Multicultural Affairs	1800 811 810 1800 177 135 (After hours)
South Australia	Department for Child Protection	13 14 78
Tasmania	Department for Education, Children and Young People	1800 000 123
Victoria	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	North Division – 1300 664 977 South Division – 1300 655 795 East Division – 1300 360 391 West Division (Metropolitan) – 1300 664 977 West Division (Rural & Regional) – 1800 075 599 After hours – 13 12 78
Western Australia	Department of Communities	1800 273 889 1800 199 008 (After hours)