

135 Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Purpose

1. This policy outlines how Community College Gippsland (CCG) and ECG College (to be referred to as CCG for this policy) demonstrates the organisation's commitment to maintaining a safe and child-friendly learning environment, where children and young people from all cultures are welcome and feel safe.
2. The policy and supporting procedures provide the overview of CCG's strategy for implementing the requirements outlined in Ministerial Order 1359 and the Victorian Child Safe Standards.
3. The policy informs CCG's community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and young people and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of the organisation.
4. For the purpose of this policy the term "Staff" refers to all employees of CCG including the Board of Directors, volunteers and any teachers/trainers engaged under contract or hired from an external party under a labour hire arrangement.

Scope

5. This policy:
 - applies to all staff at CCG irrespective of whether they work in direct contact with students.
 - applies to all physical and online learning environments used by students during or outside of class hours, including other locations provided for a student's use (for example, school camps and excursions) and those provided through third-party providers.
 - should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes - refer to the Relationships-Internal section at the end of this policy

Statement of commitment to child safety

CCG is a child safe organisation who welcomes all children, young people, and their families.

CCG is committed to providing a culturally safe and inclusive learning environment where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.

CCG has zero tolerance for child abuse and takes proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our educational environments.

Our child safe policies, procedures and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

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CCG promotes positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

CCG takes proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQA+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our organisation, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our organisation has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

CCG are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

Child safety code of conduct (standard 2)

6. CCG's Child Safe Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. The Code clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.
7. CCG ensures that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults.
8. The Child Safe Code of Conduct includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.
9. All staff (including regular external service providers) are required to read, acknowledge and sign the Child Safe Code of Conduct upon engagement with CCG.

Child safe risk management (standard 2 & 9)

10. CCG will identify, assess and minimise/manage risks to child safety in our physical and online environments. These risks are managed through a range of policies and procedures including:
 - The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety and Wellbeing Management Procedures
 - The Child Safe Reporting and Complaints Policy and Procedures
 - The Student Welfare, Care and Safety Policy and Procedures

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- The Offsite Activities Student Excursion Policy and Procedures
 - The Child Safe Risk Register
 - The Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy
 - The Child Information Sharing Scheme Policy
11. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register and conduct the Child Safe Risk Assessment at least annually.
 12. CCG acknowledges different risk controls may be necessary for particular groups of students depending on the nature of the risk and the diversity characteristics of students affected by the risk.
 13. CCG has designated Child Safety Champions at each campus to support students and assist in embedding a child safe culture within the organisation.

Child safety in physical and online environments (standard 2 and 9)

14. CCG implements the e-Smart framework for both students and staff. The e-Smart program provides the framework and resources to deliver education and training to staff incorporating strategies on embracing the benefits of technology while identifying and reducing childrens' exposure to cyber risks, such as cyber bullying, online sexual predation, sexting, identity theft and fraud.
15. The Offsite Activities Student Excursion Policy and Procedures encompass a risk management approach for off-site overnight camps, excursions, adventure activities and facilities and services contracted through third party providers for student use.
16. The Child Safe Risk Register is a Risk Assessment Process that is conducted yearly (or earlier if required) and takes into account the risk minimisation approach implemented by CCG for each Child Safe Standard. This process considers each campus' specific environment, both physical and online, the activities expected to be conducted in that environment (including the provision of services by contractors or outside organisations), and the characteristics and needs of all students expected to be present in that environment.

Culturally safe environments (standard 1)

17. CCG is committed to maintaining an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.
18. CCG performs the Acknowledgment of Country ceremony for specific events and meetings, acknowledging the traditional owners of the land.
19. CCG's has a long and successful history of providing education and training programs designed specifically to support Aboriginal students engage in learning and cultural activities in ECG College and the Registered Training Organisation.

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20. Aboriginal students are provided with information on their cultural rights how CCG will support them in a culturally safe way.
21. CCG encourages Aboriginal families, relatives, and wider community to attend the campuses and engage in traditional celebration activities in acknowledgment of student achievements and award ceremonies.

Student empowerment (standard 3)

22. CCG embeds student empowerment through active involvement in any decision making processes around matters that directly affect them. CCG listens to their views and respects their input and feedback.
23. In particular CCG:
 - promotes the cultural safety, participation, and empowerment of Aboriginal students.
 - promotes the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
 - ensures that students with a disability are safe and can participate equally.
24. CCG works to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.
25. Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and strong friendships and peer support in the campus is encouraged to ensure a sense of belonging. Students are provided with CCG's Students' Rights and Responsibilities form and Student Handbooks to provide the framework and guidance on respectful behaviours.
26. ECG College students participate in the Respectful Relationships program to gain the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. Students are supported to know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and encouraged to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time. Students and families can access information on how to report concerns or complaints with information available at each campus, on the website, in the Parent and Student Handbook and at reception.
27. CCG takes all complaints about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child very seriously and all complainants concerns will be heard and actioned as appropriate. CCG will provide support for the student and keep them (and their parents/carers/guardians as appropriate) informed about progress.
28. Staff are provided with information and training to assist in identifying potential signs of harm and strategies to support students to raise any concerns or express their views.
29. Information sharing and record keeping obligations are outlined in the policies, the Child Safe Induction and in supporting documents at the campuses.

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Engagement and communications (standard 4)

30. The CCG community, including families/carers/guardians/parents have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.
31. CCG is committed to providing accessible information about CCG's child safe policies and practices and involving the CCG community in supporting our approach to child safety and wellbeing.
32. Families and students are provided with opportunities to provide input into the development and review of CCG's child safety policies and practices. Everyone is encouraged to raise any concerns and ideas for continuous improvement.
33. This process is implemented by:
 - Parents/carers/guardians access the policies through the parent portal on Compass and have public access through the website. Feedback can be provided via phone, email, online meetings and on campus in person
 - The community can access the policies and procedures that are located on the CCG website and feedback can be provided via phone, email, online meetings and on campus in person
 - Students will be provided with the policies and procedures during class and feedback will be collected during or after class hours
 - The CCG community will be informed of any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives via email, the Parent Portal with the revised documents available on the website
34. PROTECT Child Safety posters are displayed throughout every campus and additional posters displayed in the student specific areas.
35. Posters of CCG's Child Safe Champions are displayed throughout every campus and additional posters displayed in the student specific areas.

Diversity and equity (standard 5)

36. CCG embraces and celebrates the rich diversity that our students, families and community bring to the organisation and our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all, free from discrimination.
37. CCG provides a safe and inclusive learning environment for all and recognises that every child has unique skills, strengths, and experiences to bring to the organisation.
38. Access and equity for all is a key priority for CCG and child abuse and harm resulting from discrimination based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion, sex, intersex status, gender identity or sexual orientation will not be tolerated.
39. Students are provided with "child friendly" information for raising concerns or making a complaint while being supported in a culturally safe environment.

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40. A higher level of student support is given to individuals and young people with additional and specific needs by increasing our child safety awareness and duty of care responsibilities and supports to the meet the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Personnel and recruitment (standard 6)

41. CCG implements a robust pre-engagement, screening process for all Board Members, staff, volunteers, and contractors to ensure they are suitable to work with children prior to engagement of services.

42. Pre-engagement screening is conducted according to the Employment Practices Policy and Procedures which includes:

- sighting, verifying and recording the person's Working with Children Check or equivalent background check such as a VIT registration
- collecting and recording:
 - o proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications.
 - o the person's history of working with children.
 - o references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

Staff induction

43. Staff complete Child Safe specific online induction that incorporates CCG's child safe practices. All staff are provided with the Child Safe Code of Conduct for acknowledgement and signing on engagement as well as mandatory completion of the Department of Education's Protecting Children Online Learning Module prior to working on campus. The induction includes:

- the Child Safe Policy (this document)
- the Child Safe Code of Conduct
- the Child Safe Reporting and Complaints Policy and Child Safe Reporting Procedures
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that is appropriate to the nature of the role.

Ongoing supervision and management of staff

44. CCG implements an ongoing supervision and monitoring process for all staff engaged in child-connected work through:

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- Monthly Working with Children Checks completed for all staff
 - Staff meetings have Child Safe as a standing agenda item
 - Child Safe Champions at all campuses
 - Child Safe risk assessments
 - Staff undergo performance reviews
 - Provision of Child Safe refresher training
 - Each campus layout has designated student areas supports the ability for ongoing monitoring and management of staff and volunteers
45. Where an instance of inappropriate behaviour towards children and/or young people is identified, the individual will be managed immediately as per the Staff Disciplinary Procedures and CCG's legal obligations.

Suitability of volunteers

46. All volunteers are required to comply with the Volunteers Workers Policy. The policy describes the process for assessing the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness (standard 8)

47. CCG recognises that ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address any child safety and wellbeing matters.
48. Child safe training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:
- CCG's child safe policies, procedures, codes, and practices
 - completing the Child Safe specific online modules
 - recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
 - responding effectively to issues of child safety and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
 - maintaining culturally safe environments for all students
 - information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
 - identifying and mitigating child safety and wellbeing risks while in the education and training environment.
49. Other professional learning and training on child safety will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and addressing any identified issues or emerging needs.

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Complaints and reporting processes (standard 7)

50. CCG fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents/guardians/carers, and the CCG community to raise concerns that may lead to a complaint or report. Raising awareness and increasing general knowledge for making a complaint or report, supports building a child safe organisation and provides confidence in the community that all concerns will be actioned as appropriate.
51. CCG implements the Child Safe Reporting and Complaints Policy and Procedures to provide guidance to staff for raising complaints and concerns and how complaints will be addressed. The policy encompasses mandated and general reporting requirements. Students are provided with "child friendly" information for raising a concern or making a complaint in a safe and confidential environment.
52. If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff must follow Child Safe Reporting and Complaints Policy and Procedures. This may be complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person connected to CCG.
53. CCG's Bullying Harassment and Discrimination Policy, the Student Welfare, Care and Safety Policy and Procedures and the Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure encompass general complaints and concerns that exclude Child Safe specific information.
54. CCG adheres to the Reportable Conduct Scheme requirements and is a registered entity under the Child Information Sharing Scheme.

Review of child safety practices (standard 10)

55. CCG has established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of the child safe policies, procedures, and practices.
56. CCG will:
 - review and evaluate the child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and practices after any significant child safety incident, or at least every 2 years and improve where applicable
 - analyse complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to identify causes and systemic failures and to inform continuous improvement
 - report on the outcomes of relevant reviews to staff, volunteers, the community, families, and students

Child safe policies and procedures (standard 11)

57. CCG has a suite of policies and procedures to provide direction and guidance for all stakeholders on Child Safety and Student Welfare, Care and Safety.

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58. CCG's Senior Leadership Team are supported by Child Safe Champions to assist in creating and maintaining a child safe culture through implementing and modelling the Child Safe policies, procedures, and practices.
59. Staff receive information and training on CCG's Child Safe policies, procedures, and practices through:
- Provision of the Child Safe Code of Conduct at the time of engagement and completion of the online Child Safe Specific learning module incorporating all policies and procedures
 - Access to all policies and procedures located on the intranet
 - Child Safe is regular standing agenda item at staff meetings
 - Provision of ongoing education, training and supervision for all staff and volunteers
 - Students and families are provided with Child Safe information upon enrolment and feedback is encouraged in a safe and inclusive environment
60. The Child Safety and Student Welfare, Care and Safety Policies and Procedures are available on the website for public access with feedback encouraged to support continuous improvement and strengthening the child safe culture.

Privacy and information sharing

CCG collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our CCG collects, uses, and discloses information refer to Information Privacy Policy located on the website and a summary of Information Collection Notice located in the Student and Parent Handbooks provided on enrolment.

Records management

61. CCG complies with the collection, retention and destruction of staff and student record information as per the requirements of:
- Regulatory requirements related to records management as part of maintaining ongoing registration as a registered training organisation that includes a registered senior secondary school
 - Contractual requirements related to funding contracts at the State and Commonwealth Government levels
 - The General Retention and Disposal Authority Guidelines by the Public Record Office Victoria for the: Records Retention & Disposal Schedule for Non-Government Schools
 - The Public Record Office Victoria for the Records Retention & Disposal Schedule Organisational Response to Child Sexual Abuse Incidents and Allegations.

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Delegated responsibility

62. The Board of Management hold ultimate responsibility of governance and oversight for child safety, as part of CCG daily operations the Boards delegate responsibilities to the Chief Executive Officer, the Senior Leadership Team including the School Principal.
63. The Child Safe Champions are responsible for raising awareness of Child Safety and supporting staff and students to raise concerns or issues in a culturally safe manner that is appropriate to the person/people involved.
64. All staff are responsible for adhering to CCG's Child Safe policies and procedures to provide all students with a safe and inclusive learning environment at CCG.

Definitions

Child - A child (under 17 years of age) enrolled as a student at the school or RTO participating in a program.

Child abuse includes -

- any act committed against a child involving-
 - o a sexual offence; or
 - o an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and
 - o the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence; or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm; and
 - serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while students are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child safety - encompasses matters related to protecting all students from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

Child Information Sharing Scheme - Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) authorises prescribed professionals and service providers to share information to promote the wellbeing and safety of children.

Mandatory reporting, failure to disclose, failure to protect and grooming

- the mandatory reporting obligation is set out in Part 4.4 of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005. Section 184 imposes an obligation on teachers, principals and other persons listed in section 182 to make a mandatory report if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection on the grounds that the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm because of physical injury or sexual abuse, and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

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- the failure to disclose offence in section 327 of the Crimes Act 1958 requires any adult (subject to specific exemptions) who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence. Further information can be obtained at: www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-andfamilies/failuretodisclose-offence
- the failure to protect offence in section 49O of the Crimes Act 1958 applies where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a school will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that school. A person in a position of authority in the school will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so. Organisations other than schools are also covered by the offence. Further information is available at: www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-andfamilies/failuretoprotect-a-new-criminal-offence-to
- The offence of grooming for sexual conduct with a child under the age of 16 is found in section 49M of the Crimes Act 1958. That section provides:
 1. A person (A) commits an offence if-
 - a. A is 18 years of age or more; and
 - b. A communicates, by words or conduct (whether or not a response is made to the communication), with-
 - i. another person (B) who is a child under the age of 16 years; or
 - ii. another person (C) under whose care, supervision or authority B is; and
 - c. A intends that the communication facilitate B engaging or being involved in the commission of a sexual offence by A or by another person who is 18 years of age or more.
 2. A person who commits an offence against subsection (1) is liable to level 5 imprisonment (10 years maximum).
 3. A does not intend to facilitate B engaging or being involved in the commission of a sexual offence by A or by another person who is 18 years of age or more if, were the conduct constituting the sexual offence to occur, A or the other person would satisfy an exception, or have a defence, to that sexual offence.
 4. It is immaterial that some or all of the conduct constituting an offence against subsection (1) occurred outside Victoria, so long as B or C was, or B and C were, in Victoria at the time at which that conduct occurred.
 5. It is immaterial that B or C was, or B and C were, outside Victoria at the time at which some or all of the conduct constituting an offence against

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subsection (1) occurred, so long as A was in Victoria at the time that conduct occurred.

6. It is immaterial that A, B and C were all outside Victoria at the time at which some or all of the conduct constituting an offence against subsection (1) occurred, so long as A intended that the sexual offence would occur in Victoria.
7. In this section- communication includes an electronic communication within the meaning of the Electronic
8. Transactions (Victoria) Act 2000; sexual offence means-
 - a. an offence against a provision of Subdivision (8A), this Subdivision
 - b. (other than section 49K(1) or this section), (8C), (8D), (8E), (8F) or c. (8FA); or
 - d. an attempt to commit an offence covered by paragraph (a); or
 - e. an assault with intent to commit an offence referred to in paragraph

Further information can be obtained at:
www.justice.vic.gov.au/safercommunities/protecting-children-andfamilies/grooming-offence

Registered Training Organisation - A Registered Training Organisation (RTO) (CCG) is a provider of nationally recognised vocational education and training (VET). CCG provides training and assessment in accredited qualifications or statements of attainment that are recognised across Australia and are accepted by industry and other educational institutions.

Reportable Conduct Scheme - The CEO of CCG is required to notify the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) of all allegations of reportable conduct by employees and volunteers.

School environment - means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by CCG for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

In a non-Government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary); or
- a minister of religion. School governing authority
- The proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor; or

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- the governing body for a school (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the Education and Training Reform Act 2006; or the principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the Education and Training Reform Act 2006

Relationships

Internal

This Child Safe Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related policies, procedures, and codes. These include :

- 111 Risk Management Policy
- 112 Legislation Compliance Policy
- 134 Child Information Sharing Scheme Policy
- 137 Staff Code of Conduct Policy
- 137-2 Educators and Support Staff Code of Conduct
- 138 Volunteer Workers Policy
- 304 Student Welfare, Care and Safety Policy
- 400 Employee Handbook
- 411 Bullying Harassment and Discrimination Policy
- 421 Employment Practices Policy
- 421-1 Employment Practices Procedure
- 605 CCG Student Handbook
- 680 ECG College Student and Parent Handbook

External

Education and Training Reform Act 2006; Education and Training Reform Amendment (Child Safe Schools) Act 2015; Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017; Children, Youth and Families Act 2005; Ministerial Order 1359; Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005; Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012; Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities; Children Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2018; Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic); Worker Screening Act 2020,

Procedures

- 135-1 Child Safety and Wellbeing Management Procedures
- 135-2 Child Safety Reporting and Complaints Procedure
- 135-2B Guide to Handling Reports or Complaints
- 135-3 Child Safe Code of Conduct

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Forms

135-2A Child Safe Incident Report Form

Other related documents

- Guidelines to the Minimum Standards and Requirements for School Registration
- Ministerial Order No. 1359 - Implementing the Child Safe Standards - Managing the risk of child abuse in schools and school boarding premises
- Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools
- Four Critical Actions for Schools
- Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending
- Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending

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