

	<h2>Child Safe Policy</h2>
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Authorisation	MOSS Board
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Reviewed by	Senior Manager – Quality and Compliance
Next review date	June 2028
Responsible person	Child Safety Officers
Policy owner	CEO

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction to MOSS personnel regarding our duty of care to ensure child safety and meet our child safety commitments.

The policy aims to ensure that all children remain safe and supported while accessing MOSS services and that MOSS personnel maintain safe and respectful relationships with children while meeting their legal, regulatory and professional obligations.

Scope

This policy applies to all persons working for or associated with MOSS, whether in a direct or non-direct client-related role, at a MOSS site, in an outreach capacity, remotely or in any other setting where MOSS services are provided.

Persons covered by this policy include:

- Board members
- Employees, including permanent, fixed-term and casual employees
- Volunteers
- Contractors and subcontractors
- Students on placement
- Co-located personnel
- Any other person engaged in work or activities on behalf of MOSS.

In this policy, the term MOSS personnel covers all persons listed above.

Definitions

Word/Term	Definition
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Abuse	Any action, or lack of action, that significantly harms or is likely to harm a child's physical, psychological or emotional safety, health, wellbeing or development.
Child	Any person under 18 years of age who is being supported by MOSS, accompanies a person receiving MOSS services or otherwise has contact with MOSS personnel or services.
Child safety	Measures taken to protect children from abuse, harm, neglect and other risks to their safety and wellbeing.
Child Safe Standards	The eleven compulsory minimum standards that Victorian organisations providing services or facilities for children must implement to protect children and young people from abuse and harm.
Child Safety Officer	A person appointed by MOSS to provide advice, guidance and support in relation to child safety concerns, reporting obligations and the implementation of this policy.
Reportable conduct	Conduct that falls within the categories established under the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme. The applicable statutory definitions and current regulatory guidance must be used when determining whether an allegation may constitute reportable conduct.
Reasonable belief	A belief formed on reasonable grounds. Proof is not required, but there must be more than a suspicion or speculation. A reasonable belief may be formed from a disclosure, observation, information received from another person or other relevant circumstances.
Risk	Anything that may threaten or compromise the safety, protection, participation or wellbeing of a child.
Social Services Regulator	The Victorian regulator responsible for administering the Reportable Conduct Scheme and regulating the Child Safe Standards for social services and organisations that do not have a sector-specific co-regulator.
Worker	An employee, volunteer, contractor, subcontractor, student, Board member or other person carrying out work or activities for or on behalf of MOSS.

The Social Services Regulator currently regulates the Child Safe Standards for social services and administers the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Policy Statement

Merri Outreach Support Service Ltd, referred to in this policy as MOSS, is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children who access our services or have contact with our organisation.

MOSS has a range of policies, procedures, codes, reporting mechanisms and organisational practices supporting this commitment.

We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our personnel, volunteers and students on placement.

MOSS has zero tolerance for child abuse, neglect and harm. All allegations and child safety concerns will be treated seriously and managed in accordance with applicable legislation, regulatory requirements and MOSS policies and procedures.

MOSS is committed to:

- The cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- The cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Providing a safe, accessible and inclusive environment for children with disability
- Affirming the safety, dignity and inclusion of LGBTIQ+ children
- Supporting children to understand and exercise their rights
- Listening to and respecting children's views
- Ensuring families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
- Identifying and managing risks to children
- Ensuring concerns, allegations and incidents are reported and responded to appropriately.

MOSS will meet its legal and social obligations to contact Victoria Police, DFFH Child Protection, the Social Services Regulator or another relevant authority when concerns arise regarding a child's safety or where reporting is required.

Children and Young People

This policy is intended to empower children, who are vital and active participants in our organisation.

MOSS will involve children in decisions, particularly decisions about matters that directly affect them. We will listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

Children being supported by MOSS will be assessed individually using the relevant MOSS-approved assessment and wellbeing tools and, where appropriate, will be involved in developing their case plan.

MOSS promotes diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation. In particular, we will:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Ensure children with disability are safe, supported and able to participate equally

- Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children who identify as LGBTIQ+
- Provide children with accessible and age-appropriate information about their rights
- Ensure children know how to raise a concern or make a complaint
- Take children's concerns and complaints seriously
- Provide appropriate support when children participate in decisions or reporting processes.

MOSS Board Members, Employees, Volunteers, Students and Contractors

This policy guides MOSS Board members, employees, volunteers, contractors and students regarding appropriate behaviour with children in our organisation.

All MOSS personnel are required to comply with the MOSS Child Safe Code of Conduct and sign the MOSS Statement of Expectations incorporating the Child Safe Code of Conduct at commencement and annually thereafter.

MOSS personnel should use organisational structures for consultation and support if they have concerns about child safety.

MOSS has nominated Child Safety Officers who can provide support and guidance regarding child safety concerns, reporting obligations and the application of relevant MOSS policies and procedures.

Inappropriate behaviour, allegations and child safety concerns will be reported through the appropriate internal and external channels. The external body will depend on the nature, severity and urgency of the matter and may include:

- Victoria Police
- DFFH Child Protection
- The Social Services Regulator
- A relevant funding body, regulator or government department.

Reportable allegations involving workers or volunteers must be notified to the Social Services Regulator in accordance with the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Training and Supervision

Training and supervision ensure everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility, regardless of whether they work directly with children.

New employees, volunteers, contractors and students will receive an induction covering MOSS's commitment to child safety, the Child Safe Standards, the Child Safe Code of Conduct and the responsibilities relevant to their role.

Our organisational culture aims for all MOSS personnel, parents, carers and children to feel confident and comfortable discussing allegations, complaints and child safety concerns.

MOSS will train relevant personnel to:

- Understand their child safety responsibilities
- Identify risks to children

- Recognise possible signs of abuse, neglect or harm
- Respond appropriately to a disclosure or concern
- Understand internal and external reporting requirements
- Apply culturally safe and inclusive practices
- Understand information-sharing, privacy and recordkeeping responsibilities
- Identify and manage risks in physical and online environments.

MOSS supports personnel through ongoing supervision, training and reflective practice to develop their skills and maintain child-safe practices.

Recruitment

Many roles at MOSS require workers to be skilled in working with children.

Recruitment advertisements, position descriptions and selection criteria will clearly demonstrate MOSS's commitment to child safety and our awareness of relevant social, ethical and legislative responsibilities.

MOSS welcomes applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disability and people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

MOSS will undertake screening appropriate to the position and its level of contact with children. Screening may include:

- Working with Children Check verification
- National Police Record Checks
- Identity and qualification checks
- Referee checks
- Employment history checks
- Child-safety-focused interview questions
- Assessment of the applicant's values and suitability to work with children.

MOSS personnel undertaking child-related work must hold a current Working with Children Check unless a lawful exemption applies.

Evidence of required checks will be maintained on personnel files and relevant central registers in accordance with MOSS recordkeeping and privacy requirements.

Risk Management

Child safety is paramount. MOSS personnel must identify and respond to risks to children as soon as practicable by following applicable MOSS policies, procedures and risk-management processes.

The MOSS Child Protection Policy and Child Protection Procedure provide guidance regarding child protection concerns.

The MOSS Reportable Conduct Policy and Reportable Conduct Procedure must be followed where an allegation may constitute reportable conduct.

Personnel should consult with their Program Manager, a Child Safety Officer or the General Manager of Operations for support.

Early intervention and prevention are essential parts of risk management. Personnel should use supervision, team case meetings and other appropriate consultation processes to discuss emerging or potential risks to children.

Risks associated with the physical and online environments used to deliver MOSS services must be identified, assessed, documented, controlled and regularly reviewed. Risk management must balance the need to protect children from harm with the benefits of participation, inclusion and positive engagement.

Reporting and Responding to Child Safety Concerns

The safety and wellbeing of children is paramount. Due process will be followed when responding to allegations or concerns involving MOSS personnel. Responses will be timely, thorough, transparent, procedurally fair and based on available evidence.

If a person forms a reasonable belief that an incident may have occurred or that a child may be at risk, the concern must be reported.

A reasonable belief may arise when:

- A child makes a disclosure
- Behaviour or circumstances consistent with abuse, neglect or harm are observed
- Another person raises a concern
- Suspicious, unsafe or inappropriate behaviour is observed
- Information is received that indicates a child may be at risk.

Concerns should be reported without delay to the relevant Program Manager, the General Manager of Operations or a MOSS Child Safety Officer.

The person making the report must complete the relevant MOSS incident reporting documentation and provide the information to the appropriate manager or Child Safety Officer without delay.

Management will determine the required internal and external reporting, escalation, support, response and investigation processes. Specialist or regulatory guidance may be sought where necessary.

Depending on the circumstances, reporting may be required to:

- Victoria Police
- DFFH Child Protection
- The Social Services Regulator
- Relevant funding bodies
- Relevant government departments or regulators
- The MOSS Board of Directors.

If an incident falls within the scope of the Client Incident Management System, it must also be reported through CIMS in accordance with applicable requirements.

More than one notification or report may be required for the same matter. Completing one report does not remove the obligation to make any other legally or contractually required report.

All records must be accurate, objective, securely stored and accessible only to authorised persons.

MOSS personnel who are found to have breached child-safe practices may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the MOSS Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. This may include termination of employment or engagement and referral to an external authority, depending on the circumstances.

Where appropriate, MOSS will provide children and families with information about the organisation's response, available supports and the progress or outcome of the matter.

Privacy, Confidentiality and Information Sharing

All personal information considered, received or recorded will be managed in a manner that respects the privacy and dignity of the individuals involved.

Information will be collected, used, disclosed, retained and securely stored in accordance with:

- Applicable privacy legislation
- Child safety and reporting obligations
- Information-sharing requirements
- Relevant MOSS policies and procedures
- The need to protect children and other persons from harm.

Privacy and confidentiality must not prevent personnel from making a report or sharing information where this is required or authorised by law or is necessary to protect a child.

Where appropriate, individuals will be informed about how their information will be recorded, used, disclosed and stored, and who may have access to it.

Legislative Responsibilities

MOSS takes its legal and regulatory responsibilities seriously.

MOSS personnel must understand and comply with the legal obligations relevant to their work. These may include obligations relating to:

- Reporting concerns to Victoria Police
- Mandatory reporting to DFFH Child Protection
- Protecting children from known or foreseeable risks
- Responding to suspected criminal conduct
- Reportable conduct notifications
- Working with Children Check requirements
- Child Safe Standards compliance
- Privacy, confidentiality and information sharing

- Workplace screening, supervision and recordkeeping.

Where a legal obligation is unclear, personnel must seek advice from a Program Manager, Child Safety Officer, General Manager of Operations or Chief Executive Officer without delay. Seeking advice must not unreasonably delay urgent action required to protect a child.

Review of Child Safe Standards

MOSS will review its implementation of the Child Safe Standards at least annually.

The review will consider:

- Compliance with the eleven Child Safe Standards
- Feedback from children, families, personnel and other stakeholders
- Complaints, incidents and reportable allegations
- Identified and emerging risks
- Recruitment, screening, training and supervision practices
- The effectiveness of policies, procedures and reporting systems
- Regulatory, legislative and organisational changes
- Opportunities for continuous improvement.

The outcomes of reviews will be documented and used to inform improvements to MOSS systems, policies, procedures, training and service delivery.

Responsibility/Accountability

MOSS Board of Directors: Provides governance oversight of MOSS's child safety obligations and organisational commitment to the Child Safe Standards. Authorises this policy and receives relevant assurance, risk and incident information.

Chief Executive Officer: Accountable for organisational compliance with this policy, the Child Safe Standards, the Reportable Conduct Scheme and other applicable obligations. Performs or formally delegates the responsibilities assigned to the head of the organisation under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

General Manager of Operations: Oversees operational implementation of this policy and supports appropriate escalation, reporting, risk management and organisational responses.

Child Safety Officers: Provide advice and support regarding child safety concerns, reporting, risk assessment and relevant legislation. Assist MOSS personnel to understand and apply this policy and related procedures.

Program Managers: Ensure this policy is implemented within their programs, personnel receive appropriate guidance and supervision, and child safety concerns are documented, escalated and reported without delay.

People and Culture or the manager responsible for Human Resources: Ensures child-safe recruitment, screening, induction, training and personnel recordkeeping requirements are implemented and monitored.

All MOSS personnel: Comply with this policy and the Child Safe Code of Conduct, participate in required training, identify and respond to risks, report concerns promptly and contribute to a child-safe organisational culture.

References and other documents

Document	Location/Link
MOSS Child Protection Policy	SharePoint
MOSS Child Protection Procedure	SharePoint
MOSS Child Safe Code of Conduct	SharePoint
MOSS Statement of Expectations incorporating the Child Safe Code of Conduct	SharePoint
MOSS Children's Policy	SharePoint
MOSS Reportable Conduct Policy	SharePoint
MOSS Reportable Conduct Procedure	SharePoint
MOSS Recruitment and Selection Policy	SharePoint
MOSS Recruitment and Selection Procedure	SharePoint
MOSS Supervision Policy	SharePoint
MOSS Supervision Procedure	SharePoint
MOSS Induction Policy	SharePoint
MOSS Induction Procedure	SharePoint
MOSS Disciplinary Policy	SharePoint
MOSS Disciplinary Procedure	SharePoint
MOSS Duty of Care Policy	SharePoint

MOSS Privacy Policy	SharePoint
MOSS Confidentiality Policy	SharePoint
MOSS Risk Management Policy and Procedure	SharePoint
MOSS Complaints and Feedback Policy and Procedure	SharePoint
MOSS Incident/Injury/Near Miss Report Form	SharePoint
MOSS Client Incident Management System procedure and forms	SharePoint
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)	View the current legislation
Child Wellbeing and Safety Regulations 2017 (Vic)	View the current regulations
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)	View the current legislation
Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)	View the current legislation
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)	View the current legislation
Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)	View the current legislation
Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)	View the current legislation
Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)	View the current legislation
Victorian Child Safe Standards	View the Child Safe Standards
Reportable Conduct Scheme	View the Reportable Conduct Scheme
Mandatory reporting guidance	View current mandatory reporting guidance
Child Safe Standards resources	View Child Safe Standards resources
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child