

	<h2>Child Safe Policy</h2>
Version No.	Version 2.0 6th December 2018
Endorsement	Mark Goodie – CEO, 06/12/2018
Authorisation	MOSS Board of Directors
Review date	6th December 2021
Responsible person	Halime Aldemir
Policy owner	Halime Aldemir

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction to agency personnel surrounding our Child Safety commitments. The policy aims to ensure that all children remain safe and supported while accessing MOSS services and that MOSS staff maintain safe and respectful relationships with children whilst also meeting legal obligations.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all persons working for MOSS in either a direct or non-direct client related role at a MOSS site or in an outreach capacity.

Persons include:

- Board members
- Employees (permanent and casual)
- Volunteers
- Contractors and subcontractors
- Students on placement
- Any other person/s involved with MOSS, including co-located staff

In this policy the term ‘employee’ covers all persons listed above.

3. Definitions

Word/Term	Definition
Abuse	Child abuse is any action, or lack of action, that significantly harms the child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development
Child	Includes all children and young people under the age of 18 years who are being supported by MOSS
Child Safety	Measures to protect children from abuse
Child Abuse	The Department of Health and Human Services' practice definition for child abuse states that:

	<p>Child abuse is any action, or lack of action, that significantly harms the child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development.</p> <p>The practice definition for child abuse notes the different forms of child abuse are:</p> <p>Physical abuse</p> <p>Physical abuse is any non-accidental form of injury or serious physical harm inflicted on a child by any person. Physical abuse does not mean reasonable discipline though it may result from excessive or inappropriate discipline. Physical abuse can include beating, shaking, burning and assault with weapons. Physical injury and significant harm to a child may also result from neglect by a parent or caregiver or within the context of family violence.</p> <p>Emotional abuse</p> <p>Emotional abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated, frightened by threats or is experiencing family violence. It also includes hostility, derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent coldness from a person, to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired.</p> <p>Sexual abuse</p> <p>A child is sexually abused when any person uses their authority over the child to involve the child in sexual activity. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity including fondling genitals, masturbation, vaginal or anal penetration by a finger, penis or any other object, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exposure to or exploitation through pornography or prostitution.</p> <p>Neglect</p> <p>Neglect includes failure to provide the child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision to the extent where the health or development of the child is significantly impaired or placed at risk. A child is neglected if they are abandoned or left uncared for over unreasonable periods of time that is inconsistent with their age, stage and development.</p>
Risk	Includes anything that can threaten the safety and wellbeing of children

4. Policy

Merri Outreach Support Service (MOSS) is committed to ensuring safety for all children who access our service. The Agency has a range of policies and procedures supporting this commitment.

We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff, volunteers or students on placement. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, providing a safe environment for children with a disability and children who identify as LGBTI.

MOSS has zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and in line with our policies and procedures. We have legal and social obligations to contact child protection and/ or the police when we have concerns about a child's safety.

MOSS provides regular training to our staff, volunteers and students on placement, on identifying child abuse risks factors.

4.1.1 Children

This policy is intended 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. It is an expectation that **ALL** children being supported by MOSS are assessed individually using the 'State-wide well-being tool', and are involved in the formulation of their case plan.

MOSS promotes diversity in our organisation, in particular we:

- 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/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children who identify as LGBTI

4.2 MOSS staff, volunteers and students

This policy guides MOSS staff, volunteers and students on appropriate behaviour with children in our organisation. All MOSS personnel must agree to abide by our Child Safe Code of Conduct, by signing the MOSS Statement of Expectations, incorporating the Child Safe Code of Conduct.

Where prudent, MOSS personnel should use agency structures for consultation and support if they have concerns about child safety. MOSS has two Child Safety Officers, a role assumed by the Team Leader of the Regional Children's Resource Program and the Team Leader of the Bright Futures Program, who can provide invaluable support around child safety. Inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

4.3 Training and supervision

Training and supervision ensures that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility, regardless of whether they work directly or not with children. New employees, volunteers and students' regular supervision will include an induction to MOSS's commitment to child safety.

Our organisational culture aims for all Agency personnel, in addition to parents/carers and children, to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff, volunteers and students to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. Our personnel will be informed on how to respond to allegations.

MOSS also supports our staff, volunteers and children through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect all children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, children with a disability and, children who identify as LGBTI.

4.4 Recruitment

Many roles with MOSS require workers to be skilled practitioners with children. In recruitment we develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities.

We welcome applications from Aboriginal people, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with a disability and people who identify as LGBTI.

All MOSS staff, volunteers and students performing child related work are required to hold a Working with Children Check and provide evidence of this Check which is to be kept on personnel files and central register managed by the Operations Manager with Human Resources responsibilities. MOSS conducts referee checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting suitable staff.

4.5 Reporting

Whilst the safety and wellbeing of children is paramount, due process around any child safe issues affecting Agency personnel will be followed. This will be informed by the applicable agency policies and procedures and will be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Allegations of abuse and safety concerns should be reported on the MOSS Incident/Injury/Near Miss Report Form and referred to Management without delay. Management will determine ongoing reporting requirements 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 the Agency response.

4.6 Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, students, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure personal information is protected, keeping in mind legal requirements and the need to protect the

child. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access

4.7 Legislative responsibilities

Our organisation takes its legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- *Failure to disclose* - Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- *Failure to protect* - People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- *Grooming Offences* – This offence targets predatory conduct designed to facilitate sexual activity with a child.

5. Responsibility /Accountability

5.1	Senior Coordinator North and West Regional Children’s Program
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreting relevant legislation and reference documents that have bearing on this Policy.

6. References and links to legislation and other documents such as Accreditation Standards.

Name	Location
MOSS Child Protection Policy	MOSS Policy and Procedure Manual
MOSS Child Protection Procedure	MOSS Policy and Procedure Manual
MOSS Statement of Expectations incorporating the Child Safe Code of Conduct	MOSS Policy and Procedure Manual
Children’s Policy	MOSS Policy and Procedure Manual
Recruitment and Selection Policy	MOSS Policy and Procedure Manual

Recruitment and Selection Procedure	MOSS Policy and Procedure Manual
Supervision Policy	MOSS Policy and Procedure Manual
Supervision Procedure	MOSS Policy and Procedure Manual
Induction Policy	MOSS Policy and Procedure Manual
Induction Procedure	MOSS Policy and Procedure Manual
Disciplinary Policy	MOSS Policy and Procedure Manual
Disciplinary Procedure	MOSS Policy and Procedure Manual
Incident/Injury/Near Miss Report Form	MOSS Z drive/Common/Critical incident report forms MOSS
Failure to disclose	https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-disclose-offence
Grooming Offence	https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/grooming-offence
Failure to protect	https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-protect-a-new-criminal-offence-to
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (VIC)	http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/LTObject_Store/ltobjst10.nsf/DDE300B846EED9C7CA257616000A3571/8C0201BA52DEFD24CA2580D600114178/\$FILE/05-96aa077%20authorised.pdf
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (VIC)	http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/LTObject_Store/LTObjSt6.nsf/DDE300B846EED9C7CA257616000A3571/6606BB1B2DC56CE3CA257974000E4879/\$FILE/05-83aa014%20authorised.pdf
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)	http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/Domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/PubStatbook.nsf/f932b66241ecf1b7ca256e92000e23be/54D73763EF9DCA36CA2571B6002428B0/\$FILE/06-043a.pdf

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