

EVOLVE

PERFORMING ARTS

Child Safe Policy

Background

This Child Safe Policy has been prepared by Evolve Performing Arts to demonstrate our commitment to child safety and to promote the importance of ensuring a safe environment for the children in our care.

The safety of children is of fundamental importance to Evolve Performing Arts. We have zero tolerance for all forms of child abuse.

Our commitment to Child Safety

Our organisation is committed to the safety of all children in our care. All children in our care have the right to be protected from any activity that may harm their health, development or wellbeing.

We take a zero tolerance approach to child abuse and we actively look into ways to continuously improve the protection of children in our care.

We will report to the authorities where we are concerned about the safety, abuse or potential abuse of children in our care.

We understand the importance of providing a safe, happy and fun environment for all children in our care and we aim to create an environment where children can learn, grow and thrive.

We work together with the children we care for and their parents to provide a safe, inclusive and open environment.

We have a transparent and confidential feedback system that enables children and parents to speak up about issues that are important to them. We respect all views and opinions and act to address concerns raised by children or their parents.

We are committed to seeking to prevent all forms of child abuse and have implemented practices to identify and remove risks relating to the abuse of children in our care.

We are committed to supporting and encouraging the cultural safety of aboriginal children or children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds. We are also committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for children with a disability.

Our values

Our organisation's values include:

- caring for others;
- welcoming children from all cultural backgrounds; acting in the best interests of children in our care; respect; and
- creating a sense of trust

Our values underpin the work of Evolve Performing Arts and our commitment to providing a safe environment for all children in our care.

We aim to provide a caring environment that is welcoming, inclusive and allows all children to feel valued and safe.

We promote cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and/or children with a disability.

We encourage parents, children, staff, volunteers or others to speak out if they witness behaviour or practices which are inconsistent with these values.

Our staff and volunteers

Our staff and volunteers are required to provide a safe environment for all children under their supervision, including by complying with this policy and our code of conduct regarding child safety.

We encourage our staff and volunteers to attend regular training on this policy, our organisation's values and child safety so that everyone who works with us understands that Evolve Performing Arts takes child safety seriously.

We aim to recruit staff and volunteers that are suitably skilled to work with children. We interview and conduct referee checks on all of our staff and volunteers before they start working with us.

We conduct Working with Children checks on staff and volunteers who engage in child related work.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (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 and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further).

Any 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.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children.

We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities.

Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel.

The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, 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 progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Legislative Responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

Failure to disclose: Reporting child sexual abuse is a communitywide 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.

Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties. **ALL ADULTS ARE MANDATORY REPORTERS**

Our Code of Conduct:

All of our staff and volunteers must abide by our Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct sets out our organisation's expectations for appropriate behaviour with children. We require all of our staff and volunteers to act in accordance with our Code of Conduct.

A copy of our Code of Conduct can be found on our website.

Risk management:

Evolve Performing Arts proactively manages risks and has a risk management framework and policies in place to identify, assess and mitigate risks to children in our care. Our risk management policies cover the management of risks, such as occupational health and safety risks and risks of child abuse to children.

Reporting a safety complaint, allegation or concern

We take child safety very seriously. Anyone is able to raise a complaint, allegation or concern about our organisation's child safety practices. We treat all complaints, allegations or concerns raised with our organisation very seriously and respectfully.

Nominated staff members have been trained to deal with allegations of abuse. If Evolve Performing Arts receives an allegation of abuse, our trained staff will investigate that allegation thoroughly and in a professional manner.

We are committed to ensuring that the appropriate authorities are notified where we are concerned about the safety, abuse or potential abuse of children.

Review

Evolve Performing Arts regularly reviews our practices and procedures in relation to child safety. Where possible, we will involve children and their parents in these reviews and ensure that the review considers issues regarding Aboriginal children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability.

Where the review results in this policy being updated, we will make the updated policy available, including on our website.

Contact us

If you would like information about this policy, have any concerns or queries regarding child safety or to report a child safety complaint, allegation or concern, please contact our child safety officer. The contact details for our child safety officer are set out below:

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse, phone 000.