
Title: Child Safety Policy**Division:** All**Approved by:** Group Chief Executive Officer**Purpose**

Mercy Health are committed to ensuring the safety of all children who access our services, enter our facilities or have contact with our employees and meeting our compliance obligations. By complying with this Policy and associated Standards, Mercy Health aims to prevent child abuse, encourage disclosure, reporting and improve responses to any allegations of child abuse.

This policy intends to guide all employees, contractors and volunteers who work with children and their families, and those developing policies, procedures and services related to children within Mercy Health.

Who Must Comply

All staff, contractors and volunteers.

Mercy Health's Commitment to Child Safety

Mercy Health holds a strong commitment to child safety across all its services. This commitment is promoted by the following organisational precepts:

- an awareness of staff to listen to the voice of children
- a zero tolerance of child abuse
- development and ongoing review of policies and procedures to protect children from abuse
- a commitment to take all allegations of abuse against children seriously and to respond to them consistently and in line with Mercy Health's child safe policies and procedures.
- a recognition of the need to continually promote cultural safety for children of Aboriginal and culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

Policy

Child Safety at Mercy Health is informed by a number of Standards and Principles outlined below.

National Principles

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations were developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Principles have been endorsed by all Commonwealth, state and territory governments in February 2019 to provide a nationally consistent approach, however are yet to be implemented in every jurisdiction.

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations are:

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
9. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

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Mercy Health also comply with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) which provide a framework for Catholic organisations to foster a culture of safety and care for children and vulnerable adults. The NCSS are closely aligned with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

Child Safe Standards (Victoria)

On 1 January 2016 Victoria introduced compulsory minimum standards that apply to organisations who provide services for children to help protect children from all forms of abuse for Mercy Health this predominantly applies to Health Services. The Child Safe Standards (Standards) form part of the Victorian Government's response to the recommendations arising from the "Betrayal of Trust Inquiry", the report of which was tabled in Parliament on 13 November, 2013 and services within Victoria are legally required to comply.

Child Safety in compliance with the Child Safe Standards will promote -

- the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- the safety of children with a disability.

Child Safe Standards:

- Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements
- Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety
- Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
- Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

Persons engaged in activities with children at Mercy Hospitals Victoria Ltd and Mercy Palliative Care are required to comply with the Code of Conduct with Children.

Child Wellbeing and Child Protection (NSW Health)

Health Services within NSW are required to comply with the relevant NSW acts and Child Wellbeing and Child Protection Policies and procedures as directed by NSW Health.

The policy responsibilities for health workers are to:

- Recognise and respond appropriately to the vulnerabilities, risks and needs of families, children and young people when providing any health service;
- Collaborate across NSW Health services and with interagency partners to support and strengthen families and promote child health, safety, welfare and wellbeing;
- Use the Mandatory Reporter Guide and seek assistance from the NSW Health Child Wellbeing Unit to help identify children or young people at suspected risk of significant harm (ROSH);
- Seek assistance from the NSW Health Child Wellbeing Unit and the Family Referral Services to help respond to vulnerable families, children and young people below the ROSH threshold
- Actively seek feedback from Community Services after making a child protection report and continue to support the child, young person or family consistent with the health worker's roles and responsibilities;
- Follow the Child Wellbeing and Child Protection - NSW Interagency Guidelines and other agreed interagency procedures when working with children, young people and families, including in relation to information exchange, High Risk Birth Alerts, Prenatal Reporting, escalation of child protection concerns, assumption of care by Community Services and out of home care health assessments;

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- Collaborate in joint investigation and response to matters involving alleged child sexual assault or serious child abuse or neglect leading to criminal proceedings; and
- Participate in mandatory and / or other child protection training for NSW Health workers.

Compliance

Implementation and monitoring of the Child Safe Standards will occur through the Equity and Inclusion Committee through the organisation's Safeguarding Coordinator.

Link with Organisational Values

Stewardship

- *In articulating a common approach to practice, this policy creates a context of **stewardship** through holding people accountable for the highest standards of performance.*
- *In supporting our staff to lead and make decisions whilst holding in trust the resources and tradition in their care, this policy holds **stewardship** as an important value in fulfilling our mission and in serving*

Definitions

Term	Definition
Child	A person who is under 18 years of age
Child Abuse	For the purposes of these Standards, child abuse constitutes any act committed against a child involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical violence• Sexual offences• Serious emotional or psychological abuse• Serious neglect
Child Safety	In the context of the Standards, child safety means measures to protect children from abuse.
Child Safe Organisation	In the context of the Standards, a child safe organisation is one that meets the Standards by proactively taking measures to protect children from abuse.

Links to Related Mercy Health Documents

- [Code of Conduct Policy](#)
- [Code of Conduct with Children Policy](#)
- [Vulnerable Children and Child Protection Policy](#)
- [Vulnerable Children and Child Protection Procedure](#)
- [Protection of Children Policy](#)
- [Protection of Children Procedure](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Policy](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Procedure](#)
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Key Legislation, Acts, Standards & References Relevant to Child Safe Standards

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	Jurisdiction
Betrayal of Trust Report of the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations 2013	All
National Principles for Child Safe Organisations	All
National Catholic Safeguarding Standards	All
Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)	NSW
Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)	NSW
Crimes Act 1900 (NSW)	NSW
Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)	NSW
Ombudsman Act 1974 (NSW)	NSW
Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld)	QLD
Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Qld)	QLD
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)	VIC
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)	VIC
Child Safe Standards, DHHS 2015	VIC
Commission for Children and Young People, Victoria http://www.cryp.vic.gov.au/	VIC
Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)	VIC
Healthcare that counts: A framework for improving care for vulnerable children in Victorian health services. DHHS, March 2017.	VIC
Criminal Code Act Compilation Act 1913 (WA)	WA
Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004 (WA)	WA

Keywords

- Child
- Child Safety
- Child Safe Organisations
- Child Safe Standards

Version History & Author / Contributors

V.	Date Created (MM/YYYY format)	Section(s) Changed (eg policy/definitions/references)	Created/Amended by (position title)
1	July 2017	New	Social Work Manager
2	October 2020	Updated to include content on National Standards and to make the content applicable across the whole organisation	Safeguarding Coordinator