

Child Protection Policy



Study Buddy

Purpose of our Child Protection Policy

Study Buddy is an educational program providing services to children and young people of all ages.

Our program provides religious, educational and social services to the Jewish community in Victoria.

We take seriously our responsibility to deliver services in an environment that is caring, nurturing and safe. Our senior management is committed to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect.

It is the responsibility of all our personnel, from Executive to staff and volunteers, to understand the important responsibility they have to:

- protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying and exploitation by our personnel;
- be alert to incidents of child abuse and neglect occurring outside the scope of our operations and services that may have an impact on the children and young people to whom we provide a service;
- engage in rigorous recording and reporting of child abuse and exploitation; and
- create and maintain a child safe culture that is understood, endorsed and put into action by all the individuals who work for, volunteer or access our programs and services.

Child Protection Policy Framework Summary

The Child Protection Policy has been adopted by our senior management. It is our statement of commitment to a set of principles and procedural benchmarks that underpin our policies and procedures in relation to the protection of children and young people.

Who is covered by our Child Protection Policy?

Our Child Protection Policy covers all our involved personnel.

Definitions used in this policy

Term	Definition
Child or young person	A person under the age of eighteen years
Parent	All those who have parent equivalent responsibilities for a child or young person including guardians, grandparents or other relatives, foster parents or other authorised carers
Involved Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All paid employees and formal volunteers with direct contact with children or young people, their supervisors and managers; • All Spiritual Leaders, executive and senior managers with responsibility for delivering services to children or young people; • All permanent contractors working directly where children and young people are present; • Anyone involved in dealing with reports or allegations of child abuse or with access to children's or young people's records; and
Personnel	Includes those whom we employ directly, those we employ indirectly through other groups or organisations, and all those who are involved as volunteers
Direct Contact	A direct contact role is one that has contact with children and young people that is not incidental, but normally part of providing a service, program or activity for children and young people. This direct delivery may require regular physical contact and forms of ongoing communication.
Code of Conduct	Our Code of Conduct assists in identifying and preventing behaviour that may be harmful to the children and young people. They describe what is, and what is not, acceptable behaviour or practice when working with or engaging with children and young people.
Emotional or psychological abuse	Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when a child does not receive the love, affection or attention they need for healthy emotional, psychological and social development. Such abuse may involve repeated rejection or threats to a child. Constant criticism, teasing, ignoring, threatening, yelling, scapegoating, ridicule and rejection or continual coldness are all examples of emotional abuse. These behaviors continue to an extent that results in significant damage to the child's physical, intellectual or emotional wellbeing and development.
Physical abuse	Physical abuse occurs when a person subjects a child to non-accidental physically aggressive acts. The abuser may inflict an injury intentionally or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a child. Physically abusive behavior includes (but is not limited to) shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning and kicking. It also includes giving children harmful substances such as drugs, alcohol or poison. Certain types of punishment, whilst not causing injury can also be considered physical abuse if they place a child at risk of being hurt
Sexual abuse	Sexual abuse occurs when an adult or someone bigger or older involves a child in any sexual activity. Perpetrators of sexual abuse take advantage of their power, authority or position over the child or young person for their own benefit. It can include making sexual comments to a child, engaging children to participate in sexual conversations over the internet or on social media, kissing, touching a child's genitals or breasts, oral sex or intercourse with a child. Encouraging a child to view pornographic magazines, websites and videos is also sexual abuse. Engaging children to participate in sexual conversations over the internet is also considered sexual abuse.

Neglect	Neglect is the persistent failure or deliberate denial to provide the child with the basic necessities of life. Such neglect includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, adequate supervision, clean water, medical attention or supervision to the extent that the child's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed. Categories of neglect include physical neglect, medical neglect, abandonment or desertion, emotional neglect and educational neglect. The issue of neglect must be considered within the context of resources reasonably available to the family.
Family Violence	Family violence occurs when children are forced to live with violence between adults in their home. It is harmful to children. It can include witnessing violence or the consequences of violence. Family violence is defined as violence between members of a family or extended family or those fulfilling the role of family in a child or young person's life. Exposure to family violence places children and young people at increased risk of physical injury and harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.
Sexual exploitation	Sexual exploitation occurs when children are forced into sexual activities that are then recorded in some way and/or used to produce pornography. Such pornography can be in the form of actual photos or videos or published on the internet. Exploitation can also involve children who are forced into prostitution.
Harm	Harm, to a child, is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; or • sexual abuse or exploitation. • a single act, omission or circumstance; or • a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.
Grooming	Grooming is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a child with a view to abusing them at some stage. There is no set pattern in relation to the grooming of children. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period of time before the abuse begins. The child may be given special attention and, what starts as an apparently normal display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation and then into more serious sexual behaviour. Other perpetrators may draw a child in and abuse them relatively quickly. Some abusers do not groom children but abuse them without forming a relationship at all. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sports and religious activities, or in internet chatrooms, in social media or by SMS.
Bullying	Bullying involves the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another less powerful person or group and is generally an act that is repeated over time. Bullying has been described by researchers as taking many forms which are often interrelated and include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Verbal</i> (name calling, put downs, threats) • <i>Physical</i> (hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting) • <i>Social</i> (ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating) • <i>Psychological</i> (spreading rumours, stalking, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions).

Who is responsible for implementing our Child Protection Policy?

Our senior management is responsible for the development and endorsement of our Child Protection Policy. It delegates the implementation of the policy to the relevant management bodies. The role of each entity in relation to the development and compliance of our Child Protection Policy is detailed in the table below.

Entity	Role/Responsibility
Board of Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and communicate our commitment to this policy and the importance of meeting standards and statutory requirements. • Support policy review on an annual cycle as a minimum or at a time governed by legislation, regulations or organisational learnings that prioritise a change to the policy. • Ensure compliance to the policy via inbuilt review and monitoring mechanisms. • Ensure adequate resources area allocated to allow for development and effective implementation of the policy. • Develop opportunities for regular discussion at all levels to support a culture of openness and continued improvement and accountability to child protection. • Advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young people in support of this policy
Operational management team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all involved personnel understand their obligations in accordance with the Child Protection policy and procedure. • Ensure the Child protection policy is implemented and adhered to • Ensure the development and implementation of required internal policy/work procedures and guidelines are in place to support child protection practice • Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow effective implementation • Proactively share resources and experience in the development of child safe initiatives as they are identified. • Develop opportunities for regular discussion at all levels to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability of child protection. • Advocate and Promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young people in support of this Policy • Have management representative for safeguarding to ensure processes are established, implemented and maintained, reporting to management on performance and promoting awareness throughout the organisation.

What is our commitment to protecting children and young people?

We endorse and support the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (ratified in Australia in 1990). The Convention recognises that children under the age of 18 years need special care and protection.

In recognition of our support for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we make the following commitments to the children, young people and families who access our activities, programs, services and facilities.

Our commitment to children and young people

- We are committed to the safety and well-being of all children and young people who access any of our activities, programs, services or facilities.
- We are committed to providing children with positive and nurturing experiences.
- We will support families and communities to promote children's healthy development and well-being.
- We will take action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse, family violence and neglect.
- We will take action to ensure that children are not exploited, abused or harmed during the time that they are involved with any of our activities, programs, services or facilities
- We will listen to children and address any concerns that they raise with us.

Our commitment to parents and carers

- We are committed to supporting parents and carers to protect their children.
- We will offer assistance that builds on a family's strengths, is sensitive to their cultural and religious beliefs and empowers them to meet the changing needs of their children.
- We are committed to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children.
- We aim to be transparent in our decision-making with parents and carers in relation to their children as long as doing so does not compromise the safety of children or young people.
- We will seek to involve parents whenever possible and practicable in the decision-making process that impacts on them and the Children.
- We will provide opportunities for formal debriefing and/or counselling families of Children who have experienced abuse and any other family in the community who may indirectly be affected by an incident.

In order to fulfill our obligations to the protection of children and young people, we make the following commitments to our personnel.

Our commitment to our personnel

- We are committed to providing our personnel with the necessary support to enable them to fulfill their roles.
- We will put in place a management structure that supports and develops staff in their roles.
- We are committed to providing our personnel with regular supervision and development.
- We will work to ensure that our personnel have access to a senior person to make decisions in relation to any action required to protect children from abuse, bullying and exploitation.
- We will work to ensure that there are safeguards in place to protect People from violence or any kind of harassment in their work place.

Our commitment to ensuring a child safe organisation

- We are committed to using best practice standards in the recruitment, screening and employment of People.
- We will work to create an environment in which children are safe and feel safe.

- We will work to ensure that our personnel do not harm, abuse or exploit children and young people who are involved with our programs, services or facilities.

What are the requirements of our personnel in relation to protecting children?

The following are requirements of this policy which are expected to be included in our policies, code of conduct and operational procedures developed and implemented by our organisation.

We expect our personnel to understand children's rights.

An understanding of children's rights is an important basis for all the programs and services that we offer to children and families. It enables us to identify when children's needs and entitlements are compromised and when they require support. We expect our personnel to have a working knowledge of children's rights appropriate to their role and use it to inform decisions about how to behave and act with and on behalf of children and young people.

We expect our personnel to understand and acknowledge the significance of family relationships for children.

Children's experiences of their family are foundational for their development. Families can act as supportive resources for growth and resilience in children. Family relationships can also restrain and harm children's social, physical, cognitive and emotional functioning. Families are the single most significant influence in shaping the way children develop and perceive their sense of identity. We expect our personnel to recognise, respect and work to increase the awareness of parents/carers and other family members to care and protect their children.

We expect our personnel to promote and distribute information about this policy to children, young people and parents/carers as part of an introduction pack to be given out when they first begin to access any of our services. The information will be made available in developmentally appropriate language and translated to accommodate the main communities that access our services.

We expect our personnel to respect the cultural and religious practices of families who come to our services.

However, no cultural or religious belief will take precedence over the right of children to protection from harm.

We expect our personnel to understand and respond to the special needs of children with developmental delays or disabilities.

We acknowledge that children with developmental delays or disabilities have special needs. We expect our personnel to act in ways that communicate effectively with and are supportive of children with developmental delays or disabilities. We also understand that we will need to be proactive in recognising the additional vulnerability to exploitation and harm that children with developmental delays or disabilities experience.

We expect our personnel to be respectful of children and young people.

As part of our commitment to children and young people, we will facilitate opportunities for children and young people to tell us their views and feedback about the services we provide to them. We will treat children as individuals and respect their unique abilities and vulnerabilities. We expect our personnel to express attitudes and engage in behaviour that respect and support children and young people.

We expect our personnel to act on any concerns raised by children, young people and/or their parents/carers.

We will take seriously any concerns or issues raised by children, young people and/or their parents. We will investigate all complaints or allegations made against any of our personnel. We will ensure that we report any crimes against children, young people or other family members to the Police in accordance with our policies and operational procedures. We expect our personnel to follow our complaints procedure without hesitation in response to concerns raised by children, young people and/or their parents.

We expect our personnel to understand the definitions, indicators and impact of child abuse, bullying and exploitation.

Experiences of abuse, family violence, neglect bullying and exploitation are significant sources of trauma for children and intensify the risk of children and young people developing a range of emotional, psychological, social and behavioural problems. Child physical abuse and sexual abuse is a crime. Intervention which identifies and prevents abuse from occurring is instrumental in supporting children and families. When abuse has occurred, it is imperative that action is taken to protect children from further experiences of abuse again. We expect our personnel to know how to define child abuse, be aware of its indicators and understand its consequences. The more informed we are, the more effective we will be in our efforts to protect children from all forms of harm and exploitation.

We expect our personnel to know and follow regulations in relation to the care of children.

There are number of regulations governing the provision of child care. These regulations define our minimum responsibilities and obligations towards children and families. We expect all our personnel to know and follow these regulations. It is the responsibility of the managers of our child care services to ensure that the regulations are adhered to by all People under their supervision.

We expect our personnel to know and follow the law in relation to reporting child abuse.

We expect our personnel to know and follow relevant laws in their state jurisdiction to report child abuse, family violence, neglect exploitation. Notwithstanding our obligations under the law, we expect our personnel to consult with a senior person in the organisation to ensure that appropriate action is taken to respond to concerns about the wellbeing or safety of a child or young person.

We expect our personnel to co-operate with police and/or other formal investigations.

In every circumstance, we expect our personnel to co-operate to the best of their ability with any formal investigation undertaken by the police or other authorised body in relation to the care and protection of children and young people.

We expect our personnel to use the accredited policies and operational procedures defined at the local level whenever they have a concern that a child may be experiencing abuse, family violence or neglect.

This policy has been designed to facilitate decision making in relation to the protection of children and young people. At all times, we expect our personnel to have a comprehensive understanding of the contents of this policy and abide by them whenever they have concerns about the possibility that a child or young person has experienced or may be at risk of experiencing abuse, family violence or neglect.

We expect our personnel to always follow our Code of Conduct.

We have a Code of Conduct that set out rules for behaviour with and around children. Our personnel will be asked to personally endorse the Code of Conduct and ensure that they adhere to it when they are at work and away from work. It aims to ensure that our personnel are always safe adults who act protectively of children and young people.

We expect our personnel not to harm or exploit children who access our services.

It is a serious breach of this policy if any of our personnel harms or exploits children and young people who are involved in any of our services.

We expect our personnel not to contravene any policies, regulations or laws in relation to the safety and protection of children and young people.

It is a serious breach of this policy if any of our personnel contravenes any regulations or laws in relation to the safety and protection of children whether or not they are working, volunteering or in our activities, services or programs at the time

We expect that our personnel will support children, young people and their families as directed by senior people in our organisation in the event that a child or young person is abused, bullied or exploited by any of our personnel.

We recognise that the impact of abuse, bullying or exploitation on children and young people is traumatic. It is even more complex when the perpetrator of the abuse or exploitation is one our personnel. In these situations, we will provide opportunities for formal debriefing and/or counselling to the children, young people and their families who have experienced the abuse, bullying or exploitation and any other child, young person and family in the community who may indirectly be affected by the incident (s).

It is a requirement of our Child Protection Policy that we follow and adhere to our Reporting Process with respect to any breaches of this policy.

What support will we provide our personnel?

We will ensure that our personnel receive training about this policy.

On an annual basis, we will ensure that all of our personnel are provided with a minimum of one compulsory training opportunity to understand and recommit to this policy. The policy will also form part of the induction of our personnel.

We will ensure that our personnel are clear about what is expected of them in relation to children's welfare and safety.

We will provide regular opportunities to clarify and confirm the procedures for staff to apply when taking action in relation to children's welfare and safety. This will include a discussion of this policy as a standing item for regular meetings at all levels of our organisation. Our senior management will publish an annual report to all our personnel about the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy.

We will ensure that our personnel are aware of our formal recruitment, screening and employment practices in relation to individuals with specific roles in working or volunteering with children and families.

All our personnel will be informed during their recruitment that their employment or volunteer will be subject to clearance under the Working with Children Check system and a national Criminal Records Check. It is a serious breach of this policy if an individual, who has convictions that would make him/her ineligible to be granted a Working with Children Check (or equivalent) clearance, gains employment or is allowed to volunteer with children or young people who access our services. It is also a serious breach of this policy, if an individual continues in his/her employment or volunteer role with us if he/she has been charged or convicted of a crime that would make him/her ineligible to be granted a Working with Children Check (or equivalent) clearance.

We will provide our personnel with guidance and supervision in relation to their role with children, young people and families.

We recognise that caring for and working with children, young people and their families can be complex and challenging. As such, we will provide regular supervision for all our personnel in relation to their specific roles with children, young people and families.

We will jointly make decisions about initiating action to protect children and young people from abuse, neglect or exploitation.

The decision to initiate any form of action to protect children from abuse, neglect or exploitation will be made in conjunction with a senior member of our organisation as defined in local policies and operational procedures.

We will provide opportunities for our personnel to receive debriefing in the event that it is required.

We recognise that responding to children and young people who are at risk of or have experienced abuse, neglect and family violence can be stressful. It is even more complex when the perpetrator of the abuse or exploitation is another staff member or volunteer. In these situations, we will provide opportunities for formal debriefing and/or counselling to our personnel as required.