

Policy 23: Child Safety Policy and Procedure

Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to

- prevent and respond to abuse of children and young people under the age of 18
- ensure safety of all children and young people across the range of services and activities of ACU on and/or off site
- create a culture and environment that is supportive and protective of children and young people under the age of 18, Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse background and with a disability

Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all staff and students of ACU. ACU College has adapted this policy from ACU's overarching policy to meet the needs of its staff, visitors, contractors and workplace supervisors.

Definitions

1. **'Child / Children'** is a person or persons under the age of 18
2. **'Child abuse and/or neglect'** can generally be defined as occurring when a child has been, is being, or is likely to be subjected to physical, emotional or sexual actions or inactions which have resulted in, or are likely to result in, harm or injury to the child. This definition is a generalisation of the definitions at law. Jurisdictionally applicable definitions can be obtained from the relevant legislation in each state and territory.
3. **'Concerning behaviour'** is the actions or inactions of a person that cause or are perceived to cause or could potentially cause harm (defined below) to a child or vulnerable adult.
4. **'Harm'** is defined as the detrimental impact on the physical, psychological, emotional or social safety, wellbeing and development of a child or vulnerable adult.

Policy

1. **Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements**
 - 1.1 ACU has a Student Welfare and Support Coordinator and Course Coordinators who work in consultation with the relevant Student Support Services (Policy 17: Student Services and Welfare Policy and Procedure) to deal with safety and cultural safety for Aboriginal children and young people under the age of 18, cultural safety for culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and young people under the age of 18 and the safety of children and young people under the age of 18 with a disability.
 - 1.2 The Director and the leadership team of ACU, in staff meetings and induction, reinforce the culture of Child Safe Standards through promotion of the Standards and promoting a culture where the safety of children and young people under the age of 18 is everyone's responsibility.
2. **A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety**
 - 2.1 ACU is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and vulnerable adults who interact with University Members. ACU does not tolerate any behaviour which is inconsistent with this commitment by any University Member or member of the public on an ACU site.
 - 2.2 ACU has zero tolerance of child abuse in all environments.
 - 2.3 This Policy is communicated to all new University Members through induction and orientation processes (as applicable) and to existing University Members through Learning Environment Online (LEO).
 - 2.4 ACU is committed to providing opportunities for all University Members to participate in education, training and awareness raising activities relevant to protecting children.
3. **A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children**
 - 3.1 Conduct interactions in the presence of other adults:
 - a. To help children feel safe, avoid being alone with children. Ensure that another adult is present, or close by and able to observe interactions when providing one-on-one services to children.
 - b. Do not transport unaccompanied children unless parental consent is provided.

3.2 Avoid unnecessary physical contact:

- a. Do not initiate, encourage or accommodate unnecessary physical contact unless it can be explained in terms of the appropriate activity and needs of the child.
- b. Deal sensitively with inappropriate physical contact and report it to a supervisor.

3.3 Behave professionally at all times:

- a. Only make contact in an official capacity and as part of duties.
- b. Avoid discussing personal details.
- c. Be a positive role model. Do not show favouritism and treat all children equitably and respectfully.

3.4 Use technology appropriately:

- a. Ensure that photographing, audio recording or filming via any medium is authorised in writing by the parent or guardian and is used solely for the purposes for which they have been authorised.
- b. Ensure that there is no identifying personal information in photographs or film footage of children e.g. name tags and avoid images of children in minimal clothing, e.g. swimwear.
- c. Do not provide personal contact details and always use ACU email and telephone for communication.
- d. Do not “friend” or “connect” via social media unless for purposes related to the work and with the consent of the parent or guardian.
- e. Be aware of issues associated with online safety.

3.5 Listen and act:

- a. If a child raises a concern, ask open questions, listen patiently, be compassionate and reassure them and then take appropriate action to address the concern.
- b. If a child reports concerning behaviour which has occurred at ACU or elsewhere, take action to report the behaviour.

3.6 Seek parental consent and assent from the child (where appropriate):

- a. Seek consent from a parent or guardian of a child where prudent to do so.

4. Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel

- 4.1 All ACU staff and selected through structured Interviews, reference checks and Working with Children Checks (where necessary) are undertaken for staff and volunteers.
- 4.2 It is a condition of the employment that all trainers and assessors who are in direct contact with children and young people under the age of 18 have a valid Working with Children Check card and a Police Clearance Certificate at all times in the staff file.
- 4.3 All staff and volunteers are inducted and trained in safety for children and young people under the age of 18. Staff handbook with information on Working with children Act 2005 is provided to all new staff and to the existing staff through LEO.
- 4.4 All fixed-term and continuing staff are required to complete an online module about protecting children and vulnerable adults as part of their induction, and existing fixed-term and continuing staff will also be required to complete the online module.
- 4.5 All other University Members (i.e. not covered by 4.4) engaged in activities involving children or vulnerable adults may be required to complete an online module about protecting children and vulnerable adults if required.

5. Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

5.1 Responding to an emergency: If a child is at immediate risk of harm the staff/unit must ensure their safety by:

- a. separating alleged victims and others involved
- b. administering first aid
- c. calling 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns

- d. identifying the contact person at ACU (Student Welfare and Support Coordinator or the Security) for future liaison with Police
- e. Where necessary the staff may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

5.2 Reporting to authorities:

- a. As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed the staff/unit must report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.
- b. If the source of suspected abuse is from within ACU, it should be reported to Victoria Police.
- c. All incidents must also be reported internally via Critical Incident Report Form in accordance with Policy 14 Critical Incident Management Policy and Procedure.

5.3 Contacting parents/carers:

- a. The relevant unit/staff member must consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers.
- b. On their advice unit/staff may not contact the parents/carers (e.g. the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parents/carers to be contacted) and may contact the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion).

5.4 Providing ongoing support:

- a. ACU will provide support for children impacted by abuse. This will include the development of a Student Support Plan developed in consultation with Student Wellbeing professional and/or Counselling staff from the relevant unit.
- b. ACU will continue to monitor the support services provided and actively engage with the affected parties to seek if any further support is required.

6. Strategies to identify and reduce or remove the risk of abuse

- 6.1 ACU has risk management policy and procedure (Policy 22) and critical incident management policy (Policy 14) that include a comprehensive plan of how the risks and critical incidents are identified, reported and managed at ACU.
- 6.2 The objective of risk management within the context of protecting children and vulnerable adults is to remove or minimise potential risks to the safety and wellbeing of children and/or vulnerable adults involved in activities with University Members and/or on ACU sites.
- 6.3 The risk management policies and approaches are constantly updated to reflect the needs of the present time.

7. Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

- 7.1 All relevant policies including reporting procedures (Policy 3 Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure) are accessible on our Learning Management System (LEO) by all children.
- 7.2 ACU ensures that all children and young people under the age of 18 feel safe, empowered and taken seriously if they raise concerns by having a dedicated staff (student welfare and support coordinator) available and attend to the concerns as soon as practicable.
- 7.3 Students are encouraged to actively participate in any feedback mechanism implemented by ACU.
- 7.4 Every possible measure is taken to promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and young people under the age of 18, the cultural safety of culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and young people under the age of 18 and the safety of children and young people under the age of 18 with a disability.

Other Relevant Policies

- 1. Policy 1 Access and Equity Policy and Procedure
- 2. Policy 2 Privacy Policy and Procedure
- 3. Policy 3 Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure

- 4. Policy 11 Code of Conduct and Discipline Policy and Procedure
- 5. Policy 14 Critical Incident Management Policy and Procedure
- 6. Policy 16 Staff Recruitment and Appraisal Policy and Procedures
- 7. Policy 17 Student Services and Welfare Policy and Procedure
- 8. Policy 22 Risk Management Policy and Procedure

Version History	Detail of update
Version 1.2	Rebranded to ACU College