



# CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT

## Aim

The Little Village is committed to providing the highest quality care for all villagers, in particular children, whom look to their carers for comfort, security and above all for safety. Our service has put procedures in place to prevent and also secure the safety and comfort of each child, family member, visitor and all employee.

We create a safe environment by looking at every detail of our daily routine and procedures as well as our daily planning and hiring of employees. All policies pertaining to our service have been carefully considered to ensure an environment that is not only comfortable and conducive to learning, but also to create a secure place for children to nest.

## National Quality Standard

This policy links to the following NQS: National Quality Standards 2.1.2, 2.1.4, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 3.1.2, 4.1.1

## Links to other policies

- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy
- Arrival and Departure Policy
- Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisation Policy
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- Behaviour Guidance Policy
- Excursion and Incursion Policy

## Sources

- SIDS & kids [www.sidsandkids.org](http://www.sidsandkids.org)
- National Childcare Accreditation Council [www.ncac.gov.au](http://www.ncac.gov.au)



## Strategy

### SELECTION AND SCREENING

Prior to commencing employment or volunteer services, the following precautions will be taken:

- All employees and/or volunteers must complete an application form which requests details of relevant past experience, positions held, details of two referees and permission to contact them
- Both referees will be checked and spoken to, using an agreed set of questions which have been drafted by The Little Village
- The questions will seek to establish the applicant's suitability for the role or position and the conversation will be documented and retained on file.
- All short-listed candidates must undertake a formal interview, which includes an analysis of past experience working with children, the elderly or vulnerable people
- A Working With Children's Check (WWCC) which complies with the legislative requirements of NSW will be requested and received prior to the Employee or Volunteer commencing their proposed role. The check must show that the individual is not precluded from working in childcare or aged care.
- Where The Little Village has identified that an applicant has previously committed a violent or sexually related offence, they cannot, under any circumstances, be considered for employment or engagement with The Little Village.

### TRAINING

All Staff Villagers, Students and Volunteers will be issued with a copy of this policy and receive formal training in;

- The content of the The Little Village [Child Safe Environment Policy](#)
- How to recognise signs and symptoms of children who may be at risk of harm
- Staff Villagers, Students and Volunteers are kept informed of changes in relevant legislations
- Reporting procedures and the associated legal requirements.

### EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION

- Incidents of Abuse are unlikely to take place in front of another person and the presence of a witness can assist in clarifying questionable allegations. For these reasons, working in pairs is the preferred method within The Little Village.

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- Two or more employees and/or volunteers will be present whenever an individual child or vulnerable person is being supervised or cared for.
- Where this is not possible, it should be done in a room which can be observed easily by others. All rooms have been designed with glazing to allow transparency of care. At no time will children be alone with a carer or an employee
- Inexperienced staff/volunteers will always work with a more experienced Village Staff when caring for a child.
- When transporting children in exceptional circumstances, staff will avoid being alone in the car with a child. Where this is not practical, they should specifically confirm that they will take children directly to and from arranged venues and not to spontaneously detour or make additional arrangements and only with specific consent from both the parent/legal guardian and the Nominated Supervisor.
- Actively supervising children at all times/ensuring children are safe and comfortable.

#### PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- Adults and Children are expected to respect each other's privacy during times that require undressing, dressing or changing clothes. Workers will set an example by protecting their own privacy in similar situations, according to our [Privacy and Confidentiality Policy](#).
- All aspects of every program related to children will be open to observation by family, friends or guardians of that child.

#### ACCESS TO CHILDREN

- Workers have the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at TLV to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave the premises.
- Protecting the rights and interest of children at the TLV by involving families in the review of this policy and in any decision-making pertaining to the protection of their children.
- Where TLV has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact will not occur while the child is on the premises
- Ensure there are appropriate procedures in place for the safe delivery and collection of children ([Arrival and Departure Policy](#)).



## INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

- Staff Villagers, Students and Volunteers will respect a children's feelings and privacy when engaging in physical contact of any kind.
- Educate and empower children to talk about events and situations that make them feel uncomfortable ([Interactions with Children Policy](#))

## CONNECTIONS WITH COMMUNITY

- Cooperate with other services and/or professionals in the best interests of children and their families
- Ensure that families are made aware of support services available to them, and the assistance these services can provide
- Notify ACECQA, in writing, within 24 hours of becoming aware of a notifiable complaint or allegation regarding the health, safety and/or welfare of a child at The Little Village.

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Maintain learning environments that provide sufficient space, and include carefully chosen and well-maintained resources and equipment to ensure a safe environment
- Maintain a regular cleaning schedule for all equipment to avoid cross-infection ([Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy](#))
- Maintain a clean environment daily, and removing tripping/slipping hazards as soon as these become apparent ([Occupational Health and Safety Policy](#))
- Conducting a daily check of the building, ensuring all children are signed out of the Centre, doors and windows are closed and locked, and appliances are switched off etc. A written record of the daily check should be kept, signed by an educator and filed for future reference
- Ensure the physical environment at The Little Village is safe, secure and free from hazards for children
- Conduct risk assessments for excursions and considering children's safety when leaving the Centre premises ([Excursion and Incursion Policy](#))
- Ensure all equipment and materials used at the Centre meet relevant safety standards
- Ensure the Centre is up to date with current legislation on child restraints in vehicles if transporting children ([Occupational Health and Safety Policy](#))
- Implement and practise emergency and evacuation procedures ([Emergency and Evacuation Policy](#))

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## DISCIPLINING OF CHILDREN

- Is not the responsibility of The Little Village or staff villagers to discipline a Child. If a Child does not exhibit acceptable forms of behaviour, we will guide their behaviours referring to the Behaviour Guidance Policy.
- If the child becomes a danger to themselves or others, Staff Villagers may remove the child from direct contact and refer back to their parent/legal guardian.
- At no time will TLV staff member verbally or physically discipline a child.

## REPORTING PROCEDURES

- The Little Village actively encourages the reporting of all reasonable suspicions of possible abuse, neglect or general concern about the wellbeing of a child.
- We are also committed to building an environment where either a victim or employee/volunteer feels able to report such abuse.
- Employees and/or volunteers must report **reasonable suspicions** of abuse to the senior management, either the Nominated Supervisor or Director.
- Reasonable suspicion means fair and practical reason to believe an incident involving abuse has occurred based on either verbal communication, hearsay, rumour or observation of behaviour (see below for further information on reasonable grounds)
- If in doubt, the decision tree should be consulted. If found that no report is necessary, the result should be printed and kept in the child's file if further suspicion is gauged.
- An independent person will be appointed by The Little Village with the specific duty of dealing with any allegations of harm or abuse that may arise.
- The details of those reporting abuse will be kept private and confidential.
- A documented reporting process with escalating procedures has been established by The Little Village for handling allegations of abuse.
- The escalating procedures will be as follows:
  - a) The automatic suspension from all work or other duties within The Little Village of any person while under investigation or by the police, for committing abuse
  - b) The automatic termination of their employment, or involvement with The Little Village if found guilty of committing abuse, either by internal investigation or by a court.



- If there is sufficient evidence that a villager has been or is suffering abuse, (even if it is outside TLV) the Police, ACECQA and The Little Village’s Insurer will be contacted immediately (within 24 hours of notification).
  - The phone number for the Police is: **02 4721 9444**.
  - The phone number for The Little Village is: **02 47368384**
  - Guild Insurance **1800 810 213**
  - Online ACECQA notification via NQAITS or inform authorised supervisor to complete online notification within 24 hours  
<https://public.nqaits.acecqa.gov.au/Pages/Landing.aspx>
  - Email the authorised provider: [admin@thelittlevillage.com.au](mailto:admin@thelittlevillage.com.au)
- If a disclosure of abuse is made (with reasonable grounds of suspicion) the person who receives the disclosure will maintain appropriate pastoral care to the one making the disclosure (the notifier). This will include:
  - Treating each allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim. The matter should not be swept under the carpet.
  - Not pushing the notifier to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempting to investigate the allegation.
  - Reiterating that what has happened is not their fault, and that they are correct in disclosing the incident.
- No contact will be made with the person whom the accusation is made. They cannot be notified of the accusation, but if the risk of harm is imminent, that action should be taken to remove the child from the care of the accused. This must be done by the police.
- Staff Villagers are responsible for keeping documentation or physical evidence of the notification of abuse, or the abuse itself. Photographic evidence, jottings, observations may be used to persecute the accused.
- As with TLV policy, any disclosures by staff, reports of suspected abuse and all details of the subsequent investigation will be documented promptly and documents will be held in a secure location where a breach of privacy cannot occur (Confidentiality of Policy)
- Providing support for TLV is committed to providing support for the child at risk of harm, to their guardians and any villager privy to the incident. Providing the links for the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of the child and relevant persons.



## COLLECTING INFORMATION

ACTION	DETAILS
Make notes	Record your observations, and date and sign the entries
Continue to observe	Record your observations, and date and sign the entries
Consult colleagues	Access support and advice from your colleagues, compare notes and brainstorm possible strategies to address areas of concern
Develop action plans based on service procedures	Understand and consult the policies and procedures of <i>The Little Village</i> when determining what action to take
Talk to other agencies about helping the family	Collaborate with or engage community health services, local government services, Child FIRST, ACECQA/Childcare Directorate/Child Protection officers and disability services. You may wish to instigate a case meeting
Talk to the child	Do this with respect for the child or young person's need for privacy and confidentiality
Talk to the parents/guardians	Only do this when it will not jeopardise the safety of the child or young person

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

- The primary consideration and action should be in the best interest of the child, with due regard to confidentiality and fairness to the person against who the allegation is made.
- Children should be encouraged to approach any person in the Village to express their feelings and should be given the confidence that they will be heard
- Staff Villagers, volunteers and students must be clear and confident about who they are expected/permitted to approach when expressing concerns, or making a notification of serious abuse, neglect or general concern about the wellbeing of a child.
- Any investigation undertaken by TLV must ensure procedural fairness for a person suspected of abusing a child to ensure natural just course.
- Records must be kept about any child safety concern or complaint, and stored in accordance with TLV's Keeping of Records Policy. These records must contain information about the action taken, including any internal investigation and any reports made to statutory authorities or professional bodies.
- All stakeholders in TLV must be made aware of the need to report serious matters involving child protection to external authorities.
- Privacy must be maintained, and information must only be disclosed on a need-to-know basis, in accordance with the Privacy and Confidentiality Policy.

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- Permission is not required from parents/legal guardians of a child where abuse is suspected, and parents/guardians do not need to be notified that a report has been made.

#### REASONABLE GROUNDS

A person may form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection after becoming aware that the child's safety or wellbeing is at risk and the child's parents/guardians are unwilling or unable to protect them. There may be reasonable grounds for forming such a belief if:

- A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be referring to themselves) Someone who knows the child or young person states that the child or young person has been physically or sexually abused
- A child shows signs of being physically or sexually abused
- The person is aware of persistent family violence or parental substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability that is impacting on the child or young person's safety, stability or development
- The person observes signs or indicators of abuse, including non-accidental or unexplained injury, persistent neglect, poor care or lack of appropriate supervision
- A child's actions or behaviour may place them at risk of significant harm and the parents/guardians are unwilling or unable to protect the child.

#### SIGNS OR INDICATORS OF HARM

- Physical signs of abuse or neglect may include, but are not limited to, bruises, burns, sprains, bites, cuts, fractures, frequent hunger, malnutrition, poor hygiene and inappropriate clothing.
- Behavioural signs of abuse (physical, sexual and emotional) or neglect may include, but are not limited to, wariness or distrust of adults, fear of parents/guardians and of going home, fear when other children cry/shout, excessive friendliness to strangers, being very passive and/or compliant, having/claiming to have headaches and/or stomach pains, displaying sexual behaviour that is unusual for the child's age, frequent rocking, sucking and biting, having difficulty sleeping, being withdrawn, aggressive and/or demanding, being highly anxious, having delayed speech, acting like a much younger child, and often being tired and falling asleep.
- Disclosures by the child concerned, or by other parties.

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