



Child Safe Environment Policy

Philosophy Statement

Epic Holiday Camps are committed to creating a fun and safe environment for school-aged children to enjoy meaningful **real-world experiences** to remember forever. With a focus on **learning through play**, we offer exciting **age-matched activities** to support children in gaining confidence, developing their identity and enhancing their **health and wellbeing**. Organisational culture is important to us and we strive to build teams of motivated, fun and **engaging teachers** who children and families can **respect and trust**. Effective communication with children and their families underpins everything we do, ensuring we foster respectful relationships and **continually improve** our program delivery.

Policy Rationale

This policy provides a set of clear guidelines to strengthen safety for all children attending our programs. The policy has taken into account the Victorian Child Safe Standards in relation to supporting efforts to drive cultural change to protect children from abuse. This policy provides standards for:

- Creating safe environments in which children can participate in all aspects of programs and experiences in safety and comfort.
- Ensuring all staff members have adequate knowledge of risk identification, safety and emergency procedures for supervision and advocacy of children in our care.
- Ensuring all staff understand and comply with policies and procedures for reporting concerns of child safety as per legislations and regulations.

Policy Statement

Values

EPIC Holiday Camp has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that all children in our care are safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, families, staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torre Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and to provide safe environments for children with disability. EPIC Holiday Camp has committed to be a child safe organisation.

In actioning this commitment EPIC Holiday Camp have established robust policies designed for the safety of children. EPIC Holiday Camp regularly review and update these policies, and accompanying procedures and staff training.



In line with our stance against child abuse, EPIC Holiday Camp will treat all child abuse, allegations and/or child safety breach seriously. EPIC Holiday Camp staff and volunteers are aware of our expectations and consequences as outlined in our 'Supervision and Child Safe Environments' policies, procedures and training programs.

EPIC Holiday Camp supports the seven child safe standards and promotes these with staff, educators, families and children. These seven standards being:

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 resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.

Standard 5. Process 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.

Our children

This policy empowers children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say. We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and welcome people from all walks of life and cultural background.

In particular we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from CALD backgrounds.
- Ensure that children with disability are safe and can participate equally.

Our staff and volunteers

This policy informs our staff and volunteers of EPIC Holiday Camps' expectations in interacting and caring for children.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct clearly specifies the expected standards all EPIC Holiday Camp staff and volunteer must adhere to when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Code of Conduct. All



EPIC Holiday Camp staff members wear an easy to recognise EPIC Holiday Camp Uniform so all children can quickly and confidentially identify staff.

Training and supervision

EPIC Holiday Camp has a deep commitment to staff and volunteer training. We acknowledge training and education is a critical component to ensuring all staff and volunteers understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

The EPIC Holiday Camp culture encourages all staff, volunteers, parents, carers and most of all, children, to feel confident and comfortable to discuss any allegations of child abuse and/or child safety concerns. EPIC Holiday Camps' staff and volunteer training programs include the identification and appropriate responses, as well as risk mitigation strategies, of child abuse.

EPIC Holiday Camp support staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to:

- develop skills necessary for the protection of children in our care from abuse
- promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torre Strait Islander children; promote the cultural safety of children from CALD backgrounds; and the safety and inclusion of children with disability.

New employees and volunteers are supervised to ensure the EPIC Holiday Camps' commitments to the message of child safety being everyone's responsibility' is a lived commitment. Supervision of new staff and volunteers also allows monitoring of behaviours towards children and on-going learning to increase is safety and appropriate interactions (please refer to EPIC Holiday Camp's Code of Conduct). EPIC Holiday Camp's commitment means that any behaviour threatening the safety of children will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Victoria Police (VicPol), depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

EPIC Holiday Camp exercises all reasonable precautions in employing skilled professionals to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertise roles in a manner demonstrating our commitment to child safety and our ethical and legislative responsibilities as an organisation. EPIC Holiday Camp is very clear before and during the recruitment process that our staff and volunteers have ethical as well as legislative obligations to children. All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold and provide evidence of a current Working with Children Check. Please see the Working with Children Check website for further information. EPIC Holiday Camp reference checks all new staff to ensure the recruitment of safe and trustworthy team members. Where a criminal history is revealed during



the recruitment process, the applicant will be given an opportunity to provide further context and/or information.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is EPIC Holiday Camps' primary concern. We are also fair and just to staff and personnel. The decisions EPIC Holiday Camp make regarding recruiting, assessment of incidents and/or exercising disciplinary action, will always occur via transparent processes and will be based on evidence. EPIC Holiday Camp records all allegations of abuse and/or safety concerns via incident reporting forms.¹ This includes investigation updates and information necessary authorities and/or bodies. All records are securely and confidentially stored. Where allegation/s of abuse and/or safety concern/s are raised, EPIC Holiday Camp provides information and updates to families and children as appropriate on all progress and any actions EPIC Holiday Camp as an organisation exercises.

1 - See resource seven in this toolkit.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded respect privacy of all individuals, be they staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to a persons' safety. EPIC Holiday Camp have procedures and practices to ensure all personal information is protected and confidentially stored. EPIC Holiday Camp believes that everyone is entitled to know how information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it. EPIC Holiday Camp acts in a transparent and fair manner through all processes.

Legislative responsibilities

EPIC Holiday Camp takes prioritises our legal responsibilities and believe these to be of the utmost seriousness. These legislative commitments include:

- Failure to disclose: Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide 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.²
- 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.³
- Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.⁴



2 - A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed. Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website .

3 - Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website .

4 - Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about how to make a report to child protection .

Risk management

All Victorian organisations are required to protect children where risks are identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, EPIC Holiday Camp proactively manages risks of abuse to our children. EPIC Holiday Camp implement risk management strategies including the identification, assessment, appropriate response and immediate and ongoing risk mitigation strategies to minimise child abuse and risks. All risks to children are noted and managed. These include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child from our programs on social media).

Regular review

This policy is reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. EPIC Holiday Camp ensures that families and children have the opportunity to contribute to policy design. EPIC Holiday Camp is an inclusive organisation welcoming local Aboriginal communities, Culturally And Linguistically Diverse communities and people with a disability.

Allegations, Concerns & Complaints

EPIC Holiday Camp treats all allegations seriously and commits to thorough and swift investigation procedures. EPIC Holiday Camp staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations. We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers are familiar with procedures of action including reporting of all identified abuse or inappropriate behaviours. EPIC Holiday Camp believes everyone has a responsibility to report allegations of abuse where there is reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above). EPIC Holiday Camp acknowledges a response is required where:

A child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)



- Behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed⁵
- Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- Observing suspicious behaviour.

5 - For example behaviour, please see An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards:

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc#sthash.KZWOT6ZK.dpuf

Procedures

Educators actively supervise all children attending EPIC Holiday Camp programs. Educators ensure appropriate positioning both indoors and outdoors to ensure maximum supervision for children in our care. (S 165)

- Educators ensure that all children are made aware of program boundaries and program supervision procedures.
- Educators guide program experiences and implement daily routines to ensure children are supervised, supported and safe.
- EPIC Holiday Camp licensing staff assess the suitability of the physical environment prior to EPIC Holiday Camp commitment to any venue. Coordinators reassess the environment daily for risk of harm or hazard to children, when convening programs. The Resource Manager reassesses the environment at the conclusion of each holiday period and report back to Area Manager to ensure venues safe and well resourced.
- Educators complete a daily OH&S checklist during the program to ensure that hazards, risk and concerns are noted and appropriately addressed. Educators encourage children to be mindful of the program environment and the equipment. Educators assist in maintaining a space that is as safe as possible.
- Educators ensure that any other person/s visiting or present at the service support the achievement of an environment that is physically and emotionally secure for all children. Any persons not supporting a child safe environment is asked to leave.
- Educators maintain appropriate educator, child ratios. Person/s visiting the program during operating times are encouraged to make appointments to ensure these ratios are kept.
- Educators discuss expectations with children inform of behavioural expectations including being responsible, respecting their environment and other children and reporting any concerns they may have.
- Educators are especially vigilant when the environment includes water hazards. Rigorous risk assessments are completed prior to such activities. All Educators read and abide by said risk assessments.
- Where water activities are scheduled, Educators inform children of boundary areas and behavioral expectations prior to the commencement of activities. For their safety, children unable to listen or follow expectations immediately will be excluded from the activity.



- Educators provide current Working with Children Checks and relevant any other qualifications (Asthma, Anaphylaxis, First Aid, CPR) training to ascertain fitness and propriety of educators.
- EPIC Holiday Camp ensures that the nominated supervisor/ coordinator and all staff at the service who work with children are advised of any existing child protection orders.
- All staff are made aware of any court orders related to child protection though our software alert system, there will also be a hard copy of the court order readily available to all staff at relevant venues.
- EPIC Holiday Camp provides an environment that is free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol for all staff and children. All staff and volunteers at each service comply with and uphold the tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol free environment.
- EPIC Holiday Camp provides a “Chill Out Zone” for children to assess at any given time throughout the day.

References

ACECQA National Quality Framework Resource Kit (2012)

Quality Area 2 – Children’s health and safety

Quality Area 7 – Leadership and Service Management

Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011) R 84

Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010) S 168(2)(h), S 165