

Gum Nut Preschool and Childcare

Child Safe Environments & Protection Policy **(Child Safety and Wellbeing)**



Purpose

This policy affirms Gum Nut Preschool & Childcare's commitment to child safety and wellbeing. We create and maintain a child-safe environment where all children are valued, respected, and protected from harm.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors, students, families, and any other persons involved with the service.

Aims of Service:

Our service takes the responsibility to provide a safe and caring environment for all children seriously. We believe the safety of children is always paramount and we aim to protect a child's right to be safe from abuse of any kind. Our service aims to defend the rights of educators to confidentiality if a complaint against them is made and is found to be unsubstantiated.

Gum Nut Preschool and Childcare aims to ensure that all parties affected by this policy are made aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding child protection. The service aims to educate all parties about their roles in child protection and about signs of abuse and ensure that all requirements of child protection requirements are being met.

Our service fundamentally believes that all children have the right to a life free from harm. We aim to provide an environment that is free from any type of abuse and foster a child's growth and development as per the individual requirements of each child.

We endeavor to ensure all educators at our service are aware of their obligations under the law regarding the welfare of children and always uphold their obligation. In addition to this, our service aims to provide training to all educators (along with any volunteers, students etc.) on child protection issues to ensure that, in the horrid event a child has suffered abuse, the service can act quickly in the best interests of the child.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is informed by the following:

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
- Child Safe Standards
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Reportable Conduct Scheme (Commission for Children and Young People)

Our Commitment to Child Safety

- We have **zero tolerance for child abuse**.
- We actively promote the safety, participation, and empowerment of all children, including those with a disability, from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- We are committed to culturally safe environments for all children and families.

Child Safe Standards Implementation

We implement the following 11 Child Safe Standards (updated 2022):

1. Embedding child safety and wellbeing in organisational leadership, governance, and culture.
2. Empowering children to participate in decisions affecting them.
3. Family and community involvement in promoting child safety.
4. Respecting equity, diversity, and promoting cultural safety.
5. Clear expectations for staff and volunteers.
6. Regular training and supervision of staff and volunteers.
7. Safe recruitment practices.
8. Managing risks to child safety.
9. Regular review and continuous improvement.
10. Safe physical and online environments.
11. Commitment to child safety embedded in policies and procedures.

Code of Conduct

All staff, volunteers, and contractors must comply with our Code of Conduct, which includes clear expectations about:

- Appropriate behaviour with children.
- Professional boundaries.
- Reporting obligations.
- Use of technology and social media.

Recruitment and Screening

We employ safe recruitment practices including:

- Working with Children Check (WWCC) (Regularly checked)
- Reference checks
- Interview questions around child safety
- Probation periods and ongoing supervision

Staff Training

All staff and volunteers will complete:

- Child Safe Standards training
- Mandatory reporting training (e.g. via the Victorian Department of Education modules)
- Ongoing professional development

Our service aims to:

Ensure that all employees are:

- Clear about their roles and responsibilities regarding child protection.
- Aware of their obligations to immediately report suspected abuse to the service / centre director or person in charge.
- Aware of the indicators when a child may be at risk of harm or significant harm.
- Refer educators to training and development in the recognition and reporting of abuse and harm.
- Provide reporting procedures and professional standards for care and protection work.
- All educators hold a Working with Children Check and or VIT.
- Enable educators to have access to relevant acts, regulations, standards and other resources for them to complete and understand their obligations.
- Provide educators and ECTs with changes, new regulations, updates or amendments.

Educating Children About Protective Behaviors

Our program is designed to teach children, in an age-appropriate and developmentally suitable way, about protective behaviors to help them feel empowered and safe.

Children will learn:

- The difference between acceptable and unacceptable behavior, including appropriate and inappropriate physical contact.
- That they have the right to feel safe at all times.
- How to say “no” to anything that makes them feel unsafe, uncomfortable, or unsure.
- How to use their own awareness and understanding to make safe choices.
- To recognise early warning signs in their body or emotions that may indicate they are not feeling safe, and the importance of thinking clearly in those moments.
- That there is no secret or situation too frightening or shameful that cannot be shared with a trusted adult.
- Educators are always available to listen and support them if they have concerns or questions.
- The importance of reporting any suspicious behavior or individuals.
- How to recognise and express their feelings, both verbally and non-verbally.

In relation to providing a child's safe environment at the service:

- Ensure children are adequately supervised and that educator-to-child ratios are always maintained
- Ensure parents/guardians have completed the enrolment form including details of authorised emergency contacts.
- Permission forms for excursions, incursions and administration of medication forms are completed as required.
- The physical environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children.
- ECTs and educators and the person in charge conduct risk assessments for excursions and consider children's safety when leaving the service.
- All equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards.
- Implement and practice emergency and evacuation procedures.
- The Nominated Supervisor, educators, volunteers and students are kept informed of any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy
- Centre environments must be free of vaping devices and vaping substances, tobacco and alcohol.

Roles & Responsibilities:

For Children:

To feel safe and a sense of belonging in a respectful and supportive environment.

Children respect each other and our differences.

- Learn about their right to feel safe and be protected from harm.
- Understand who they can talk to if they feel unsafe.
- Be encouraged to report any behaviour that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.
- Participate in Safety Discussions
- Have opportunities to contribute their views in matters that affect them.
- Treat other children and adults with kindness and respect.
- Avoid behaviours that could hurt or endanger others (e.g., bullying).
- Follow Safety Rules and Procedures
- Learn about personal boundaries and consent in an age-appropriate way.
- Encourage others to speak up if they feel unsafe.

For Families:

- Treat all children at the service equally and respectfully. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children, children with disabilities, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children discovering who they are without prejudice or judgement.
- Report any suspicions to the most senior person on duty when at the service.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person, regardless of their abilities, gender, religion or cultural background.
- Respect the decision of employees and teach children to do likewise.
- Focus on encouraging children's efforts and learning.
- Support all efforts to remove any form of abuse in the service and encourage a safe and supportive service environment.
- Consumption of alcohol and illicit substances is prohibited while on the service's premises. Parents must not come to the service whilst under the influence of alcohol or illicit substances.
- Smoking is prohibited on the service's premises. Safety, role modeling.
- Contribute to this policy and procedure: have a voice.

For Educators:

- Report any situation where they suspect a child is at risk of significant harm
- Promote the welfare, safety and wellbeing of children at the service.
- Have an awareness of referral agencies for families where concerns of harm do not meet the significant harm threshold.
- Be aware of obligations as per the Mandatory Reporter Guide.
- Assist in supporting children and families when liaising with relevant government agencies.
- Consumption of alcohol and illicit substances is prohibited while on the service's premises. ECTs and educators must not come to the service whilst under the influence of alcohol or illicit substances.
- Smoking is prohibited on the service's premises.
- ECTs and educators must not show favor toward any child.
- ECTs and educators to refrain from developing close personal relationships with children out of the carer/child relationship.
- ECTs and educators must refrain from using the abusive, derogatory, or offensive language.
- Individuals or groups of children are not permitted to be withdrawn into areas where they are not visible by other ECTs and educators or taken into rooms that can be locked.
- Permanent or temporary child-care ECTs and educators are to be directed to ensure that they always remain readily accessible and within the visibility of other ECTs and educators while with the children.
- Students and volunteers are to be directed to ensure that they are never alone with children in a direct & unsupervised capacity.
- When a child is on service premises, there must be a minimum of two ECTs/educators on the premises. It is the responsibility of the Director/Coordinators to ensure rosters meet this requirement and it is the responsibility of all ECTs and educators to ensure this requirement is upheld.
- Changing nappies should take place within the view of other adults as much as possible & only centre educators with a WWC or VIT to change and assist with toileting.
- Parents should be made aware that it may be necessary to physically restrain an out-of-control child who may compromise the safety of him/herself, other children, or ECTs/educators.
- Up-to-date developmental records on all children are to be kept. Relevant conversations with parents that may relate to a child's behavior change (e.g. parents separating, new baby in the family, moving to a new house etc.) are to be noted in the developmental record
- ECTs and educators should ensure they are aware of the individual child's stage of development, needs and plan the curriculum accordingly.
- ECTs and educators should work with parents to develop and record appropriate procedures for managing toilet practices and behavior management.

Must be committed to providing children with safe environments where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well the safety of children with a disability. Children who are discovering or expressing who they are will not be discriminated against or judged, they will be supported in this journey.

Accusations of abuse or suspected abuse against Educators, ECTs, volunteers, the Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider are treated in the same way as allegations against other people. Reports will be made to the Child Protection Helpline where a child is at risk of significant abuse by a person at the Service. If the Supervisor is involved in the abuse, then the Approved Provider or most senior Educator will assist in notifying the Child Protection Helpline

Reporting and Responding to Concerns

We take all allegations and safety concerns seriously. We comply with all legal reporting obligations, including:

- Mandatory reporting (for early childhood teachers and others)
- Reportable Conduct Scheme (allegations against staff or volunteers)
- Duty of care and failure to disclose/failure to protect laws.

How to Report: Providers must notify the Regulatory Authority of any allegations or incidents or physical or sexual abuse within 24 hours (previously 7 days).

- Internal Reporting: Staff must immediately inform the Centre Director or Nominated Supervisor.
- External Reporting: Concerns may also be reported to:
 - Child Protection (North Division) - [1300 598 521](tel:1300598521) After Hours Child Protection: [13 12 78](tel:131278)
 - Commission for Children and Young People – [1300 782 978](tel:1300782978)
 - Victoria Police – [000](tel:000) (in emergencies)
 - To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child after hours, call the After Hours Child Protection Emergency Service: [13 12 78](tel:131278).
 - Orange Door – Heidelberg - [1800 319 355](tel:1800319355)

We maintain confidentiality, support affected individuals and record all incidents.

Child Protection Risk Management Strategy: Concerns of Abuse / Neglect

Definition of Abuse / Neglect

"Abuse or neglect" means –

- (a) sexual abuse; or
- (b) physical or emotional injury or other abuse, or neglect, to the extent that:
 - (i) the injured, abused or neglected person has suffered, or is likely to suffer, physical or psychological harm detrimental to the person's wellbeing; or
 - (ii) the injured, abused or neglected person's physical or psychological development is in jeopardy.

Suspicion of harm

You can suspect harm if:

- You are concerned by significant changes in behaviour or the presence of new unexplained and suspicious injuries.

Disclosure of harm

A disclosure of harm occurs when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened or is likely to happen.

Documenting disclosure: The service will:

Providers must notify the Regulatory Authority of any allegations or incidents or physical or sexual abuse within 24 hours (previously 7 days).

- Remain calm and find a private place to talk.
- Not promise to keep a secret.
- Tell the child/person they have done the right thing in revealing the information but that they'll need to tell someone who can help keep the child safe.
- Only ask enough questions to confirm the need to report the matter because probing questions could cause distress, confusion and interfere with any later enquiries.
- Not attempt to conduct their own investigation or mediate an outcome between the parties involved.

Document as soon as possible so the details are accurately captured including:

- Time, date and place of the disclosure.
- 'Word for word', what happened and what was said, including anything they said and any actions that have been taken.
- Date of report and signature.

This Policy & Procedure is to be read in conjunction with **CHILD PROTECTION PROTOCOLS:**

BETRAYAL OF TRUST: fact sheet, Victorian Government and Code of Conduct for Educators.

New Victorian Child Safe Standards were introduced on 1 January 2016 and come into effect on 1 January 2017. The initial focus will be on raising awareness and building capacity for organisations to create and maintain a child safe environment. The Child Safe Standards have been introduced to keep children safe from harm and abuse. The Standards are designed to drive cultural change in organisations, so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of leaders, educators and volunteers.

Procedure for record keeping of Working with Children's Check and VIT :

Gum Nut Preschool and Childcare administration will use electronic calendar with all renewal dates of WWC and VIT, with reminders set for four and two-weeks alerts.

1. A list is displayed in the office of Working with Children renewal dates and status.
2. Administration verbally reminds educators of upcoming renewal and notifies by text and email, this creates an audit trail.
3. Educators are required to provide a copy of receipt of renewal.
4. Administration check **Check Status** of renewal
5. Should WWC or VIT not be renewed before expiry date that ECT/educator will be suspended from work duties until it is renewed and current.
6. New employees are checked for current and approved Working with Children Checks on **Check Status** prior to commencement of employment and contact with children.

Centre conducts regular checks on **Check Status** for any changes to status.

ECTs and educators to complete online training or attend PD sessions.

References.

- ACECQA National Quality Standard - [National Quality Standard | ACECQA](#)
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing - [Child protection - DFFH Services](#)
- Reportable Conduct Scheme - [CCYP | Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)
- Mandatory reporting. - [Protecting children: Mandatory reporting and other obligations | vic.gov.au](#)

Links to other service policies:

- Centre Handbook
- Child protection protocols Policy
- Baby Sitting Policy
- Code of Conduct
- eSafety Policy
- Excursion, incursions, Off-site Program Policy
- Staffing arrangements Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma & illness policy
- Interactions with Children Policy
- Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy

Commitment to Child Safety Statement:

Gum Nut Preschool and Childcare is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people.

This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Gum Nut Preschool and Childcare has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Gum Nut Preschool and Childcare is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved in Gum Nut Preschool and Childcare has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she/they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Added 9/6/2022:

Standards change from 7 to 11: 1/7/2022.

Policy created & developed: 2011.

Updated November 2012. Reviewed: October 2014. Amendment: August 2015. Amendment January 2017.

Amendment July 2017. Amendment March 2019. Reviewed and Amended July 2025 (included vaping, notification requirements).