

Bluebird Foundation Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Bluebird Foundation is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This fundamental principle guides our care and decision-making about the young people who participate in our programs, attend our events, or otherwise have contact with our Foundation and its people.

We are committed to providing a child safe and child friendly environment, where children and young people with whom we have contact are safe and feel safe, and able to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

To affirm our commitment to child safety, Bluebird Foundation has developed a Child Safe Policy. The Child Safe Policy applies to all participants, staff, contractors, volunteers and authorised persons engaged by our Foundation.

Bluebird Foundation has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Bluebird Foundation Child Safe Policy

Scope

This Child Safe Policy applies to all participants, staff, contractors, volunteers and authorised persons engaged by our Foundation.

Responsibilities

All staff, contractors, volunteers and authorised persons engaged by Bluebird Foundation are responsible for contributing to achieving a child safe environment. They are responsible for complying with this policy, and related processes, including the requirement to report child safety concerns.

Bluebird Foundation is committed to our responsibilities in keeping children safe from abuse and will always ensure that the safety of children is our first priority.

We have a zero tolerance approach to child abuse. We also deeply value diversity and cultural safety, and have a zero tolerance approach to discriminatory practice.

In recognition of the increased vulnerability of particular groups of children, we pay particular attention to:

- The cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children;
- The cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- The safety of children with a disability;
- The safety of children who identify as LGBTQIA+; and
- The safety of children in out of home care, the youth justice system or insecure housing

To achieve this, all people involved in the care or interaction with children on behalf of Bluebird Foundation will:

- Establish and maintain a child safe environment in the course of their work through a preventative, proactive and participatory approach;
- Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
- Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
- Create an environment of openness, where children are encouraged to set and maintain boundaries, feel safe to disclose instances of abuse or harm and are confident that their autonomy and rights are respected;
- Treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas and opinions;
- Act as positive role models in their conduct with children and young people and be professional in their actions;
- Maintain strict impartiality and fairness;
- Respect the privacy of children, their families and teachers/carers, and only disclose information to people who have a need and right to know in accordance with our Privacy Policy;
- Hold a valid, current Working With Children Check (WWCC). Bluebird Foundation will maintain a register of all WWCC and ensure compliance with this requirement prior to any interaction with children;
- Comply with specific organisational guidelines on physical contact with children;
- Immediately raise any child safety concerns with the Program Manager. The Program Manager must then advise the President within 48 hours; and
- Immediately contact the police if there is reason to believe a child is currently experiencing or at immediate risk of abuse by phoning 000.

No person shall:

- Shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade children or young people;
- Unlawfully discriminate against any child;
- Engage in any activity with a child or young person that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them;
- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves;
- Be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily and for more than a very short time;
- Develop a 'special' relationship with a specific child or young person for their own needs, or 'groom' a child using predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity;
- Show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention;
- Arrange any contact, including online contact, with children or young people outside of the organisation's programs and activities;
- Photograph or video a child or young person without the consent of the child and their parents or guardians;
- Work with children or young people while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs;
- Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children;
- Use inappropriate language in the presence of children; or
- Do anything in contravention of the organisation's policies, procedures or Code of Conduct.

Managers

In addition to the above requirements, managers have responsibility to ensure:

- All adults under their management have read, understood and comply with this Child Safety Policy;
- Provide regular training and education on child abuse risks;
- Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
- Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
- Assess and manage risks relating to children in any proposed or actual programs they are responsible for; and
- All employees of Bluebird undertake formal child safe training.

Legislative Responsibilities

Bluebird Foundation takes its legal responsibilities to child safety seriously, including:

Failure to disclose: 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 Victoria Police.

Mandatory reporting: Any board members, staff or volunteers who are mandatory reporters (e.g. teachers, support workers and social workers) must comply with their duties.

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.

Reportable conduct: The Program Manager must be made aware of any allegations of physical and sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, significant emotional or psychological harm or significant neglect by an employee or volunteer towards a child. We are also legally required to notify the Commission for Children and Young People of the allegation.

Duty of care: If a child is abused by an individual associated with our organisation, our organisation is presumed to have breached its duty of care unless it can prove that it took 'reasonable precautions' to prevent the abuse in question. For more information, please refer to the new organisational duty of care to prevent child abuse page on the Department of Justice and Regulation's website.