

Group Policies - Child Safety Policy

Policy Statement:

At Epworth HealthCare the safety and wellbeing of children is paramount. Epworth is committed to child safety including the provision of a safe environment where children are able to feel safe, secure and receive age appropriate clinical care. Epworth achieves a child safe organisation by responding to the Victorian Government's Child Safety Standards.

Epworth has a zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently according to our systems and protocols. Systems are in place to mitigate risks and facilitate prompt identification and escalation of care for the child at risk. Epworth will meet both legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when there is concern for a child's safety.

The organisational framework to support this will incorporate:

1. Policies and protocols which align with the Child Safe Standards as obligated under the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*.
2. Robust human resources practices for all staff and volunteers to facilitate child safety.
3. Processes to thoroughly investigate any concerns or allegations of child abuse in an expedient time frame.
4. Culture of supporting and empowering children to participate in their own care.

The following are the specific measures implemented at Epworth to support the child safety organisational framework:

1. **Epworth policies and protocols which align with the Child Safe Standards**
 - Code of Conduct Policy includes principles and requirements that govern the ethics and standards of behaviour that are expected from all employees and contractors of Epworth.
 - Child Safety Policy is included in the Key Policy Compliance list, which all staff are required to read.
 - Children in need of protection - Mandatory Reporting Policy documents the process and escalation for a child that is suspected of being abused or at risk.
 - Risk Profile provides strategies to ensure safety and wellbeing of children
 - Informed Consent to Treatment Protocol outlines the requirements for gaining consent from paediatric patients requiring a surgical procedure.
 - Epworth By-Laws for medical practitioner credentialing, specifically requires a Working With Children Check and appropriate scope of practice to provide paediatric services
 - Paediatric admission criteria and processes align with the Child Safe Standards.
 - Clinical policies and protocols consider the provision of paediatric care.
 - Specific clinical paediatric policies and protocols are available to Epworth staff.
 - Volunteer Program Policy includes that volunteers are encouraged to communicate any issues of concern to the person in charge.
2. **Robust human resources practices and training for all staff and volunteers to facilitate child safety**
 - Compliance of currency of Working with Children Checks are monitored regularly by People and Culture staff.
 - The mandatory child safety training requirements highlight Epworth's commitment to child safety and required escalation of care for a child at risk.
 - All staff who have a Working with Children's Check (including volunteers) are required to complete Epworth's Child Safe eLearning module as part of their on-boarding training.
 - Clinicians working in specialist paediatric areas, such as the emergency departments, paediatric ward, Allergy Clinic, Operating Theatre, PACU, and wards where paediatric patients are admitted overnight, are required to complete the Epworth Advance Child

Safe elearn module as a one off requirement as part of an agreed Performance Development Plan with their Department Manager.

- All sites have a nominated **Child Safety Person** who is the Director of Clinical Services (or their delegate) and whose role is to:
 - be familiar with the responsibilities associated with mandated reporting and **who these responsibilities apply to at Epworth; and to**
 - Support staff in making a mandated report where that staff member forms a belief that a child is at risk and in need of protection.
 - Children in need of protection – Mandatory Reporting Policy documents the processes required for notification and escalation of care for children in need of protection.
3. **Processes to thoroughly investigate any concerns or allegations in an expedient time frame**
- Children with suspected non-accidental injuries are not to be admitted to Epworth as the wellbeing of the child is the overriding consideration. These children are to be transferred to a tertiary paediatric facility where expertise in evaluation of a child who has possibly been abused is available and where the appropriate child and family support and multi-disciplinary specialised care can be provided.
 - Children in need of protection – Mandatory Reporting Policy documents the processes required for notification and escalation of care for Children in need of protection.
4. **Culture of supporting and empowering children to participate in their own care**
- Diversity: Equity of Access Policy includes principles of inclusion and equity of access by valuing diversity and supporting children with all abilities.
 - Epworth is committed to providing individualised and family centred care. All children in ward areas have the communication board in their room which is updated to address any cultural or age/developmentally appropriate specific care requirements.
 - Rights of Children and/or Young Persons Poster is displayed in clinical areas where paediatric services are provided, (refer Appendices).
 - Epworth fosters awareness of cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, those children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and for children with a disability where warranted by individual care plans.
 - Epworth is committed to ensuring its policies, facilities and environment promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, culturally and or/linguistically diverse children and children with disabilities.

Collectively, these systems have been implemented to ensure that Epworth as an organisation provides a child safe culture, that meets the Child Safe Standards by proactively taking measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children at Epworth.

Epworth takes all allegations and concerns regarding child safety very seriously and responds to them consistently according to the organisation's policies and protocols.

Where a person other than an Epworth staff member (e.g. a family member or visitor) is concerned that a child receiving care at Epworth may be at risk and in need of protection, that person is encouraged to report their concern to the nurse in charge of the relevant ward.

Under the Child Information Sharing Scheme, Epworth is required to share information and documents if served with a notice, or a notice to comply, issued by the Commission for Children and Young People.

Outcome:

- Children at Epworth will remain safe at all times, protected from serious neglect, physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse.
- Epworth complies with legal requirements under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic).

Definitions:

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Term	Definition
Aboriginal child	<p>A person under the age of 18 who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent • identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and • is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.
Child abuse	<p>Child abuse constitutes any act committed against a child involving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical violence • sexual offences • serious emotional or psychological abuse • serious neglect
Children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds	<p>A child or young person who identifies as having particular cultural or linguistic affiliations by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language or language spoken at home or because of their parents' identification on a similar basis</p>
Child	<p>A person who is under the age of 18 years.</p>
Child safety	<p>In the context of the child safe standards, child safety means measures to protect children from abuse.</p>
Child safe organisation	<p>Child safe organisation is one that meets the child safe standards by proactively taking measures to protect children from abuse.</p>
Child Safe Standards	<p>November 2015 the <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005)</i> was amended to introduce the Child Safe Standards, which apply to all organisations that provide services or facilities for children in Victoria.</p> <p>The standards are outcome and focused and principle based.</p> <p>Standard 1: Strategies to embed a culture of child safety through effective leadership arrangements.</p> <p>Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety.</p> <p>Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.</p> <p>Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing staff.</p> <p>Standard 5: Processes for responding and reporting suspected child abuse.</p> <p>Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.</p> <p>Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.</p>

Term	Definition
Child information Sharing Scheme	An information sharing entity can request or disclose information about any person for the purpose of promoting the wellbeing or safety of a child or group of children.
Cultural competency	A set of congruent behaviours, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals that enable them to work effectively in cross-cultural situations
Cultural abuse	Actions and attitudes that deliberately ignore, denigrate or attack the culture of a person or community
Cultural safety for Aboriginal children	<p>The positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination, and more than cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity.</p> <p>A culturally safe environment does not ignore, challenge or deny cultural identity. Cultural safety upholds the rights of Aboriginal children to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify as Aboriginal without fear of retribution or questioning • have an education that strengthens their culture and identity • maintain connections to their land and country • maintain their strong kinship ties and social obligations • be taught their cultural heritage by their Elders • receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible manner • be involved in services that are culturally respectful
Cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds	An environment which is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for children; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their cultural or linguistic identity, of who they are and what they need. Efforts need to be made to ensure the culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and their families receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible manner, including in relevant community languages.
Children with a disability	A disability can be any physical, sensory, neurological disability, acquired brain injury or intellectual disability or developmental delay that affects a child's ability to undertake everyday activities. A disability can occur at any time in life. Children can be born with a disability or acquire a disability suddenly through an injury or illness. Some disabilities may be obvious while others are hidden.
Organisation	<p>The Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005 will provide that the standards apply to 'applicable entities', which are defined in the Act as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an incorporated body or association • an unincorporated body or association (however structured) <p>an individual who carries on a business and engages contractors, employees or volunteers to assist in the business in providing services or facilities.</p>
Risk Profile	Outlines potential risk for the care of paediatric patients at Epworth

Appendices:

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- Poster: [Charter on the Rights of Children and Young People in Healthcare Services in Australia](#)
- <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/Youth-poster-WEB.pdf>
- [Charter on the Rights of Children and Young People in Healthcare Services in Australia.](#)

Standard:

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic)
- *Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic)

References:

Victorian Government, *Cultural Responsiveness: Guidelines for Victorian Health Services* (2011)

https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/Cultural-responsiveness-framework---Guidelines-for-Victorian-health-servicesltural_responsiveness.pdf

Aboriginal Cultural Competence Framework 2008:

<https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/VAC.0001.002.0001.pdf>

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, 2010, *Building Respectful Partnerships*

Williams, R. 1999, 'Cultural Safety – what does it mean for our work practice?', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, Vol 23, Issue 2, p 213-214.

Department of Health and Human Services. [About disability](#) Retrieved from www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/disability-in-victoria/about-disability

Department Human Services (2017). An overview of the Victorian child safe standards. Retrieved from <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards-resources>

Focus Area(s):

- Standard `1: Clinical Governance Standard

Departments:

- Organisational Wide