



CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Rationale

Chinmaya Mission is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children.

Chinmaya Mission has zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to acting in the best interests of children and to keeping them safe at all times.

Aims

Chinmaya Mission is committed to:

- promoting child safety in its environment and at its functions
- ensuring the safety and best interests of the children in its care, taking into account children of cultural and linguistic diversity and those with disabilities
- a zero tolerance to child abuse
- actively working to empower the children in our care
- implementing and continuously improving procedures and systems that promote and influence an organisational culture of child safety and that provides a safe environment for our children
- preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks
- following legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when its volunteers are worried about a child's safety
- having clear requirements and procedures for volunteers to uphold
- training and educating its volunteers on child abuse risks.

Ensuring child safety is about balancing expectations and complying with legal obligations. It is not about creating an atmosphere of suspicion.

Implementation

The following values and principles will guide Chinmaya Mission in implementing consistent policies and influence an organisational culture of child safety:

- promoting child safety in its environment and at its functions
- ensuring the safety and best interests of the children in its care, taking into account children of cultural and linguistic diversity and those with disabilities
- a zero tolerance to child abuse
- actively working to empower the children in our care
- implementing and continuously improving procedures and systems that promote and influence an organisational culture of child safety and that provides a safe environment for our children
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- having clear requirements and procedures for volunteers to uphold
- training and educating its volunteers on child abuse risks.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Recruitment

Chinmaya Mission will ensure that volunteers who are engaged to work in the programs and at events will have an up to date Working with Children Check. They will monitor and assess the volunteer's suitability for the position of working with children.

All volunteers will be informed about Chinmaya Mission's child safety practices and code of conduct.

Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

Chinmaya Mission will implement and continually improve its procedures for responding to and reporting suspected abuse of a child currently in its care or that occurred years before. Chinmaya Mission will also implement practices that will support, encourage and enable volunteers, parents and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters.

Our procedures will be based on the following:

- compliance with mandatory reporting laws and obligations imposed by the criminal law to report a belief that child abuse may have occurred
- ensuring any situation is handled appropriately
- concerns of child abuse are reported to the Victoria police and relevant authorities
- Chinmaya Mission provides support to the person/s making allegations of child abuse
- all parties involved in an allegation of child abuse are treated fairly and consistently
- clarity as to who should notify any concerns and who to notify within Chinmaya Mission
- what processes should be followed during and after an investigation
- ensuring that reviewing and improving our processes is continuous.

All members of the Chinmaya Mission community have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if they have a reasonable belief that an incident took place.

Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- 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 observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Chinmaya Mission will support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse, by:

- ensuring they have access to relevant support networks and personnel
- ensuring their situation is treated with sensitivity and confidentiality
- providing such other support or assistance as may be reasonable.

Reducing or removing risks of child abuse

Chinmaya Mission will implement appropriate policies and practices for the early identification and response to risks of abuse in its physical and online environment. Such policies and practices will:

- promote understanding by all Chinmaya Missions volunteers of its expectations in relation to behaviour and conduct when interacting with children and the consequences of failing to abide by those expectations
- provide for ongoing training, education and support for all Chinmaya Mission volunteers in relation to understanding child abuse, identifying risks and areas for improvement, Chinmaya Missions' policies and practices for reporting concerns of child abuse and how to respond.

Legal responsibilities

Chinmaya Mission takes its legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **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.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in Chinmaya Mission 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.
- Volunteers who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.