



Australian Irish Dancing Association Inc

Victorian Branch

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

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Introduction

The Australian Irish Dancing Association Inc Victorian Branch acknowledges the *Wurundjeri People*, the Traditional Owners of the land on which we operate. We acknowledge and respect their contributions, experience, and knowledge as First Nations people. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging.

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy was adopted by the Australian Irish Dancing Association Inc Victorian Branch (AIDA Victoria) on 1st January 2023. It demonstrates the strong commitment of AIDA Victoria members and volunteers to child safety and wellbeing, and how our organisation keeps children safe from harm, including child abuse.

Our organisation is committed to child safety.

AIDA Victoria is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. We have a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse. We are committed to creating and maintaining a child-safe and child-friendly organisation where all children and young people are valued and protected from abuse.

All children and young people regardless of their age, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious beliefs, ability, and family background who are involved with AIDA Victoria have the right to be protected from harm and to be treated with dignity and respect. We are an inclusive organisation that recognises and respects diversity, and we are committed to proactively supporting and building the cultural safety and inclusion of all children and young people at AIDA Victoria. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment for all.

We recognise the distinctive history and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and respect and observe their cultural rights, and those of all varying cultural backgrounds. We are committed to creating a culturally safe and inclusive environment in which the diverse and unique identities, experiences and cultural rights of all children and young people are respected and valued.

As a child safe organisation, we are committed to providing welcoming, safe, and accessible environments where all children and young people feel valued, are listened to, and are genuinely considered and involved in decisions that affect their lives.

The wellbeing and safety of the children and young people in our care will always be our priority. We have specific policies, procedures, and practices in place to support our people to achieve these commitments.

A paramount consideration when managing any Child Safety Incident is to reduce actual and / or incidental harm experienced by the child or young person associated with the disclosure /reporting of the complaint.

We are committed to the safety, participation, and empowerment of all children.

This Policy outlines how AIDA Victoria prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and what steps we will take to do this.

Scope

This policy applies to all AIDA members, volunteers, parents, children, and other individuals involved in our organisation. This policy applies to all activities conducted by AIDA Victoria.

Role of the Executive Committee and Child Safety Officer

- The Executive Committee (Executive) has the role of making sure AIDA Victoria prioritises children's safety and that, when anyone raises concerns about children's safety, the matter is referred to the Child Safety Officer.
- The Executive will champion and model a child safe culture at AIDA Victoria. We encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern. The Executive will work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable to raise concerns.
- Everyone at AIDA Victoria have a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. The Executive will make sure that AIDA Victoria members and volunteers are conducting risk assessments and taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy.
- The Executive will conduct an annual review of how effectively AIDA Victoria are delivering child safety and wellbeing.
- AIDA Victoria has a dedicated Play by the Rules – Child Protection trained Child Safety Officer with responsibility for responding to any child safety related complaints or concerns.

Children's empowerment and participation

- AIDA Victoria is a child-centred organisation. We actively seek to include children's views and ideas in our organisational planning, delivery of services including rehearsals and performances, and management of facilities.
- We want children to develop new friends through AIDA Victoria and encourage children to be supportive of each other. We do not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour between children and act if this occurs.
- We respect the rights of children and provide them with information about their rights including the right to be safe at AIDA Victoria. We actively seek to understand what makes children feel safe in our organisation.
- AIDA Victoria values the voices of children and will act on safety concerns raised by children or their families. AIDA Victoria support children's participation in the following ways:
 - Regular discussions with children, including child-led conversations on what makes them feel safe and unsafe.
 - A suggestion box for children that is regularly emptied with suggestions assessed and acted on where appropriate. Children are provided with feedback on their suggestions.
 - Information provided to children and families about AIDA Victoria's operations, AIDA members and events are made suitable for different age groups and diversity of the children.

Families and communities

AIDA Victoria recognises the important role of families and involves parents and carers when making significant decisions about their child. Parents, families, and communities are welcome to provide feedback at any time through our contact email address and are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with us. AIDA Victoria provides information to families and community about our child safe policies and practices including through:

- publishing this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct on our website.

Creating culturally safe environments for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families

AIDA Victoria is committed to creating environments where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is celebrated and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and community members are welcomed and included. Strategies to embed cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children include:

- an Acknowledgement of Country at all events
- consulting with families and members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture
- supporting children who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations
- seeking feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, and communities on their experience with AIDA Victoria, particularly how safe they feel expressing their identity including their culture.

Valuing diversity

We value diversity and equity for all children. To achieve this, we:

- welcome and support participation of all children, including children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, LGBTIQ children and Aboriginal children and their families
- have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and act when discrimination or exclusion is identified.
- commit to ensuring our facilities used promote inclusion of children of all abilities.

Child Safe Code of Conduct

- AIDA Victoria has a Child Safe Code of Conduct. AIDA Members and volunteers must comply with the Code of Conduct at all times. Breaches of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action including termination of a person's involvement with the organisation.
- All third-party contractors (e.g., Adjudicators) are also expected to abide by the Child Safe Code of Conduct, and where they are engaging with children will have to sign an agreement to comply with the code, prior to delivering any services.

Recruiting volunteers

- We require a Working with Children Check for all AIDA members and a Working with Children Check for volunteers who have a role with children.

Supporting AIDA members and volunteers

- AIDA Victoria is committed to ensuring that all AIDA members and volunteers receive training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety and to support their engagement with children. AIDA Victoria assists its members and volunteers to incorporate child safety considerations into decisions and to promote a safe environment where children are empowered to speak up about issues that affect them.
- Issues or concerns about behaviour with children will be raised immediately and addressed in line with the AIDA Victoria Child Safe Code of Conduct and AIDA Victoria Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy containing the Child Safety Complaints Process.

Information sharing

AIDA Victoria may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, where it is appropriate and in their best interests. AIDA Victoria will keep information about complaints confidential, except where it is necessary to share information to respond properly to a complaint or to prioritise child

safety. We may also need to share information about incidents or complaints with external authorities to comply with the law or to prioritise safety.

Risk management

- We recognise the importance of identifying and managing risks of child harm and abuse in the physical and online environments operated by AIDA Victoria
- We will conduct risk assessments and have a risk management plan to address the risk of child abuse and harm at AIDA Victoria. The risk management plan will be developed in consultation with our AIDA Victoria members, volunteers, parents, and children. We will ensure that any risk controls put in place balance the need to manage harm with the benefits of participating at AIDA Victoria.

Non-compliance with this policy and the Code of Conduct

AIDA Victoria will enforce this policy, the Code of Conduct and any other child safety and wellbeing policies (see list below). Potential breaches by anyone will be investigated and may result in restriction of duties, suspension or termination of membership or engagement or other corrective action.

Review

AIDA Victoria will review all child safe practices and policies at least every two years. We also review relevant practices and policies in response to a child safety incident or 'near miss'. Findings from reviews will be reported to the people involved in our organisation and also inform our approach to continuous improvement of our child safety practices.

Child Safety Concerns and Complaints

As a child safe organisation, AIDA Victoria is committed to the appropriate reporting of concerns about the safety of children and young people, responding to complaints promptly, thoroughly, and fairly, and taking immediate action to protect children and young people at risk.

A **child safety concern** refers to any issue that has or could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

A **child safety complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction to an organisation related to one or more of the following:

- the organisation's services or dealings with individuals
- allegations of abuse or misconduct by an AIDA member, a volunteer or another individual associated with the organisation
- disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child
- the conduct of a child at an organisation event
- the inadequate handling of a prior concern
- general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

Within this Policy, a **Child Safety Incident** is defined as:

- Any child safety concern where an AIDA Vic member or volunteer, in the course of their work, form a **reasonable belief** that a child or young person has suffered, or is likely to suffer, abuse or harm - whether caused by an adult OR by another child.
- Any child safety complaint against AIDA Vic, including any allegation of Reportable Conduct made against AIDA Victoria members or volunteer either within an AIDA Victoria event or outside the event.
- Any breach of AIDA Victoria's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, including the Child Safe Code of Conduct included within.

The main objectives of AIDA Victoria's approach to dealing with Child Safety Incidents are ensuring that:

- risks to children's safety are minimised

- incidents where child abuse is either suspected or has occurred are appropriately dealt with on a case-by-case basis by making sure that organisational procedures are followed as per this Policy
- all legislative requirements and AIDA Victoria processes regarding reporting are met as soon as possible
- AIDA Victoria's practices, processes and culture are consistent with legislation, the Child Safe Standards, and the objective of being a child safe organisation.

AIDA Victoria will take a trauma-informed approach to Child Safety Incidents, that:

- recognises that emotional, physical, or sexual abuse and other negative life experiences such as racism or violence constitute a trauma.
- understands that the impact of abuse on children can be profound, especially when it occurs at developmentally vulnerable times of their life
- uses strategies to help children participate in complaints processes without causing further trauma.

Creating a Child-Focused Complaints Culture

Making a complaint and raising safety concerns is not easy, particularly for children and young people.

To ensure an organisation has a child-focused complaints culture, it must have a focus on children and their safety reflected in the design and implementation of their complaint handling system as well as being embedded in policies, procedures, communication strategies and training.

A child-focused complaint handling system depends on organisations also having a positive complaints culture. In organisations with a positive complaints culture:

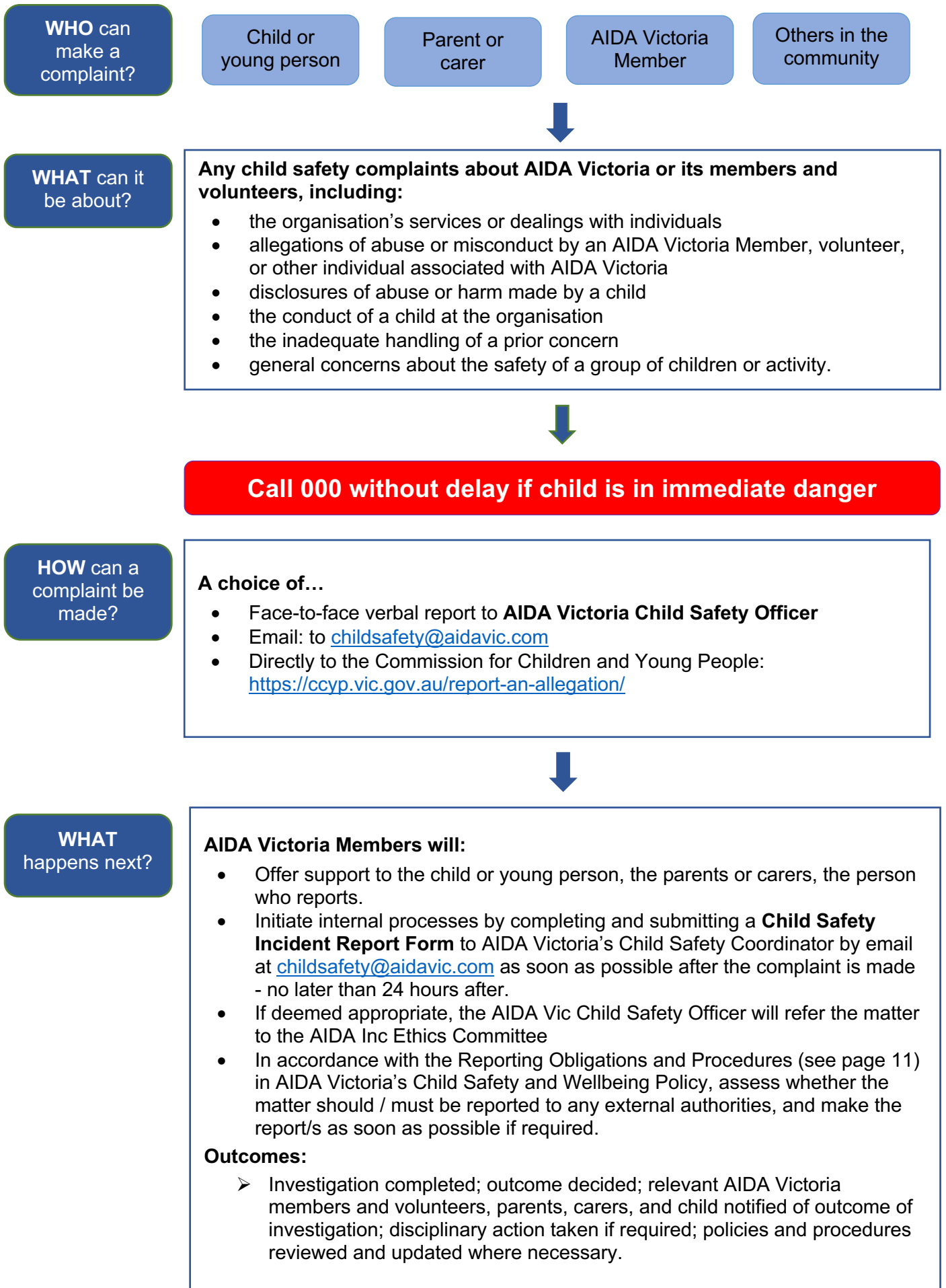
- organisations demonstrate a practical commitment to children exercising their right to speak up.
- organisations ensure that children not only are safe, but also feel safe.
- members actively communicate that complaints are welcome from anyone, are taken seriously and are a valuable source of information which can help improve the organisation.
- when a complaint is raised, the organisation deals with it promptly.
- the positive complaints culture is actively fostered with AIDA Members and volunteers at each level of the organisation.

Making a child safety complaint about AIDA Victoria

AIDA Vic members will support anyone wishing to make a child safety complaint about AIDA Vic by:

- Providing publicly available information about how they can raise child safety complaints about AIDA Victoria, and how those concerns will be responded to and investigated, that is child-friendly, accessible, age-appropriate, and in a range of language and formats as needed.
- Welcoming and encouraging them to make a complaint, without judgement or dispute.
- Explaining the different ways that they can submit a complaint, either through AIDA Victoria and/or external authorities, and supporting them to access their preferred avenue.
- Supporting them to complete the **Child Safety Complaints Process** on the next page by:
 - providing interpreters or translations
 - assisting them to complete documentation (hard-copy or electronic)
 - explaining that they can remain anonymous if they wish.
 - providing a supported handover or referral (where possible / appropriate) when needing to involve another AIDA Victoria member or an external authority in the complaints process.

Child Safety Complaints Process



Child Safety Incident Procedures

The four steps that all AIDA Victoria personnel (i.e., AIDA members, volunteers, students) must follow regarding **any Child Safety Incident** (including child safety complaints about AIDA Victoria) are:

1. Recognise
2. Respond
3. Report
4. Support

1. Recognise

AIDA Victoria may become aware of an incident, allegation or suspicion of child abuse or harm (either by adults or by other children) in a number of ways, such as:

- a complaint is made through AIDA Victoria's complaints process.
- 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.

Signs that may indicate a child is being abused:

Sometimes a child may tell us if they are being harmed, and at other times we will need to look out for signs that may indicate a child is being abused, such as changes in behaviour, emotions, or physical appearance.

Common behavioural indicators / signs across the different types of child abuse and harm include:

- unusual or regressive changes in behaviour, like a sudden decline in academic performance, anxiety, withdrawal, hyperactivity, bedwetting, sleep disturbances, drug, or alcohol misuse
- concerning behaviours that may be harmful to themselves or others
- being extremely sensitive and alert to their surroundings (hypervigilance)
- absences from school without reasonable explanation
- frequent headaches or stomach pains
- drawings or writing which depict violence or abuse
- raising a concern about a friend or someone they know
- attempted suicide or self-harm
- unexplained or inconsistent, vague, or unlikely explanations for an injury
- unexplained bruising, fractures, or other physical injuries
- unusual fear of physical contact
- harm to others or animals
- wariness or fear of someone including a parent, carer, other adult or child
- trying to protect friends or other family members from someone
- reluctance to go home
- the child is assessed as having experienced a significant delay in their emotional or intellectual development or that their functioning has been impaired
- taking on a caring or parental role with siblings prematurely.

Watch for any changes in the child's general mood. The child may become anxious, irritable, depressed, angry, or show a combination of emotions. However, do not assume that just because you see these signs the child is being abused - these signs can apply to a child under stress and may not be related to abuse.

2. Respond

Children and young people raising complaints and safety concerns or disclose abuse should be treated with sensitivity and given support.

A paramount consideration when managing any Child Safety Incident is to reduce actual and / or incidental harm experienced by the child or young person associated with the disclosure /reporting of the complaint.

AIDA Victoria members role in further harm prevention or reduction

AIDA Victoria members will prevent or reduce further harm to those impacted by the incident by:

- Calling Emergency Services on 000 if a child is at immediate risk of harm
- Making the surroundings safe to prevent immediate recurrence of the incident, for example:
 - removing potentially harmful person(s)
 - increasing supervision of children and young people
 - moving uninvolved children and young people away from the incident
 - move to a safe place
 - alerting others to risks that extend beyond the local environment,
- Providing immediate care and support to the child/young person and others involved in the incident by addressing:
 - physical wellbeing e.g., providing first aid.
 - emotional/psychological wellbeing e.g., arranging for coverage of duties and supervision.
 - facilitating access to counselling for AIDA Victoria members if needed

AIDA Victoria members role upon receiving a complaint or concern

If a child or young person raises a child safety complaint or concern, including disclosing abuse, AIDA Victoria members will:

- Let the child talk about their concerns in their own time and in their own words.
- Listen to the allegation or disclosure supportively, without judgement or dispute.
- Maintain a calm appearance and do not be afraid of saying the 'wrong' thing.
- Be supportive, reassuring and comforting if they are upset.
- Tell them you believe them; it is not their fault and that they were right to tell you.
- Ask open-ended questions to clarify the basic details, without seeking detailed information or asking suggestive or leading questions.
- Let them know you will act on this information, that you may need to let other people know, and explain why that is the case. Do not promise to keep any information a secret.
- Do not make promises you cannot keep.
- Write down what the child told you as soon as you can, using their words as best as you can remember.
- Take note of their behaviour and appearance at the time
- Take notes of physical evidence, for example, bruising if the child shows you.
- Help the child and their family to get appropriate support, such as counselling.
- Thank or commend them for raising the concern and tell them that AIDA Victoria will take immediate action in response to the disclosure / allegation.
- Report the matter as per the Reporting Obligations and Procedures outlined next in this Policy.

In your responses you will need to consider the specific needs of the child or young person. Consider the unique qualities of the child including, for example, whether the child is, or may be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, has a disability, identifies as LGBTIQ+, has a culturally and linguistically diverse background and/or is unable to live at home.

3. Report

Once the immediate response is completed, AIDA Victoria will report Child Safety Incidents by:

1. Following the **Child Safety Incident Reporting Process for AIDA Victoria**; and
2. Fulfilling the relevant **Reporting Obligations and Procedures** detailed below.

Reporting Obligations and Procedures

AIDA Victoria members must report Child Safety Incidents in accordance with the relevant reporting obligations and procedures outlined below, **each time** they become aware of any further grounds for the reasonable belief of abuse or harm.

Internal Reporting

AIDA Victoria Members must report **ALL Child Safety Incidents** internally, by:

- notifying the AIDA Victoria Child Safety Officer verbally as soon as possible.
- completing a **Child Safety Incident Report Form**, and
- submitting the completed form to AIDA Victoria's Child Safety Officer by email at childsafety@aidavic.com as soon as possible - within 24 hours of the incident.
- If deemed appropriate, the AIDA Victoria Child Safety Officer will refer the matter to the AIDA Inc Ethics Committee.

If AIDA Victoria become aware of a Child Safety Incident via **any complaints process**, they must complete a Child Safe Incident Report Form by transferring the information contained within the complaint to that form and providing any other relevant information available and submit it as above.

External Reporting

AIDA Victoria is subject to legal obligations regarding reporting child abuse, harm, or other child-related misconduct to external authorities, which are outlined below. The external reporting obligations for each Child Safety Incident will depend on the nature and circumstances of that incident.

Sometimes it may not be a legal requirement for AIDA Victoria to report a complaint or concern to external authorities, but it may still be advisable to report so the safety of children can be prioritised. At all times, child safety must be AIDA Victoria's main consideration when considering reporting to external authorities.

Alleged or suspected criminal conduct

Physical or sexual abuse, including grooming, of children is a crime and should be reported to the police. Family violence, regardless if a child has been physically or sexually abused, is serious. If a concern relates to family violence it should be reported to the police. If anyone is in imminent or immediate danger, call 000 immediately.

Failure to disclose a sexual offence.

If an adult reasonably believes a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16, they must report it to Victoria Police by calling 000 or going to their local police station.

Failure to disclose the information may be a criminal offence. The offence applies to all adults in Victoria, not just professionals who work with children, unless they have a 'reasonable excuse' or are exempt.

Reportable Conduct Scheme

AIDA Victoria must comply with reporting obligations under Victoria's Reportable Conduct Scheme. The Scheme requires heads of organisations to notify the Commission about any reportable allegations that an organisation's workers or volunteers have committed child abuse or child-related misconduct within three days of becoming aware of the allegation.

For details on how to notify the Commission about a reportable allegation, see

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme/about-reporting-allegations/>

The organisation must also investigate these allegations (after receiving clearance by Victoria Police) and report its findings together with any actions taken to the Commission.

Child Safety Incident and Reporting Obligations and Procedures Summary Table

External reporting obligations vary depending on the nature and circumstances of the Child Safety Incident. Therefore, the reporting obligations and procedures for different types of Child Safety Incidents are summarised in the table below.

Type of Child Safety Incident	Reporting Obligations and Procedures
Physical abuse (against or in the presence of a child)	<p>Report to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Child Safety Officer, verbally or via email as soon as possible; <i>AND/OR</i> by submitting a Child Safety Incident Report Form. If deemed appropriate, the AIDA Vic Child Safety Officer will refer the matter to the AIDA Inc Ethics Committee • Child Protection (Department of Fairness, Families and Housing), <u>if</u> the child or young person has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of the abuse; <i>AND</i> • Victoria Police, <u>if</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The child or young person is in immediate danger; and/or ○ Alleged or suspected criminal conduct has occurred, such as physical or sexual abuse (including grooming) of children, or family violence; and/or ○ You have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed or attempted a sexual offence (including grooming) against a child under 16 years of age
Sexual abuse (against or in the presence of a child, including attempted)	
Grooming	
Emotional or psychological abuse	<p>Report to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Child Safety Officer, verbally or via email as soon as possible; <i>AND/OR</i> by submitting a Child Safety Incident Report Form. If deemed appropriate, the AIDA Vic Child Safety Officer will refer the matter to the AIDA Inc Ethics Committee • Child Protection (Department of Fairness, Families and Housing), <u>if</u> the child or young person has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of the abuse or neglect; <i>AND</i> • Victoria Police, <u>if</u> the child or young person is in immediate danger.
Neglect	
Reportable Conduct	<p>If the alleged perpetrator is an AIDA Victoria member, volunteer, or student the abuse or harm may constitute Reportable Conduct under the Reportable Conduct Scheme. In these situations, you must still complete the above reporting requirements and processes</p>

Child Safety Incident Reporting Process for AIDA Victoria

WHO must report?

AIDA Victoria Member

Volunteers

Students



WHAT to report?

Any Child Safety Incident (i.e., all child safety concerns or complaints), including:

- Direct or indirect disclosure of child abuse or harm (i.e. sexual, physical, emotional, psychological, neglect, grooming or exposure to family violence)
- Allegation, suspicion or observation of child abuse or harm
- Breach of AIDA Victoria's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, including the Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Child safety complaints against AIDA Victoria or its personnel
- Environmental risks that could increase the likelihood of abuse occurring.



Call 000 without delay if child is in immediate danger



HOW to report?

1. Determine what **immediate action** needs to take place to protect the child or young person from harm (or further harm), including whether the Police or Child Protection need to be contacted ASAP.
2. Start completing a **Child Safety Incident Report Form**, which will provide guidance on whether a report also needs to be made to any external authorities.
3. Decide if **further advice** is needed about how to proceed. If further advice is needed, contact the AIDA Victoria Child Safety Officer, who can provide advice on child safety matters and reporting requirements.

THEN:

4. **Complete and submit the Child Safety Incident Report Form** (including details of all external reports made) to AIDA Victoria's **Child Safety Officer** by email at childsafety@aidavic.com - no later than 24 hrs after incident.
5. Reportable Conduct notifications to the Commission for Children and Young People, which must be done by the AIDA Victoria Child Safety Officer.

4. Support

AIDA Victoria will provide appropriate post-incident support to those impacted by the incident, such as:

- The child / young person and their family (this includes any specific support needs for those who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander; Culturally and Linguistically Diverse; LGBTIQ+; have a disability; or are unable to live at home)
- Other children or young people who witnessed the incident
- Any AIDA Victoria member or volunteer who witnessed and/or reported the incident, or are otherwise impacted by the incident
- Any AIDA Victoria member or volunteer against whom a complaint is made.

Post-incident support options include:

- Facilitating a referral to appropriate community support services for any children, young people or family members involved in or impacted by the incident, such as:
 - Orange Door (www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au), formerly Child FIRST, which is the new access point for women, children and young people who are experiencing family violence, and families who need assistance regarding the care and wellbeing of their children or young people
 - Specialist services to ensure that culturally appropriate supports are put in place once a report is made, including services such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Family Welfare Organisations, CALD Support or Advocacy Services, Disability Support Services and Victims of Crime Support Services.
- Facilitating access to incident debriefing or counselling for AIDA Members who report (or are impacted by) Child Safety Incidents AIDA Victoria members and volunteers who are aware of the incident will be reminded that:
- Any allegation does not mean the person is guilty, and that the allegation will be properly investigated and will include the right to 'procedural fairness'; and
- They are not to discuss the matter with any person, except as directed by police, child protection authorities and / or AIDA Victoria's Child Safety Officer or unless required or authorised to do so by law, and only in direct relation to investigation of the allegation.

Record keeping

- AIDA Victoria is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns.
- All child safety complaints, concerns, incidents and near misses will be recorded in the incident reporting system.
- Records which may assist with the investigation of a complaint or safety concern will be identified and kept as part of the record of an investigation. Records will be kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint.
- We will record and keep the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints. This includes findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken.

Supporting documents

The following policies and procedures comprise the AIDA Victoria Child Safety and Wellbeing System and work together to support child safety and wellbeing across all our operations:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safety Complaints Process (see page 8)
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Incident Report Form

Supporting legislation

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)* (including Child Safe Standards)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)* (including reporting to Child Protection)
- *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* (including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences)
- *Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)* (including Part XIII – Organisational liability for child abuse)

Glossary of Terms

Child/ren

In this Policy the term child or children includes both children and young people under the age of 18 years.

Child abuse

Child abuse is defined in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)* as including:

- a sexual offence committed against a child
- an offence committed against a child under section 49M (1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), such as grooming
- physical violence against a child
- causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

Child safe organisation

A child safe organisation is one that creates a culture, adopts strategies, and takes action to promote child wellbeing and prevent harm to children and young people.

A child safe organisation consciously and systematically:

- Creates an environment where children's safety and wellbeing are at the centre of thought, values, and actions.
- Places emphasis on genuine engagement with and valuing of children and young people.
- Creates conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm to children and young people.
- Creates conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying any harm.
- Responds to any concerns, disclosures, allegations, or suspicions of harm.

Child Safe Standards

The Victorian Child Safe Standards are a compulsory framework that support organisations to promote the safety of children by requiring them to implement policies to prevent, respond to and report allegations of child abuse and harm. New updated Standards were released by the Victorian Government in 2021 and apply from 1 July 2022.

Child safety

In the context of the Child Safe Standards, 'child safety' means measures to protect a child from child abuse or harm.

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

A Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy clarifies the organisation's expectations about child safety and wellbeing systems and practices and how the organisation is meeting the Standards. The policy holds AIDA Vic Members and the organisation to account and may include statements to children, families, members, volunteers, and the community that an organisation is committed to child safety and wellbeing, as well as describing how that commitment will be met.

Child Safety Officer

A Child Safety Officer is a nominated person, or persons, that people within the organisation's community can go to with any child safety concerns or complaints. Their contact details are widely advertised around the organisation.

Communities

Communities means a group of people with whom a child shares common interests, experiences, social background, nationality, culture, beliefs, or identity.

Cultural rights

Cultural rights are the rights of each child (either individually or as part of a group of people) to develop and express their background, customs, social behaviour, language, religion or spirituality, beliefs, and way of living.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have distinct cultural rights to enjoy their identity and culture; maintain the use of their language; maintain their kinship ties; and maintain their relationship with the land, waters, and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs.

Cultural safety

Cultural safety is 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'. It empowers people and allows them to contribute and feel safe to be themselves.

Culturally and linguistically diverse

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) is a broad and inclusive term for communities with diverse language, ethnic background, nationality, dress, traditions, food, societal structures, art, and religion characteristics.¹

Culturally and linguistically diverse does not usually include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people because of their distinct history and experience as Australia's First Nations people. For the purposes of the Standards there are specific considerations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, however, we also acknowledge the cultural and linguistic diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Direct contact

Any contact between a person and a child that involves:

- physical contact; or
- face to face contact; or
- contact by post or other written communication; or
- contact by telephone or other oral communication; or
- contact by email or other electronic communication.

Disability

Disability means:

- the total or partial loss of a body part or a bodily function (such as mobility, sight, or hearing)
- the presence in the body of organisms that may cause disease
- malformation or disfigurement
- a mental or psychological disease or disorder
- learning difficulties.

Disability may be permanent, non-permanent or an increased chance of developing a disability in future. Disability also includes behaviour that may be a symptom or expression of disability even if that disability is not formally diagnosed.

Disclosure

A disclosure in the context of child safety is the process by which a child conveys or attempts to convey that they are being, or have been, abused. Disclosure can be verbal, non-verbal, or indicated through behaviour. A disclosure may be accidental or intentional, partial, or complete and victims may disclose in different ways to different people throughout their lives.

Adults may also convey that they were abused as a child or that they may have perpetrated abuse.

Duty of care

AIDA Victoria has a duty of care that is reasonable to prevent the abuse of a child by an individual associated with AIDA Victoria while the child is under AIDA Victoria's care, supervision, or authority.

Empowerment

Empowerment is building up children and strengthening their confidence in themselves and in an organisation. It involves equipping children with the skills and knowledge to make informed decisions and enabling them to increase control of their lives.

Equity

Equity is a state of fairness in which all children are equal and can participate fully and safely in an organisation, regardless of their background, characteristics, or beliefs. This requires that organisations understand that some children have different needs and may require different supports or assistance to feel safe, well and to participate fully.

Families

Families means people who make up the family unit for a child. Families may be made up of a wide variety of relationships, including those who are related by blood, marriage, adoption, kinship structures or other extended family structures. Families may include people who share in the daily tasks of living or share a very close, personal relationship.

Harm

Harm is damage to the health, safety, or wellbeing of a child, including as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual, and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.

Inclusive environment

Organisations with an inclusive environment:

- value all children
- respect their rights
- challenge all forms of discrimination
- understand and respond to the needs and capabilities of all children and their families, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families
- adjust their approaches to ensure all children feel safe, welcome and can participate.

Mandatory reporting

In accordance with the *Children Youth and Families Act*, the legal obligation of certain groups of people to report a reasonable belief of child physical or sexual abuse to child protection authorities.

Online environments

Online environments are any technological platforms which an organisation uses or controls, such as computers, phones, websites, intranet, social media, and video conference facilities regardless of where such platforms may be accessed by children.

Participation

Participation refers to opportunities for children to have their say and to inform decision-making. This includes engaging children in conversation where ideas are shared. This requires organisations to listen, to hear and to make appropriate changes based on what children share.

Policies

Policies are the documented rules, expectations, and positions of the organisation.

Practices

Practices are the rules, expectations, actions, or processes that are commonly or usually done by, or within, the organisation, regardless of whether those rules, expectations, actions, or processes are written down.

Procedures

Procedures are the documented actions and processes that put into operation the organisation's policies.

Processes

Processes are a systematic series of actions directed at achieving a particular outcome.

Reasonable belief

A belief is considered 'reasonable' if a reasonable person, doing the same work, would have formed the same belief on those grounds. Grounds for forming a belief are matters of which you have become aware, and any opinions in relation to those matters.

Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be as follows:

- 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; and/or
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Reportable allegation

In accordance with the definition provided in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act*, any information that leads a person to form a reasonable belief that an employee has committed Reportable Conduct, or misconduct that may involve Reportable Conduct, whether or not the conduct or misconduct is alleged to have occurred within the course of the person's employment.

Reportable conduct

In accordance with the definition in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act*, one or more of the following:

- sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child.

Risk

In the context of the Child Safe Standards, risk is exposure to the chance for harm or abuse of a child to occur in connection with an organisation.

Risk management

Risk management involves identifying, preventing, and minimising risk as much as is reasonably possible.

Volunteer

Volunteer means any person engaged by or a part of an organisation who provides a service without receiving a financial benefit, regardless of whether their role relates to children. There is no minimum period of engagement to be considered a volunteer.

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is a positive state of physical, mental, and emotional health. It generally means feeling safe, happy, and healthy more than momentarily.

Working With Children Check

A Working With Children Check is the process whereby an assessment is undertaken by the issuing authority (Department of Justice and Community Safety) to determine whether a person is suitable to work in child-related work.