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<b>RESPONSIBLE MANAGER:</b>	Manager - Student Engagement and Support
<b>CATEGORY:</b>	Governance
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<b>RELATED DOCUMENTS:</b>	<b>Legislation:</b> <a href="#">Ministerial Order 1359 – Child Safe Standards, Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools</a> Child Safe Standards (2022)
	<b>Documents:</b> PPP036 Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy PPP052 Duty of Care Guidelines PPP083 Staff Code of Conduct PPP083a Staff Code of Conduct - Child Safety PPP149 Student Code of Conduct PPP149b Student Code of Conduct - addendum PPP161 Risk Management Framework PPP141 Complaints Resolution procedure PPP106 Police and Working with Children Check PPP105 Recruitment and Selection Guidelines PPP170 SWDS Responding to Abuse and Neglect Guidelines PPP202 Professional Boundaries SWTAFE Induction Program and Annual Corporate Refresher Child Safe Standards – VRQA guidelines and resources Department of Education and Training – ‘Child Protect’ resources ‘Commission for Children and Young People’ Resources

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## Introduction

South West TAFE (SWTAFE or the ‘Organisation’) has a zero tolerance to child abuse and is committed to embedding an organisational culture of child safety and wellbeing. These Guidelines demonstrate a strong commitment to ensuring that children are safe when in the care of the organisation, and provides an outline of the procedures and practices implemented to keep everyone safe from harm, including all forms of abuse.

They provide a framework for:

- the development of a Child Safety & Wellbeing Program inclusive of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child safety and wellbeing within the organisation;
- the creation of a positive and robust child safety and wellbeing culture;
- the promotion and open discussion of child safety and wellbeing issues within the organisation;
- complying with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child safety in Victoria.

## Definition of a Child

For the purposes of implementing a child safe culture and environment, a child is inclusive of anyone under the age of 18 years of age. It is not restricted to students of South West TAFE.

## Child Safety & Wellbeing Principles

SWTAFE's commitment to child safety and wellbeing is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse.

1. All children have the right to be safe and their safety is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture
2. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility
3. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount and their views and privacy must be respected
4. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our organisation's community
5. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our PPP083 Staff Code of Conduct, PPP083a Staff Code of Conduct – Child Safety and PPP202 Professional Boundaries Guidelines
6. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, volunteers, third party contractors and external education providers who have direct contact with children
7. Child safety training is mandatory for all South West TAFE Board members, staff and volunteers More in depth training targeting staff who engage with children and vulnerable people will be conducted on an annual basis.
8. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the organisation's community
9. Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
10. Children will be supported to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights
11. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support
12. Children identifying as part of the LGBTQIA+ community have the right to special care & support
13. We have zero tolerance of racism and expectations that staff and volunteers will act on incidents of racism

## Children's Rights to Safety and Participation

SWTAFE has an ethical and legal responsibility to develop and implement strategies that embed a culture of child safety, as per Ministerial Order 1359. These include allocating roles and responsibilities; keeping staff informed; and periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and revising them where appropriate.

We encourage all our students –*whether they are a child or not by definition* - to express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them. We listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them. We teach students about what they can do if they feel unsafe, and listen to and act on any concern's students, or their parents or carers raise with us.

## Valuing Diversity and Inclusion

We value and celebrate diversity including cultural diversity, and we do not tolerate discriminatory practices. To achieve this, we promote the:

- cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students and their families
- cultural safety, participation and empowerment from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) and their families
- personal safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability and their families to make them feel welcome and part of all aspects of school life
- personal safety, participation and empowerment of LGBTQIA+ students and their families make them feel welcome and part of all aspects of school life

## Our Child Safety & Wellbeing Program

Our Child Safety & Wellbeing Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work practices, policies and procedures and information channels to protect children from abuse. It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators;
- clear procedures and channels for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse;
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, volunteers (direct and indirect), third party contractors, external education providers, parents and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters;
- procedures for recruiting and screening staff and volunteers; and processes for monitoring third party service contractors;
- support strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe and encouraged to raise concerns;
  - Child Safe contact officers
  - Classroom discussion
  - Reporting information present throughout our organisation
  - Wellbeing officers present and in contact with children
  - Reporting documents and help displayed
- policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities;
- a child safety and wellbeing training program;
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children;
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality;
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards); and
- a system for continuous improvement and review

### Responsibilities

Child safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility. Anyone acting on behalf of SWTAFE including staff, the Board, volunteers, and third-party contractors have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children.

Specific responsibilities include:

- **South West TAFE Board**  
Each member of the Board is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the organisation's *Child Safety & Wellbeing Guidelines* and related Programs to be effectively implemented and are responsible for holding the CEO with the support of the Executive team, accountable for effective implementation.
- **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**  
The CEO is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this *Child Safety & Wellbeing Guideline* and related Programs are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child safety culture is maintained within the organisation.
- **Child Safety Contact Officers**  
A number of staff members are nominated as the organisation's Child Safe Contact Officers. They receive additional specialised training with respect to child safety issues, and are responsible for championing child safety and wellbeing and assisting in coordinating responses to child safety incidents.
- **Staff Members and Volunteers**  
All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our *Child Safety and Wellbeing Guidelines* and related Programs and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the organisation's Contact Officers.

All staff are required to sign a Staff Code of Conduct PPP083 which recognises the critical role that staff play in protecting the students in our care and establishes clear expectations of employees, volunteers, and contractors for appropriate behaviour with children in order to safeguard them against abuse and or neglect. The Code of Conduct also protects staff through clarification of

acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

All staff are required to observe and supervise interactions between children and adults within our service and report all concerns immediately.

- **Our Student Body**

All South West TAFE students are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the organisation's environment. Students will be informed of South West TAFE's Child Safety and Wellbeing Guidelines PPP036 and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy PPP012 through the Student Code of Conduct PPP149 and Student Code of Conduct – addendum PPP149b, and will be made aware of what to do to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse.

- **Third Party Contractors**

All third-party contractors (service providers) engaged by the organisation are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the organisation's environment. All service providers engaged by the organisation are required to be familiar with our PPP012 Child Safety and Wellbeing Guidelines. South West TAFE may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the service provider and this information will form part of their induction.

- **External Education Providers**

An external education provider is any organisation or individual that has been engaged to deliver a specified course of study, workshop, forum or guest speaking session. The delivery of such a course may take place on South West TAFE premises or elsewhere. All external education providers engaged by the organisation are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the organisation's environment, and are required to be familiar with our Child Safety & Wellbeing Guidelines PPP012. South West TAFE may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the service provider and this information will form part of their induction.

## **Recruiting and Inducting Staff and Volunteers**

SWTAFE will apply the most thorough and rigorous standards in the recruitment and screening of staff and volunteers. Our Recruitment and Selection Guidelines PPP105 specify the requirement to interview and conduct referee checks on all staff and volunteers and require police checks and Working with Children Clearance (WWCC) to be submitted.

As a part of the SWTAFE's induction process, all staff, volunteers and Board Members are required to participate in training on child safety. Induction programs for third party service contractors and external education providers also contain information in relation to child safety to ensure they are consistent with the organisation's approach to child safety.

Our commitment to child safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for staff and volunteer positions, as per our recruitment practices.

## **Breach**

Where a SWTAFE employee is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within these Guidelines, the organisation may start a disciplinary process for a breach of the Staff Code of Conduct PPP083. This may result in disciplinary consequences.

Where the CEO is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within these Guidelines the concerned party is advised to contact the Chair of the Board.

## **Reporting Concerns**

SWTAFE's nominated primary Child Safe Officer is the **Team Leader of Student Wellbeing and Support**. In addition, SWTAFE have a number of Child Safe Contact Officers throughout its campuses. Our Child Safe Program ensure that Child Safety Contact Officers are trained and able to provide detailed guidance as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

## OFFICIAL

Third party contractors, external education providers, students, parents/carers or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact one of the organisation's Child Safety Contact Officers or report their concerns directly to an appropriate external authority.

The organisation's Complaints Manager will undertake an initial evaluation of any complaints made in relation to child safety and refer on to the organisation's Child Safety Officer. Communications will be treated confidentially on a "need to know basis".

### **Risk Management**

SWTAFE adopts a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of the activity being undertaken; the physical and online environments; and the demographic and characteristics of our student body from time to time.

### **Communication**

Information about SWTAFE's commitment to the protection of children will be communicated through our public website as well as through other relevant marketing and communication mediums. Where possible, opportunity will be given for family and community to provide feedback on Child Safety provisions.

### **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

SWTAFE is committed to making diversity, equity and inclusion part of everything we do, including in the implementation of this policy/procedure/guideline. For more information, please visit the 'Our Values' page on our [website](#) [external] or the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Homepage on ECHO [internal]. [Diversity, Equity & Inclusion \(DEI\)](#)

### **Statement of Commitment to Child Safety**

South West TAFE is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a Child Safe Program designed to keep children safe within our organisation. For Child Safe key documents, resources, contact officer details please go to: [Child Safe Commitment](#)