

CHILD SAFEGUARDING CODE OF CONDUCT

CODE OF CONDUCT

All personnel (employees, volunteers, interns and Board members) and associates (MOU partners, consultants, contractors and subcontractors) engaged by the Children First Foundation (**Children First**) are required to sign this code of conduct prior to engaging in Children First programs, projects, or activities and to adhere to this code of conduct while performing their duties.

This Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct aims to keep children safe from abuse and exploitation. It serves to protect those in contact and engaging with Children First from misunderstandings by providing clear behavioural guidelines and expectations that assist in establishing and maintaining clear professional boundaries when working with or having contact with children.

I, the person named below, acknowledge that I have read and understood the Children First Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, and agree that in the course of my involvement with Children First programs, I must adhere to the behavioural expectations and standards outlined below.

1. General Professionalism

I will:

- (a) Work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of Children First
- (b) Be professional in my actions
- (c) Maintain a duty of care towards others
- (d) Be fair, considerate, and honest with others
- (e) Maintain strict impartiality
- (f) Not discriminate against any child, young person, or their family
- (g) Not give or provide children with alcohol or illegal drugs
- (h) Not work with children or young people while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- (i) At all times, be aware of my behaviour and avoid actions or behaviours that could be perceived by others as child exploitation and abuse (Appendix A).

2. Child Safe Responsibilities

I will:

- (a) Establish and maintain a child-safe environment
- (b) Treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas and opinions regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic, or social origin, property, disability, or other status
- (c) Respect the privacy of children and young people, their families, and parents/guardians, and only disclose information to people who need to know

- (d) Be alert to the forms and possible signs of child abuse (see Appendix A for some examples), including child grooming
- (e) Act as a positive role model when interacting with children and young people
- (f) Conduct myself in accordance with the Children First Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and this Code of Conduct
- (g) Not engage in any activity with a child or young person that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them
- (h) Endeavour to empower children and their parents/guardians and provide them with the required information and resources to support their safety and allow them to make decisions.
- (i) Promote the cultural safety, inclusion, participation, and empowerment of all children
- (j) Where appropriate, clarify cultural expectations with a child's parent, guardian, or carer in relation to support requirements for their child
- (k) Not discriminate against any child, parent, guardian, or carer.

3. Professional Boundaries

I will:

- (a) Ensure all children receive appropriate attention and opportunities (no favouritism)
- (b) Conduct all activities and communication with children and their families within the scope of my role at Children First
- (c) Respect boundaries with children and their families.

I will not:

- (d) Develop a relationship with a specific child, young person or parent/guardian for my own needs
- (e) Show favouritism through the provision of gifts¹ or inappropriate attention to a specific child, young person or parent/guardian.
- (f) Invite children into my private residence, hotel room or a remote or isolated location unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger
- (g) Sleep in a room with a child or their parent/guardian unless necessary, in which case the CEO's permission must be obtained, and another adult must be present if possible
- (h) Engage in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity (as defined under the Criminal Code Act 1995) with any child, parent or guardian who engages with Children First programs or activities
- (i) Hire or otherwise engage children for domestic or other labour, which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, or interferes with their

¹ Individual gift-giving of material gifts or money to child/young person/guardian/parent is never permitted. Children First, however, gratefully accepts donations and will distribute them according to our vision, mission and need across program areas. Any organisation wishing to support or 'sponsor' a specific child must do so through Children First, and this must be approved by the appropriate manager, including any gift giving.

time available for education and recreational activities, or places them at significant risk of injury.

4. Reporting Responsibilities

I will:

- (a) Immediately disclose to Children First's Chief Executive Officer all charges, convictions, and allegations against me in relation to child exploitation and abuse (including those under the local or traditional law), which occurred before, or occurs during, my involvement with Children First
- (b) Uphold mandatory reporting obligations as it applies to my location and occupation
- (c) Immediately report concerns or allegations of child abuse (see Appendix A for some examples of child abuse) and exploitation in accordance with Children First's child safe complaints reporting process
- (d) Report child abuse incidents (see Appendix A for some examples of child abuse) to the Police in accordance with Failure to Disclose obligations in Victoria or Failure to Protect laws as they apply in other relevant States / Territories

5. Communication

I will:

- (a) Talk to children in a professional and supportive manner
- (b) Use positive language that creates a fun and inclusive environment
- (c) Listen to and respect the ideas and opinions of all children and parents/ guardians
- (d) Provide opportunities for children to raise their concerns
- (e) Promote friendships and encourage children to support their peers
- (f) Only use authorised Children First channels to communicate with children, parents, or guardians, for example, by work email or telephone

I will not:

- (h) Use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate, whether in person or online
- (i) Shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle, or degrade children or young people
- (j) Engage in open discussions of a sexual, manipulative, violent, or adult nature (that are physically, mentally, emotionally or spiritually beyond a child's level of understanding) in the presence of children or young people
- (k) Arrange, seek to, or contact any child outside Children First programs and activities; this is inclusive of direct contact or any contact via telephone or online, including social media platforms

6. Supervision

I will:

- (a) Wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children

- (b) Ensure younger children remain in close proximity and are supervised at all times either by their parent/guardian or carer, or a Children First staff member or volunteer
- (c) Ensure all children are supervised at all times either by their parent/guardian or carer, or a Children First staff member or volunteer and adhere to the ratios outlined in Children First's risk management strategy (when available).

I will not:

- (d) Be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily and will actively minimise any time this may occur
- (e) Take children into rooms or areas that are not visible by other Children First personnel or the child's parent, guardian, or carer
- (f) Provide unauthorised transportation to a child or their parent/guardians

7. Physical Contact

I will:

- (a) Only use physical contact that is appropriate to the situation, and if necessary (e.g. if it is required for the child's safety due to their medical condition)
- (b) Seek consent from a child or (for young children) their parent/guardian if I am required to use physical contact. I will ensure the child/guardian is aware of why physical contact is required and understands (using an interpreter when necessary).
- (c) Respect and respond to signs that a child is uncomfortable with physical touch, even if verbal consent is given by the parent/guardian or child
- (d) Try to use verbal directions rather than physical touch if it is suitable
- (e) Ensure that any necessary physical contact is also culturally and religiously appropriate
- (f) Use non-intrusive touch to comfort a child who is upset or to encourage a child to participate, such as a handshake or pat on the back / upper arm.

I will not:

- (g) Initiate unnecessary physical contact, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves (unless required to do so based on the child's medical condition)
- (h) Initiate, permit, or request unacceptable physical contact with a child, such as massages or kisses.
- (i) Facilitate situations that may result in unnecessary close contact with a child, such as wrestling or tickling.
- (j) Touch children in areas of a sexual nature, such as the breasts, buttocks, or genitals.
- (k) Discipline other people's children, including physical punishment of any kind under any circumstances.

8. Use of Photographic and Video Devices

When photographing or filming a child or using children's images or personal information for work-related purposes, I must do all things necessary to:

- (a) Ensure that individual cultural traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images are adhered to before photographing or filming a child
- (b) Ensure that all images and footage of children are represented in a dignified and respectful manner (i.e. adequately clothed and depicted in a manner which is not vulnerable, submissive or sexually suggestive)
- (c) Ensure that images of children are honest and factual representations of the context in which they were taken
- (d) Ensure to obtain Children First consent before storing, transferring or using any images for medical, education, monitoring, promotional and/or fundraising purposes.
- (e) Not store images of a child or young person on my personal device
- (f) Not share or post images, videos or stories of a child or young person (other than sharing approved, posted official Children First content) to personal social media accounts or outside of the organisation
- (g) Not photograph or video a child or young person (or use any resulting photographs or video in any media releases, promotional or appeal materials) without the consent of the child and his/her/their parent(s) or guardian(s) or young person and also the consent of Children First whether the child or young person is in the care of Children First or after they have ceased to be in the care of Children First.
- (h) I will do everything I can to ensure children do not have access to any images or media that would be rated beyond their age or maturity (G, PG, etc), including music, cartoons, photos, videos, etc.

9. Use of the Online Environment

I will:

- (a) Comply with the Children First Social Media Policy

I will not:

- (c) Add any children on social media (e.g. send a request or accept them as 'friends' on Facebook or follow them on Instagram or other platforms) before, during or after their stay in our care
- (d) Publish any photos of a child (including via the internet or social media other than resharing Children First official content/posts/stories) without authorisation from Children First
- (e) Use any technology (including but not limited to computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras, or social media) to exploit or harass children or access child exploitation material through any medium.

10. Reporting a Breach of the Code of Conduct

I acknowledge that I am required to report to the Children First Child Safety Officers any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children.

I understand that the responsibility is on me, as a person involved with Children First at all times, to abide by this code of conduct and all relevant Australian and local laws and to avoid actions or behaviours which may be construed as child exploitation or abuse.

I understand that if I breach this Code of Conduct, I will face disciplinary action, including and up to termination of employment or cessation of involvement with Children First.

Signed _____ Date _____

Full name _____

Name of employer / organisation (if applicable) _____

Nature of my involvement with Children First Foundation
(eg CFF Board member/ CFF employee/ volunteer / contractor)

Office use only

Version of this Code of Conduct: [August 2025]

Policy document	Version current at the date this Code of Conduct is to be signed
Children First Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy	
Children First Social Media Policy	
Children First's child-safe complaints reporting process	

Appendix A – Behaviours that may Constitute Child Abuse

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse refers to the intentional or reckless use of physical force that results in or has the likelihood of resulting in harm to the child's health, survival, development and/or dignity. It may also include the threat of abuse where the child reasonably fears it may occur.

Unacceptable behaviours	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hitting, punching, kicking or slapping a child• Choking or suffocating a child• Throwing items or using items to hurt a child• Dragging or pushing a child	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Threatening to hurt a child through words or gestures• Restraining or locking a child up• Using hostile force towards a child• Engaging in rough physical games

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is any act that exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes that the child does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to and/or is not developmentally prepared for. It also includes acts that are contrary to acceptable community standards.

Unacceptable behaviours	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sexual touching of a child• Sexual contact with a child• Possessing or creating child abuse material• Sharing explicit photos of a child• Exposing a child to pornography or other indecent material	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using a camera to record a child while they are dressing or bathing• Using sexual language or gestures in the presence of children• Sexual comments, conversations or communications with a child• Comments that express a desire to act in a sexual manner with a child

Child Grooming

Child grooming is a form of sexual abuse. It refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing a personal connection with a child, in order to prepare the child for sexual abuse.

Unacceptable behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using a computer, mobile phone, camera or other device or exploit or harass a child• Unacceptable personal communication that explores sexual feelings or intimate personal feelings with a child• Sharing details with a child of personal sexual experiences• Inappropriately extending a relationship with a child outside of work• Giving a child special attention or isolating them from peers with the intention of making it easier to access the child for sexual activity• Offering a child gifts, money, attention or affection with the intention of making it easier to access the child for sexual activity• Making close physical contact, like inappropriate tickling and 'play' wrestling

Emotional/Psychological Abuse

Emotional or Psychological Abuse refers to inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts towards a child. It can also refer to a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurturing and emotional availability. It is behaviour towards a child that is likely to damage their self-esteem or social competence.

Unacceptable behaviours	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teasing or bullying a child• Yelling at a child• Persistent criticism of a child• Refusing to acknowledge a child's worth and the legitimacy of their needs• Persistent rejection of or hostility towards a child	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliberately preventing a child from forming friendships• Encouraging a child to engage in destructive antisocial behaviour• Making a child feel worthless, unloved, alone or frightened• Exposing a child to family violence

Neglect

Neglect refers to when a person responsible for the care of a child, fails to provide a child with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their growth, development, and wellbeing. Neglectful behaviours can be an act of omission or undertaken by wilful choice.

Unacceptable behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Depriving a child of necessities such as food, drink, clothing, medical care/treatment or shelter• Failing to protect a child from abuse, such as failure to report abuse when a child makes a disclosure• Exposing a child to a harmful environment• Failing to adequately supervise a child, resulting in injury or harm