

## Child Safety and Protection Policy and Procedures

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 **Australian Camps Association (ACA)/ People Outdoors** is committed to ensuring that children and young people who participate in its activities have a safe and happy experience. ACA/ People Outdoors has zero tolerance for the abuse or neglect of children.

1.2 The aim of the ACA and People Outdoors' Child Safe Policy is to protect the safety of children in our care and prevent abuse from occurring, and in the event that allegations are raised in relation to child abuse, to ensure that the allegations are appropriately addressed. All complaints will be treated seriously, fully investigated and handled with complete confidentiality and discretion. Everyone working and volunteering at **ACA/People Outdoors** is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse / neglect.

1.3 Should a person wish to make any enquiries in relation to this Policy, please contact Melissa Puccio, People Outdoors Manager, 0402 606 620.

## **2. PURPOSE**

2.1 The purpose of these procedures is to: Ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse / neglect and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse / neglect and/or detecting such abuse / neglect when it occurs.

2.2 Provide guidance to staff/volunteers/contractors as to what action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse / neglect within or outside of the organisation.

## **3. SCOPE**

3.1 This Policy applies to everyone involved in or connected to the ACA and People Outdoors including (but not limited to) participants, parents, contractors, officials, volunteers and staff throughout all ACA and People Outdoors' events and activities.

3.2 This Policy will continue to apply retrospectively to a person or Member following the cessation of their association or employment with the ACA or People Outdoors.

## **4. RESPONSIBILITIES**

4.1 The Board of Australian Camps Association has ultimate responsibility for creating a culture of child safety, responding to any child safety concerns while on programs delivered by the ACA (e.g. ACA/People Outdoors) and for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place.

4.2 The CEO and People Outdoors Manager is responsible for:

- Responding to and investigating reports of child abuse;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures and the organisation's Code of Conduct;
- Ensuring that all adults within the ACA/People Outdoors community are aware of their obligation to report suspected abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe the Code of Conduct (particularly as it relates to child safety);
- Providing support for staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child safety responsibilities.

4.3 All managers must ensure that they:

- Promote child safety at all times;
- Assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and eradicate / minimise any risk to the extent possible;
- Educate employees about the prevention and detection of child abuse;
- Facilitate the reporting of any disclosures, inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities;

- Have used child friendly methods for children to know the standards of care they are entitled to, particularly their rights;
- Educate the children in their care to know how to raise concerns, make complaints or let someone know they feel unsafe.

4.4 The ACA and People Outdoors is also:

- Committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.
- Supports the active participation of all children. It listens to their views, respects their views and involves them when making decisions, where appropriate, especially about matters that will directly affect them (including their safety).

4.5 Management should be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within their area of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

4.6 All staff/volunteers/contractors share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

4.7 Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, and ACA/People Outdoors's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements;

4.8 Report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the **Lead Disability Support Worker (LDSW)** as their first point of contact or to the relevant authorities (such as the police and / or the state-based child protection service) and fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters:

- Report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to the LDSW (or, if their LDSW is involved in the suspicion, to the next most responsible paid person (example PO Camp Coordinator or PO Manager) within ACA/People Outdoors), and:
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional, psychological and physical safety.

## 5. RELATED DOCUMENTS & LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

5.1 This Policy must be read in conjunction with:

The Commission for Children and Young People (VIC) Child Safe Standards 2022 Edition

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)

Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 (Vic)

Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)

Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)

ACA and People Outdoors policies and procedures, including but not limited to:

Privacy Policy;

Codes of behaviour;

Grievance and Discipline procedures;

## DEFINITIONS

**Child** means a person involved in the activities of (Organisation) (including athletes) and under the age of 18 years unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child (e.g. for the purposes of child sexual offences in Victoria, a “child” refers to a person under the age of 16 years).

**Child Abuse** is the mistreatment of a Child or Young Person that has Harmed, is Harming or is likely to Harm or endanger that Child or Young Person’s physical or emotional health, development or wellbeing and the Child has not, or is not likely to be protected by the parent(s) or guardian(s). For the avoidance of doubt, this includes but is not limited to Emotional or Psychological Abuse, Bullying, Grooming, Sexual Exploitation, Neglect and Harassment.

**Child protection** means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from Harm.

**Grooming** is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator of Abuse builds a relationship with a Child with a view to abusing them at some stage. There is no set pattern in relation to the Grooming of Children. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period of time before the Abuse begins. The Child may be given special attention and what starts as an apparently normal display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation and then into more serious sexual behaviour. Other perpetrators may draw a Child in and Abuse them relatively quickly. Some abusers do not groom Children but Abuse them without forming a relationship at all. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sports and religious activities, or in internet chatrooms, in social media or by other technological channels.

**Harm** means Harm to a person or a Child is any detrimental effect of a significant nature to the person or Child’s physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:

- Physical, Psychological or Emotional Abuse or Neglect;
- Sexual Abuse or Exploitation;

- a single act, omission or circumstance; and
- a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.

**Sexual offence (in Victoria)** means a criminal offence involving sexual activity or actions of indecency or any act which exposes a child under the age of 16 years to, or involves a child under the age of 16 years in, sexual activity or matters beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually offence behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes grooming, which includes actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child under the age of 16 years (or their carer, family or supervisor) to lower their inhibitions and prepare them for engagement in a sexual offence.

**Mandatory reporter** means a person who is legally required to make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services or the Police if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child needs protection. It includes (but is not limited to) teachers, principals, registered psychologists, nurses, doctors and midwives.

**Reasonable grounds for belief** are having a concern about the safety and wellbeing of children ranging from an uncomfortable feeling through to a direct observation or a disclosure by a child. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- Concerns about a physical environment that may pose a risk to children,
- Inappropriate or special relationships developing between staff or volunteers and children,
- Inadequate staff – child supervision ratios,
- Breaches of the Code of Conduct, particularly if they are persistent,
- Feelings of discomfort about interactions between a staff member or volunteer and a child,
- Suspicions or beliefs that children are at risk of harm,
- Observations of concerning changes in behaviour,
- Children’s disclosures of abuse or harm (including seeing signs of potential abuse on a child’s body).

## 6. RECOGNISING AND REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

6.1 A person may, in the course of participating in the camps or other activities of People Outdoors and the ACA or carrying out their work, form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse.

6.2 If a person is concerned about an immediate risk to a child's safety, the person must phone Victoria Police on "000" as soon as practicable.

6.3 Specific types of **Child abuse** include:

6.3.1 **Physical abuse:** occurs when a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant Harm as a result of a physical injury, such as a non-accidental physical injury.

6.3.2 **Sexual abuse:** occurs when a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant Harm as a result of sexual abuse, such as when a child is exploited, or used by another for his or her sexual gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others.

6.3.3 **Emotional and psychological abuse:** occurs when a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological Harm of such a kind that the child's emotional or intellectual development is or is likely to be significantly damaged; and

6.3.4 **Neglect:** occurs when a child's physical development or health has been, or is likely to be significantly damaged. It refers to an omission, such as depriving a child of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care.

## 7. EMPLOYMENT OF NEW PERSONNEL

7.1 ACA/People Outdoors undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all workers and volunteers which:

- Promotes and protects the safety of all children under the care of the organisation;
- Identifies the safest and most suitable people who share ACA/People Outdoors's values and commitment to protect children; and
- Prevents a person from working at ACA/People Outdoors if they pose a risk to children.

7.2 ACA/People Outdoors requires all workers/volunteers to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with ACA/People Outdoors.

7.3 ACA/People Outdoors requires applicants to provide a clear NDIS Worker Safety Screening Check in accordance with the law and as appropriate, before they commence working at ACA/People Outdoors and during their time with ACA/People Outdoors at regular intervals.

7.4 ACA/People Outdoors requires applicants to provide a current Working with Children Check in accordance with the law and as appropriate, before they commence working at ACA/People Outdoors and during their time with ACA/People Outdoors at regular intervals.

7.5 ACA/People Outdoors requires applicants to sign organisational Code of Conduct before they commence working at ACA/People Outdoors.

7.6 ACA/People Outdoors will undertake thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure.

7.7 Once engaged, workers/volunteers must review and acknowledge their understanding of this Policy.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

8.1 ACA/People Outdoors will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach.

8.2 On People Outdoors programs, two staff members must be present at all times when supporting campers with personal care/self-care.

8.3 When transporting campers, there should always be two staff members present. Staff must not travel alone with campers.

8.4 The Australian Camps Association will have a Governance sub-committee committed to identifying and managing risks at ACA/People Outdoors. Board Directors, staff members and volunteers will receive regular training in relation to child safety.

8.5 LDSW/DSW's are required to update Mandatory Reporting Training every year.

## **9. REPORTING**

9.1 Any staff member, volunteer, contractor, child or other family member of a ACA/People Outdoors client who has been recipient of a disclosure or has grounds to suspect abusive activity, must immediately notify the most senior person on the ACA/People Outdoors program as their first point of contact. If this is not possible then they are to contact the appropriate child protection service or the police, then the CEO.

9.2 In situations where the supervisor is suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the next highest level of supervision.

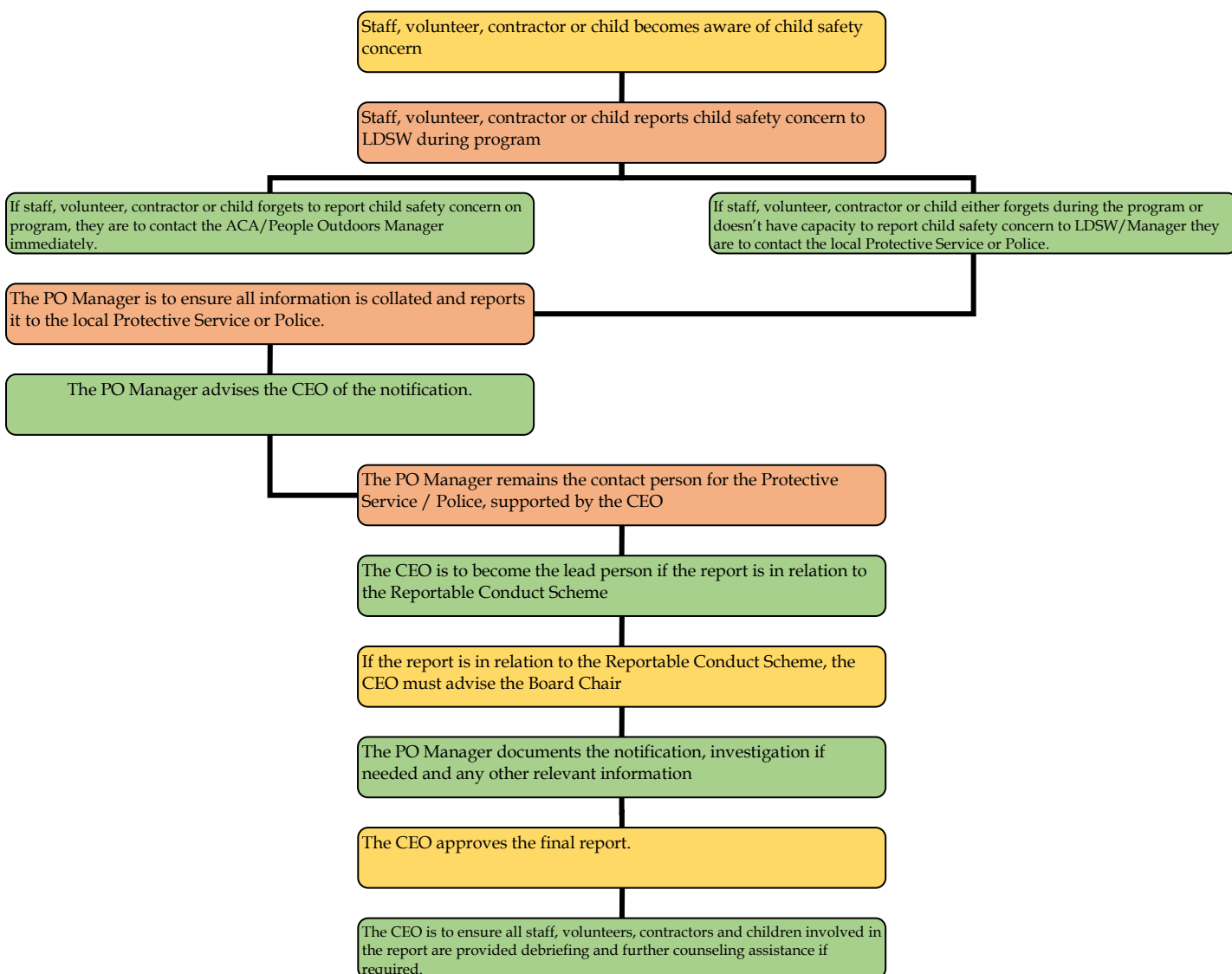
## 10. PEOPLE OUTDOORS Lead Disability Support Worker (LDSW)

10.1 The People Outdoors LDSW is the first point of contact for all staff, volunteers and children when in receipt of a disclosure or has a concern about the safety of a child on a ACA/People Outdoors program.

## 11. PEOPLE OUTDOORS MANAGER

11.1 The ACA/People Outdoors Manager is the first point of contact for the LDSW. The ACA/People Outdoors Manager will ensure all report forms have been completed and will then contact and work with the Protective Service or Police to report and manage the child safety concern. After the first engagement with Protective Services / Police, the ACA/People Outdoors Manager will advise the CEO of the child safety notification. If an investigation of the notification is required, the CEO will complete this alongside the Protective Service / Police and with appropriate support from ACA/People Outdoors Manager.

### Flow chart of investigation





- I. Staff, volunteer, contractor or child becomes aware of child safety concern
- II. Staff, volunteer, contractor or child reports child safety concern to LDSW during program
  - a. If staff, volunteer, contractor or child forgets to report child safety concern on program, they are to contact the ACA/People Outdoors Manager immediately
  - b. If staff, volunteer, contractor or child either forgets during the program or doesn't have capacity to report child safety concern to LDSW/Manager they are to contact the local Protective Service or Police
- III. The People Outdoors (PO) Manager is to ensure all information is collated and reports it to the local Protective Service or Police.
- IV. The PO Manager advises the CEO of the notification.
- V. The PO Manager remains the contact person for the Protective Service / Police, supported by the CEO.
- VI. The CEO is to become the lead person if the report is in relation to the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- VII. If the report is in relation to the Reportable Conduct Scheme, the CEO must advise the Board Chair.
- VIII. The PO Manager documents the notification, investigation if needed and any other relevant information.
- IX. The CEO approves the final report.
- X. The CEO is to ensure all staff, volunteers, contractors and children involved in the report are provided debriefing and further counseling assistance if required.

## **12. MANDATORY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:**

12.1 Although everyone has a moral and social responsibility to report concerns about child abuse, some professionals are legally required to make a report to Child Protection if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type. Doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers and school principals, police, youth workers, social workers and psychologists are mandatory reporters under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005.

## **13. Voluntary Reporters**

13.1 In addition to the mandatory reporting obligations above, any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from any form of child abuse, *may*

disclose that information to the Police, DHHS or the Commissioner for Children & Young People (CCYP).

#### **14. INVESTIGATING**

14.1 If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to conduct an investigation of this report, all employees, contractors or volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

14.2 Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the CEO will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the CEO may decide to conduct such an investigation. All employees, contractors and volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

14.3 Any such investigation will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.

14.4 The CEO will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of staff may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

14.5 After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the CEO shall coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and / or law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process, as deemed appropriate.

#### **15. REPORTABLE CONDUCT SCHEME**

15.1 If the child protection concern relates to an adult volunteer or adult staff member of ACA or ACA/People Outdoors then the head of ACA and ACA/People Outdoors, which is the CEO, must follow the following procedure outlined by The Commission for Children and Young People.

- respond to a reportable allegation made against a worker or volunteer from ACA / ACA/People Outdoors, by ensuring that allegations are appropriately investigated
- report allegations which may involve criminal conduct to the police
- notify Commission for Children and Young People of allegations within three business days after becoming aware of the allegation
- give Commission for Children and Young People certain detailed information about the allegation within 30 days after becoming aware of the allegation
- after the investigation has concluded, give Commission for Children and Young People certain information including a copy of the findings of the investigation

- ensure that their organisation has systems in place to:
  - prevent reportable conduct from being committed by a worker or volunteer within the course of their employment
  - enable any person to notify the head of a reportable allegation
  - enable any person to notify Commission for Children and Young People of a reportable allegation involving the head
  - investigate and respond to a reportable allegation against a worker of volunteer from that organisation.

15.2 There are five types of ‘reportable conduct’:

- 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.

## **16. ACA and People Outdoors Approach to Reports of Abuse**

16.1 The ACA and People Outdoors supports and encourages a person to make a report to the Police, CCYP or DHHS if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection, or they are concerned about the safety, health or wellbeing of a child.

16.2 Any person that makes a report in good faith in accordance with their reporting obligations (whether mandatory or voluntary) will be supported by the ACA and People Outdoors, and will not be penalised by the ACA or People Outdoors for making the report.

16.3 If a person is uncertain as to whether they should make a report to an external authority in relation to the safety of a child, they may speak to the Australian Camps Association CEO guidance and information. If in doubt, ask for assistance.

16.4 If an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer, People Outdoors and ACA will follow the reporting procedure outlined in Participant Safety and Protection Procedure and take all steps to ensure that the safety of the child and other children is paramount.

16.5 People Outdoors and the ACA will investigate allegations of inappropriate conduct against a child in accordance with procedural fairness and will handle the allegations in a confidential and sensitive manner to the greatest extent possible.

16.6 People Outdoors and the ACA will keep a register of any allegations regarding inappropriate conduct.

## **17. RESPONDING**

17.1 If it is alleged that a member of staff, contractor or a volunteer may have committed an offence or have breached the organisation's policies or its Code of Conduct the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted in partnership with Commission for Children and Young People.

## **18. PRIVACY**

18.1 All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. ACA/People Outdoors will have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

18.2 Everyone is entitled to know how the personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.

## **19. POLICY PROMOTION**

19.1 This policy will be made available to all members via the People Outdoors and ACA Website

19.2 This policy will be communicated to all stakeholders via team meetings and email alert.

## **20. RECORD KEEPING**

20.1 People Outdoors and the ACA will retain records of reports of child abuse and complaints about child safety.

20.2 In maintaining records of reports about child safety, the ACA and People Outdoors will maintain confidentiality and privacy for children and families in accordance with legislation.

20.3 The ACA and People Outdoors will appropriately note identified risks to child safety through the record keeping process and will incorporate those into its risk management plan.

## **21 REVIEW PROCESS**

21.1 This policy will be reviewed by the ACA Board on a biennial basis.

21.2 If you would like to provide People Outdoors or the ACA with any feedback or suggestions to improve this policy, please contact Melissa Puccio at [melissa@auscamps.asn.au](mailto:melissa@auscamps.asn.au).

21.3 In addition to the regular review of this policy, recommendations for changes to the policy may be submitted to the Board for consideration at any time. In the event that changes are accepted, the policy will be updated, and circulated to all stakeholders via the webpage, bulletin and other appropriate communication channels.