



Child Safe Standards Statement of Commitment

APPROVAL DATE: 25 January 2017

APPROVED BY: Senior Executive Team

Commitment

Zoos Victoria is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who visit our zoos.

Zoos Victoria has zero tolerance for inappropriate behaviour towards anybody on our properties.

Zoos Victoria is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety* of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person at Zoos Victoria working directly with children and young people has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays to ensure the wellbeing and safety of those children and young people.

To deliver on its commitment to child safety, Zoos Victoria;

- Takes a proactive approach to child safety;
- Fosters a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
- Respects diversity in cultures while keeping child safety paramount;
- Provides staff and volunteers who work directly with children and young people with guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
- Engages only the most suitable people to work with children and ensures adequate staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
- Ensures children know who to talk with if they are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
- Reports suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
- Shares information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk.
- All Zoos Victoria staff employed in face-to-face roles with children have a Victorian Working with Children Check
- All staff employed to deliver education programs are trained and qualified professional educators



Procedures

Zoos Victoria will ensure children know who to talk with if they are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues by;

- Including reporting procedures in pre-visit packs to the organising teacher/duty of care person for education groups of children and young people.
- Where there are inductions/briefings to education groups and camps of children and young people, the reporting procedures will be explained.

Reporting Procedures

Where a child is feeling unsafe, they are encouraged to raise such issues by;

- Notifying their teacher/person who has the duty of care for them, or;
- Notifying one of the Learning Experience or Visitor Experience staff members, or;
- Notifying a Zoos Victoria Staff member

Zoos Victoria Staff and Volunteers Responsibilities

If staff or volunteers notice any symptoms/signs of abuse they will;

- Notify one of the Learning Experience staff members in the first instance.
- If they are not available, then notify the property Duty Officer

Please refer to the [Child Safe Information Sheet](#) for more details on the responsibilities and symptoms/signs on child abuse.

Responsibilities of Learning Experience Staff and Duty Officers

- Advise the duty of care person
- Advise the appropriate authorities if at immediate risk of abuse
- Complete a [Child Safe Incident report form](#) (For internal use only)

Exception

- The Child Safe legislation exempts children over the age of 16 and work experience students from this policy and procedures. Refer to the [department of education](#).

Further information on the Standards can be found on the Victorian Department of Human Services website; <http://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards>

If you believe a child or young person is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000



Child Safe Information Sheet

Every adult who reasonably believes that a child has been abused, whether in their organisation or not, has an obligation to report that belief to authorities. This information sheet is in support of the Zoos Victoria Child Safe Standard Statement.

If a child discloses abuse;

- Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to your manager, property Officer in Charge/Duty Officer or police

If you notice any symptoms/signs your responsibility is to;

- Notify one of the Learning Experience staff members or their parent/carer/duty of care person.
- If they are not available, then notify the property Officer in Charge/Duty Officer
- If they are not available, then notify the police

Responsibilities of Learning Experience Staff and Officer in Charge/Duty Officers

- Advise the duty of care person
- Advise the appropriate authorities if at immediate risk of abuse
- Complete a [Child Safe Incident report form](#)

What is child abuse?

The child safe standards aim to protect children from abuse in organisations. Under the Act, child abuse includes five categories of abuse as outlined below.

While the standards apply specifically to child abuse, organisations should look to promote children's health and wellbeing in a broader sense.

Physical violence

Physical violence occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from a non-accidental injury or injuries inflicted by another person. Physical violence can be inflicted in many ways, including beating, shaking, burning or use of weapons (such as, belts and paddles).

Possible physical indicators:

- Unexplained bruises
- Burns and/or fractured bones

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Wearing long sleeved clothes on hot days (to hide bruising or other injury)
- Fear of specific people
- Unexplained absences
- Academic problems

Sexual offences

Sexual offences occur when a person involves the child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to his/her age and development. Child sexual abuse can involve a range of sexual activity including fondling, masturbation, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exposure to or exploitation through pornography or prostitution, as well as grooming behaviour.¹

Possible physical indicators:

- Presence of sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Displaying sexual behaviour or knowledge that is unusual for the child's age
- Difficulty sleeping
- Being withdrawn
- Complaining of headaches or stomach pains
- Fear of specific people
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Displaying aggressive behaviour

Serious emotional or psychological abuse

Serious emotional or psychological abuse occurs when harm is inflicted on a child through repeated rejection, isolation, or by threats or violence. It can include derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent and deliberate coldness from a person, to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired. Serious emotional or psychological abuse could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.

Possible physical indicators:

- Delays in emotional, mental, or even physical development
- Physical signs of self-harming

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Exhibiting low self-esteem
- Exhibiting high anxiety
- Displaying aggressive or demanding behaviour
- Being withdrawn, passive and/or tearful
- Self-harming

Serious neglect

Serious neglect is the continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention or adequate supervision, to the extent that the child's health, safety and/or development is, or is likely to be, jeopardised. Serious neglect can also occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child where the child is exposed to extremely dangerous or life threatening situations.

Possible physical indicators:

- Frequent hunger
- Malnutrition
- Poor hygiene
- Inappropriate clothing

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Stealing food
- Aggressive behaviour



Staff and volunteers must not:

- Develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- Exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps. Sitting on laps could be appropriate sometime, for example while reading a storybook to a small child in an open plan area)
- Put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
- Use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- Express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- Discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability
- Have contact with a child or their family outside of our organisation without the child safety officer's knowledge and/or consent. This applies to any potential relationships that are created whilst working for Zoos Victoria and not personal relationships created outside of the workplace. (for example, organising to meet up with a family who you have met at the Zoo, offering babysitting etc. Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate)
- Have any online contact with a child or their family (unless necessary, for example providing families with e-newsletters)
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.