

Alliance Francaise de Melbourne (“AFM”) Child Safe Policy

AFM commitment to child safety

The AFM organisation is committed to child safety.

The AFM wants children to be safe, happy and empowered. The AFM supports and respects all children, as well as its staff and volunteers.

The AFM is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

The AFM has zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with its robust policies and procedures.

The AFM has legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when the AFM is worried about a child’s safety, which the AFM follows rigorously.

The AFM is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

The AFM has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

The AFM is committed to regularly conduct training and educating its staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

The AFM supports and respects all children, as well as its staff and volunteers. The AFM is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

The AFM is committed to have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support its leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

The AFM children

The AFM promotes diversity and tolerance in its organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

The AFM staff and volunteers

This policy guides the AFM staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in its organisation.

All of its staff and volunteers will agree to abide by its code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in the AFM understands that child safety is everyone’s responsibility.

The AFM organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. The AFM is committed to train its staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand the AFM's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to the organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further).

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

The AFM takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. The AFM organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers the AFM have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information

The AFM carries out reference checks to ensure that the AFM is recruiting the right people. The AFM retains its own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected its decision making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Legislative responsibilities

The AFM organisation takes its legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.¹
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority at the AFM will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.²
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.³

Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, the AFM proactively manages risks of abuse to its children.

¹ A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed.

Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>.

² Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>.

³ Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about [how to make a report to child protection](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first) <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first>.

The AFM has risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. The AFM will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

The AFM has a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if the AFM has a reasonable belief that an incident took place.

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- 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 observed⁴
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

⁴ For example behaviour, please see [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards:](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc)
<www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc>