

Policy Name	Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
Date Last Reviewed	January 2023
Scheduled Review Date	January 2024
Approved By	Board of Directors

Purpose

Skyline Education Foundation Australia has created this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy to establish a comprehensive document that outlines our commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe culture and environment. If you need assistance understanding this Policy and you are a non-English speaker, please contact info@skylinefoundation.org.au or call 03 9917 3738. This Policy forms the foundation of Skyline’s procedures, practices, and processes and ultimately Skyline’s culture with respect to child safety and wellbeing. It informs everyone in our community of their obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and young people.

Scope

This Policy:

- applies to all Skyline staff, volunteers, and contractors (whether or not they work in direct contact with students) and to Skyline Board members where indicated.
- applies in all physical and online environments used by students during or outside of hours, including other locations provided for a child’s use and those provided through third-party providers.
- should be read together with Skyline’s Child Safety Code of Conduct and all other child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Skyline is committed to providing a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives. We promote positive relationships between students and adults, as well as between students and their peers, based on trust and respect. Our child-safe policies, strategies, and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

At Skyline, we have zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. Skyline regards its child safety responsibilities as of utmost importance. We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in Skyline environments. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, Skyline treats them seriously and responds promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer/questioning and asexual (LGBTQIA+), and other students experiencing risk or are vulnerable. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, is not tolerated at Skyline, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility, and every person involved with Skyline has an important role in promoting child safety and well-being, and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety. We regularly review our child-safe practices and seek input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

Objective

This policy provides the framework for Skyline's commitment to creating and maintaining a child-safe and child-friendly organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe. It includes the implementation of child-safe work systems, practices, policies, and procedures that promote and maintain child safety and wellbeing. The policy also outlines the creation of a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. Skyline is committed to maintaining a positive and robust child safety and wellbeing culture that is championed and modelled at all levels, as well as promoting open discussion of child safety and wellbeing issues. Additionally, Skyline is committed to complying with all laws, regulations, and standards relevant to child safety in Victoria, including the implementation of Ministerial Order 1359, which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in environments applicable to Skyline.

Application

The policy is to be applied in conjunction with provisions in the Skyline Child Safety Code of Conduct and all other relevant child safety and protection policies and procedures.

Child Safety Principles

Skyline is committed to promoting child safety and wellbeing, and protecting children from abuse. To guide our efforts, we have established the following overarching principles that inform the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies, and procedures:

1. All children have the right to be safe.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. The views of the child and their privacy must be respected.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in the Skyline Child Safety Code of Conduct.
5. The safety of children is dependent on the existence of a child-safe culture.
6. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our Skyline community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, volunteers, and external education providers who have direct contact with children.
8. Child safety and protection are everyone's responsibility.
9. Child protection training is mandatory for all Board Directors, staff, and volunteers who have direct contact with children.
10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the Skyline community.
11. 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.
12. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

By adhering to these principles, we strive to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children and young people feel safe and valued, and where their voices are heard and respected.

Child Protection Program

Skyline is committed to effectively implementing our Child Protection Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We develop and implement risk management strategies that focus on preventing, identifying, and mitigating risks related to child safety and wellbeing in both physical and online environments. We record identified risks relating to child abuse in our Child Safety Risk Register, including risk controls and treatments to reduce or remove risks. We monitor and review the risks related to child safety and wellbeing and the effectiveness of the implementation of the risk controls annually.

Our Child Protection Program aims to protect children from abuse through the establishment of work systems, practices, policies, and procedures. The program includes:

- Clear information on what constitutes child abuse and the key risk indicators associated with it.
- Clear procedures for responding to suspicions, incidents, disclosures, and allegations of child abuse.
- Strategies to encourage staff, students, parents and carers, external education providers, contractors, and volunteers to understand, identify, discuss, and report child protection matters.
- Procedures for recruiting and screening the Skyline Board of Directors, staff (including casual, emergency relief, part-time and full-time), and long-term contractors and volunteers.
- Wellbeing strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe.
- Policies that promote cultural safety, diversity, equity, and inclusion for students with disabilities.
- A child protection training program.
- Information on the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support, and assist children.
- Guidelines for record-keeping and confidentiality.
- Policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations, and standards, including the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359.
- A system for oversight, monitoring, continuous improvement, and review.

As part of the Skyline induction process, all Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers are required to complete training modules on the content of our Child Protection Program, and additional ongoing training at least annually. Staff, external education providers, contractors, and volunteers are supported by Skyline's Executive Team and our Child Safety Officers to ensure that they comply with Skyline's approach to child protection.

Responsibilities

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At Skyline, the Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers share the responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

Board: The Board is Skyline's governing authority. Each member of the Board is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available so that Skyline's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the Child Protection Program are effectively implemented. They are responsible for holding the CEO and the Executive Team accountable for creating and maintaining a strong child safety culture, developing and implementing policies and procedures in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359, and establishing strategic directions consistent with Skyline's stated mission, vision, and values, optimising the use and return on its resources, maintaining an effective system of internal control, and monitoring compliance with legal and ethical requirements.

The CEO and Executive Team: The CEO and Executive Team are responsible for taking all practical measures to ensure that this Policy and Skyline's Child Safety Program are developed and implemented effectively in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359 and that a strong and sustainable child safety culture is created and maintained. They are accountable for ensuring that effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes, and practices are in place and followed, modelling a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families, and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety, and wellbeing, enabling inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered, reinforcing high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and promoting regular open discussion on child safety issues within the Skyline community, including at Executive Team meetings, staff meetings, and Skyline Board meetings. They are also responsible for facilitating regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing, and prevention of responding to abuse, creating an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

Skyline's management takes accountability and responsibility for ensuring implementation and compliance with this Policy and all associated internal control procedures supporting this Policy. They are responsible for developing, maintaining, and updating procedures that enable compliance with this Policy. This includes policies and procedures covering:

- Charter of Values
- Occupational Health and Safety

Child Safety Officers: A number of staff members have been nominated as Skyline's Child Safety Officers. Our Child Safety Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues. They can be a point of contact for raising child protection concerns within Skyline. In collaboration with all staff and volunteers, they are also responsible for championing child protection within Skyline.

Child Safety Champion

Skyline has nominated a Child Safety Champion - **General Manager Learning Services** and the **General Manager Hatch** - to support the Program Managers and Tutors in implementing our child safety policies and practices, including Skyline staff and volunteer training.

The responsibilities of the Child Safety Champion are outlined at [Guidance for child safety champions](#).

Our **General Manager Learning Services** and the **General Manager Hatch** and our **Child Safety Officers** are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

The **General Manager Learning Services** and **General Manager Hatch** are responsible for monitoring Skyline's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our community should approach the appropriate General Manager if they have any concerns about Skyline's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

Our **CEO** is responsible for informing the Skyline community about this policy and making it publicly available.

Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and Child Safety Risk Register.

Our **CEO** has been appointed at Skyline as our Senior Child Safety Officer. The Senior Child Safety Officer is responsible for the overall promotion and maintenance of a child protection culture at Skyline.

Our **CEO** oversees the programs for child protection including the culture, compliance, incident and reporting programs, and is the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within Skyline.

Our **CEO** is responsible for championing child protection within Skyline and assisting in coordinating responses to child protection incidents, including overseeing compliance with all mandatory reporting.

Skyline Staff and Volunteers

All Skyline staff and volunteers are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and our Child Safety Program, as well as their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is the responsibility of each individual to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to report any concerns they may have relating to child abuse to one of Skyline's Child Safety Officers.

All Skyline staff and volunteers are expected to:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by Skyline or the Department of Education and Training, and always comply with Skyline's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures including following mandatory reporting requirements.
- promote a culture of child safety and wellbeing, and be proactive in supporting the safety and wellbeing of children.
- engage with students and families in a respectful and professional manner, and communicate in ways that are appropriate to the child's age, needs, and abilities.
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students and their families, and avoid behaviour that could be perceived as grooming or inappropriate.
- attend relevant training and professional development sessions to develop and maintain their understanding of child safety and wellbeing, and keep up to date with best practice and legal requirements.
- take appropriate action if they become aware of any breaches of Skyline's child safety policies and procedures, or any other conduct that could put a child at risk of harm.

It is important that all staff and volunteers understand the critical role they play in creating and maintaining a safe and supportive environment for children at Skyline. Any concerns or issues regarding child safety should be reported to one of Skyline's Child Protection Officers as soon as possible.

We do not distinguish between direct and indirect volunteers as all volunteers on our premises may have contact with students giving rise to a duty of care to protect our students. Volunteers should not be left alone with students, but our policy and procedures will be designed assuming this may inadvertently occur.

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 the Child Safety Champion.

Contractors: Contractors engaged by Skyline, including (but not limited to) outsourced maintenance and building services, consultants, catering providers, and cleaners, are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the Skyline environment. All contractors are required to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and the Skyline Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Skyline will also include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the third-party contractors.

External Education Providers: An external education provider is any organisation that Skyline has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at

Skyline.

All external education providers engaged by Skyline are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the Skyline environment. Therefore, they are required to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and the Skyline Child Safety Code of Conduct. Skyline will include this requirement in the written agreement between the organisation and the external education provider.

Supporting Our Community

Key principles that we must apply in the design of policies, procedures, interventions, support, and reporting in our child protection program are to ensure we consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and vulnerable children.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Skyline's Child Safety Code of Conduct establishes the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviour between adults and students, while ensuring that students understand what is acceptable and unacceptable in their interactions with adults at Skyline. The code also outlines unacceptable behaviour in both physical and online environments, while balancing the need to identify and mitigate risks with ensuring that students' rights to privacy, access to information, social connections, and learning opportunities are not compromised.

Complaints and Reporting Processes

Skyline ensures that our processes for complaints and concerns are child focused. We foster a culture that encourages staff, contractors, volunteers, students, parents, and the Skyline community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct, or child abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns, as well as responding, and these are documented in Skyline's Complaints Policy. We ensure that complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly. How we handle complaints is set out in our Complaints Policy in an accessible, child-focused, culturally safe, and easy-to-understand way.

The policy outlines:

- The process for making a complaint about Skyline or any person within Skyline (for example, staff, volunteers, contractors, families, children, or students).
- The roles and responsibilities of Skyline leadership, staff, and volunteers in relation to handling complaints.
- The process for dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and obligations to act and report.
- How we address reporting of complaints and concerns to Skyline leadership and other relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires responding and cooperation with law enforcement.
- How we ensure all record-keeping, reporting, privacy, and employment law obligations are met when responding to complaints and concerns.

Our Complaints Policy can be found at www.skylinefoundation.org.au/childsafety.

Skyline has a clear procedure for responding to complaints or concerns related to child abuse. If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation, or suspicion of child abuse, all staff, contractors, and volunteers (including Skyline Board members) must follow our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures.

Our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures:

- Cover all forms of abuse
- Are sensitive to the diversity and characteristics of the Skyline community
- Are publicly available
- Are accessible to children, staff, volunteers, and the Skyline community
- Apply to complaints and concerns relating to child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, Skyline staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors, or any other persons while connected to the Skyline environment
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of Skyline staff and leadership to act and report on complaints and concerns relating to child abuse
- Do not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes a child is at risk of child abuse
- Clearly describe the actions Skyline will take to respond to a complaint or concern relating to child abuse
- Address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and co-operation with law enforcement
- Ensure all record-keeping, reporting, privacy, and employment law obligations are met when responding to complaints and concerns.

Our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy can be found at www.skylinefoundation.org.au/childsafety

Communications

Skyline is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to our community by:

- Ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies, including this Policy, the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure, are available on our website.
- Displaying child safety information around the Skyline campus.
- Providing updates on child safety in the Skyline newsletter.
- Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at Board and Executive Team meetings, staff meetings, and Skyline Committee meetings.

Privacy and Information Sharing

Skyline collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws and other relevant laws. For information on how Skyline collects, uses, and discloses information, please refer to our Privacy Policy at www.skylinefoundation.org.au/childsafety.

Records Management

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with our Records Management Policy.

Support for Affected Students

Ensuring that a student feels safe and supported following an incident is of critical importance to Skyline. Skyline will work closely with the student, parents and carers, and our wellbeing team to provide all additional support services that are available. Each matter will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, and an individual may be supported with:

- Referral to the Skyline Program team.

- Referral to external specialist agencies.
- Family counselling.
- Academic support.

Definitions

The following terms in this Policy have specific definitions (and consistent with Victorian law where indicated):

Child	Child means a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years.
Child abuse	Child abuse includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any act committed against a child involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a sexual offence ○ grooming offences under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 ○ the infliction, on a child, of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm ○ the serious neglect of a child including exposure to family violence and its effects.
Child-connected work	Child-connected work means work authorised by the governing authority and performed by an adult in a learning environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.
Child-related work	Child-related work means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work at or for a service, body or place, or that involves a specified activity; • that usually involves direct contact with a child.
Child safety	Child safety includes matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to suspicions, incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse.
Direct contact	Direct contact in relation to child-related work, means any contact between a person and a child that involves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical contact; or • face to face contact; or • contact by post or other written communication; or • contact by telephone or other oral communication; or • contact by email, SMS or other electronic communication.
Vulnerable students	Vulnerable students may include but are not limited to those who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are deemed vulnerable by a government agency, funded family service or family violence service, or assessed as requiring education and care outside the family home • are identified as vulnerable as a result of a referral from a government agency, funded family service or family violence service, homeless or youth justice service; or mental health or other health service • self-identify or are identified by staff as a member of a vulnerable cohort.

Policy Breach

A breach of this policy or procedure may lead to disciplinary action which is outlined further in our:

- **Complaints Policy and Procedures**

All breaches, near misses and risks related to this policy should be reported to a member of the Executive Team. Compliance with this policy will be monitored by the CEO and the Executive Team and this may include independent audits and reviews.

Review

Skyline is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Safety Program. We have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child safety related laws, regulations, and standards:

- The CEO is responsible for reviewing and updating the **Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy** every year or after any significant child safety incident, or legislative changes including seeking input from students, parents, and carers and the Skyline community.
- We record and analyse all complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to identify causes and systemic failures and inform continuous improvement.
- We act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with Skyline staff and our community.

Policy and Procedure Linkages

- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Privacy Policy
- Complaints Policy and Procedures
- Recruitment Policy
- Child Safety Training and Supervision Policy
- Record Keeping Policy and Procedure

Related Legislation

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*