



CHILD SAFETY STANDARDS

for Buddhist Vihara Victoria Inc.

~Our commitment to protect all children from harm~

Being a child safe organisation, we are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people and will endeavour to provide a safe and supportive environment for all. These guidelines apply to all subcommittees of BVV and the Cultural and Sinhalese Language School

BUDDHIST VIHARA VICTORIA INC.

125 Homestead Road Berwick VIC 3806 AUSTRALIA

Tel: 03 9702 6275

Fax: 03 9702 6274

Website: <http://www.vihara.org.au> **Email:** buddhist@vihara.org.au

ABN 35 437 197 725

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	Page 2
BVV CHILD PROTECTION POLICY	Page 3
Introduction	Page 3
Structure	Page 3
Our commitment to child safety	Page 3
Purpose	Page 3
Policy	Page 4
Our Children	Page 4
Our Staff and Volunteers	Page 4
BVV CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURE	Page 5
Responsibilities	Page 5
Recruiting process for New members/Volunteers/ Workers	Page 7
Risk Management	Page 7
Reporting	Page 7
Investigating	Page 8
Responding	Page 8
Documenting a disclosure of harm	Page 8
Four critical actions if an incident was reported	Page 9
Strategies to Promote the participation & empowerment of children	Page 10
Privacy	Page 10
Reviewing	Page 10
BVV CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT	Page 11
Purpose	Page 11
Declaration	Page 12
THE CHILD SAFETY REPORTING PROCESS	Page 13
BVV CHILD SAFE OFFICER	Page 14
CHILDREN’S CODE OF CONDUCT	Page 15
INCIDENT/ACCIDENT REPORT FORM	Page 16

Introduction

This is a guide to meet the legislative requirements for minimum child safe standards for all Victorian organisations that provide services to children.

From 1st January 2017, all organisations that provide services to children are required to meet the seven Standards, incorporating three overarching principles:

- the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- the safety of children with a disability

The seven standards are:

- 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements
- 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety Standard
- 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
- 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

This guide to the “Child Safe Standards for BVV” was created by Pushpa Mallawarachchi & Chintha Kossinna on behalf of the Buddhist Vihara Victoria (BVV) and the BVV Cultural and Sinhalese Language School (BVV-CSLS) in March 2018 and was submitted for approval to the management committee.

References:

- A guide for creating a child safe organisation version 2 Dec 2015
- Victorian child safe standards faith communities tool kit

Date of approval: 24th March 2018

BVV CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

BUDDHIST VIHARA VICTORIA (BVV) INC. IS A BUDDHIST ORGANIZATION, FOLLOWING LORD BUDDHA'S DOCTRINE. BVV IS A CENTER FOR BUDDHIST EDUCATION, RESEARCH, INFORMATION & CULTURE. BVV IS A CENTRAL POINT FOR ALL WHO WISH TO LEARN MORE ABOUT TEACHINGS OF THE LORD BUDDHA. OUR PROGRAMS INCLUDE DAILY OFFERINGS, VARIOUS CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN AND ADULTS, FUND-RAISING EVENTS WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OF THE PREMISES AND THE SUNDAY CULTURAL AND SINHALESE LANGUAGE SCHOOL (BVV-CSLS) FOR CHILDREN.

STRUCTURE

The Committee of Management of BVV is the administrative arm of BVV; hence, is responsible for administering and governing the CSLS and all other sub-committees. *Viharadhipati* is the Principal of the CSLS by virtue of his tenure as the chief monk and Patron of BVV according to the BVV constitution. By Virtue of office, the Vice-Principal of the CSLS is a member of the Subcommittee of CSLS and has the responsibility of overseeing all aspects of running the affairs of the school and liaising with BVV administration. The President and the Committee of Management of BVV has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place for detection and prevention of child abuse.

OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

BVV is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children and young people. As a Buddhist temple cultivating the eminently valuable teachings of Lord Buddha we practice spreading loving kindness to oneself and others. Extending care to all beings is a constant theme we discuss in all Buddha teachings with our community.

Everyone residing/working/volunteering/visiting BVV is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is

1. To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within BVV.
2. To work towards an organisational culture of child safety.
3. To prevent child abuse within BVV.
4. To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
5. To provide guidance to residents/staff/volunteers/visitors of the action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
6. To provide a clear statement to residents/staff/volunteers/visitors forbidding any such abuse.
7. To provide assurance that all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

POLICY:

Buddhist Vihara Victoria Inc. (BVV) is committed to promoting and protecting the best interests of children involved in its programs at all times.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

BVV has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone residing/ working/volunteering/visiting at BVV is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between the BVV, all residents, employees, workers, associates, and members of the BVV community.

BVV will consider the opinions of children and use their opinions to develop child protection policies.

BVV supports and respects all children, staff and volunteers. BVV is committed to the cultural safety of all children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse should telephone 000.

OUR CHILDREN

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular, we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

BVV- CSLS CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

RESPONSIBILITIES

The President and the Committee of Management of BVV has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place. The Committee is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies, procedures and a Child Protection Code of Conduct are in place.

The President of the Committee is responsible for:

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

All staff/residents/ members / volunteers 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 everyone about the prevention and detection of child abuse; and
- Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

All staff/staff/residents/members/volunteers 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.

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

- Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, and BVV's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements;
 - Report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk 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 their supervisor (or, if their supervisor is involved in the suspicion, to a responsible person in the organisation); and
 - Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.
-

DEFINITIONS

Child means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

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

Child abuse means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child.

Child sexual assault is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive 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 child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

Reasonable grounds for belief is a belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. 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:

- (a) The child is in need of protection,
- (b) The child has suffered or is likely to suffer "significant harm as a result of physical injury",
- (c) The parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

- a) child states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
- b) A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);

- c) Someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
- d) Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; and/or
- e) Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

RECRUITMENT OR SCREENING PROCESS FOR STAFF/NEW MEMBERS/ VOLUNTEERS / WORKERS

BVV undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all staff, members, workers and volunteers which aims to:

- Promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of the organisation;
- Identify the safest and most suitable people who share BVV's values and commitment to protect children; and
- Prevent a person from working at BVV if they pose a risk to children.

BVV requires all staff/workers/volunteers to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with BVV.

BVV requires any person who requests membership of the BVV Association to meet the criteria stated in the BVV Constitution.

BVV may require committee of management and / or others who are involved to provide a police check and/or working with children's certificate in accordance with the law and as appropriate before they commence working at BVV and during their time with BVV at regular intervals.

BVV will undertake thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure.

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

RISK MANAGEMENT

BVV will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach.

BVV will have a risk and compliance sub-committee committed to identifying and managing risks at BVV. Risk and compliance sub-committee members will receive regular training in relation to child safety.

REPORTING

Any member or volunteer who has grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify the Principal of CSLS and they will notify the President of BVV and the appropriate child protection service or the police.

In situations where the member involved does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the next highest level, which is the Chief incumbent of the temple.

Member suspected of the abuse must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the President and he or she will report to any external regulatory body such as the police if the matter has not been resolved.

INVESTIGATING

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

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the President 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 President together with the Chief Incumbent of BVV may decide to conduct such an investigation. All members and volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

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

The President will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of Committee or resident Monks may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the President 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.

RESPONDING

If it is alleged that a member of BVV 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 while an investigation is conducted.

If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of the organisation's policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.

DOCUMENTING A DISCLOSURE OF HARM

Complete an **incident report form** (Template provided) or record the details as soon as possible so that they are accurately captured. Include:

- time, date and place of the disclosure
- 'word for word' what happened and what was said, including anything you said and any actions that have been taken, and
- date of report and signature

If you need to take notes as the person is telling you, explain that you are taking a record in case any later enquiry occurs.

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS WE TAKE IF AN INCIDENT WAS REPORTED

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

ACTION 1: RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

ACTION 2: REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

ACTION 3: CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

ACTION 4: PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

BVV understands three new criminal offences have been introduced:

a) **Failure to disclose offence:** Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence.

b) **Failure to protect offence:** The offence will apply where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

c) **Grooming offence:** This offence targets predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity with a child. Grooming can be conducted in person or online, for example via interaction through social media, web forums and emails.

- I. The offence applies where an adult communicates, by words or conduct, with a child under the age of 16 years or with a person who has care, supervision or authority for the child with the intention of facilitating the child's involvement in sexual conduct, either with the groomer or another adult.
- II. Grooming does not necessarily involve any sexual activity or even discussion of sexual activity – for example, it may only involve establishing a relationship with the child, parent or carer for the purpose of facilitating sexual activity at a later time.
- III. The sexual conduct must constitute an indictable sexual offence. This includes offences such as sexual penetration of a child, indecent assault and indecent act in the presence of a child. It does not include summary offences, such as up skirting and indecent behaviour in public.

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE THE PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF CHILDREN

- Provide children with child-appropriate and accessible information about what child abuse is, their rights to make decisions about their body and their privacy, that no one has a right to injure them, and how they can raise concerns about abuse. For example, information could be included in welcome packs, information sessions and posters, as well as on websites and social media.
- Ensure information and processes for reporting concerns are accessible to all children, for example by having policies and procedures that are able to be accessed and understood by children with a disability.
- Consider access and culturally appropriate language, photographs and artwork for Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability when drafting communications materials.
- Translate Schools information (including information about children's rights, child safe policies, statements of commitment and reporting and response procedures) into relevant community languages.
- Gather feedback from children, for example through surveys, focus groups, story time and social media, about whether they would feel safe and taken seriously if they were to raise concerns, and implement improvements based on this feedback.
- Enable children to express their views and make suggestions on what child safety means to them, and on child safe policies, reporting and response procedures, and acknowledge and act upon these where possible. For example, views could be gathered through suggestion boxes, feedback sessions, emails or online (via wikis or other social media).

PRIVACY

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

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.

REVIEWING

Every year at the AGM, and following every reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether the organisation's child protection policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children under the organisation's care.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE CODE OF CONDUCT WAS BREACHED

If any person breaches the Code of Conduct they will face disciplinary action, including and up to termination of employment or cessation of engagement or membership with the organisation. Any member previously expelled shall not be eligible to apply as a member.

BVV CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

PURPOSE

Following this code will help to protect children and young people from abuse and inappropriate behaviours from adults. It will also help staff, members and volunteers to maintain the standard of behaviour expected of them. Having a code of conduct that everyone adheres to also protects the organisation because the opportunities for harm are actively reduced.

Management Committee, staff, volunteers and contractors at BVV & CSLS are required to abide by this Code.

Under the President of the Management Committee, the committee will:

1. Be responsible for the overall welfare and wellbeing of staff, members and volunteers;
2. Be accountable for managing and maintaining a duty of care towards staff, members and volunteers; and
3. Nominate a Child Protection Officer to provide information and support to all staff, volunteers, children, young people and their carers regarding child protection matters.

All people involved in the care of children on behalf of will:

1. Work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of the organisation;
2. Be responsible for relevant administration of programs and activities in their area;
3. Maintain a duty of care towards others involved in these programs and activities;
4. Establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work;
5. Be fair, considerate and honest with others;
6. Treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas and opinions;
7. Act as positive role models in their conduct with children and young people;
8. Be professional in their actions;
9. Maintain strict impartiality;
10. Comply with specific organisational guidelines on physical contact with children;
11. Respect the privacy of children, their families and teachers/carers, and only disclose information to people who have a need to know;
12. Maintain a child-safe environment for children and young people;
13. Operate within the policies and guidelines of BVV and
14. Contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse (telephone 000).

No person shall:

1. Shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade children or young people;
2. Unlawfully discriminate against any child;
3. Engage in any activity with a child or young person that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them;
4. Initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves;
5. Be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily and for more than a very short time;
6. Develop a 'special' relationship with a specific child or young person for their own needs;
7. Show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention;
8. Arrange contact, including online contact, with children or young people outside of the organisation's programs and activities;
9. Photograph or video a child or young person without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians;
10. Work with children or young people while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs;
11. Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children;
12. Use inappropriate language in the presence of children; or
13. Do anything in contravention of the organisation's policies, procedures or this Code of Conduct.

By observing these standards, you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to BVV Principal and the President of BVV Management Committee.

I have read this Code of Conduct and agree to abide by it at all times.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Role: _____

Date: _____

Principal: -----
-

Signature: -----

THE CHILD SAFETY REPORTING PROCESS

Who can Report? Parent, Child, Staff member or volunteer

What to Report? Any child safety concerns, including:
Disclosure of abuse or harm
Allegation, suspicion or observation
Breach of Code of Conduct
Environmental safety issues

CALL 000 IF A CHILD IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER

How to Report? Direct face-to-face reporting, In writing by letter or email buddhist@vihara.org.au
Telephone call 03 9702 6275, meeting

Who to Report? President-BVV Mgt Committee, Principal-CSLS
Child Protection Officer or The Chief Monk of the Temple

What happens next?

- BVV will Offer support to the child, the parents, the person who reports and the accused staff member or volunteer
- Initiate internal processes to ensure the safety of the child, clarify the nature of the complaint and commence disciplinary process
- decide, in accordance with legal requirements and duty of care, whether the matter should be reported to the police or Child Protection and make report as soon as possible if required

Outcome: Investigation: outcome decided; relevant staff, volunteers, parents and child notified of outcome of investigation; policies, procedures updated where necessary

BVV Child safe officer

Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of staff at BVV and the Cultural and Language School contribute to the delivery of high quality child protection services to children, young people and their families.

- Perform the role under delegation from the principal, and report to the board of management
- Provide a first point of contact/central point for reporting allegation of abuse
- Implementing quality business and practice systems and standards
- Overseeing that child protection services that are provided comply with relevant legislation, delegations, policies, quality standards and our Child Safety Practice Manual
- To have a clear process in place to report allegations of child abuse.
- Establishing enduring productive partnerships with foster and kinship carers, the community
- Child safety officers need to be able to modify their style to ensure communication is effective with the range of people they contact on a day-to-day basis.
- Overseeing ongoing professional development and management of staff
- Managing the department's ongoing program of quality improvement.
- Convene and coordinate internal child safety meeting, on a regular basis

Officer Name: _____ Principal name: _____

Signature: _____ Signature: _____

Children's Code of Conduct

We all have the right to feel safe and be safe always

This Code of Conduct applies to all children attending
BVV

1. We will play SAFELY, be GENTLE and RESPECT others
2. We will SHARE and PLAY together
3. We will be POLITE at all times
4. We will be FRIENDLY to all participants
5. We will use KIND language
6. We will RESPECT all people
7. We will always ASK a teacher or a child protection officer if we need help

May we all be happy and content!

Action Taken:

Outcomes

Follow up/Analysis

Follow up comments: The type of incident is:

- first report subsequent report

Have appropriate steps been taken?

- Yes No

If No (to either of the above), what needs to be done?

Print Name: _____

Signed: _____

Reported to (Personnel informed)

Print Name: _____

Signed: _____