



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Policy number	008	Version	1.5
Drafted by	Karen Burns	Approved by BLV on	04/05/2020
Responsible person	Karen Burns	Scheduled review date	04/05/2021

INTRODUCTION

Blue Light Victoria Inc. & Victorian Blue Light Youth Camps and its affiliated branches (BLV) are committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

Everyone working and volunteering at BLV is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is

1. To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within BLV.
2. To provide an organisational culture of child safety.
3. To prevent child abuse within BLV.
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 staff/volunteers/contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
6. To provide a clear statement to staff/volunteers/contractors forbidding any such abuse.
7. To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

POLICY

BLV is committed to promoting and protecting at all times the best interests of children involved in its programs.

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

BLV has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at BLV 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 BLV Committee, all employees, workers, contractors, volunteers, associates, and members of the BLV community.

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

BLV supports and respects all children, staff and volunteers. BLV is 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.

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

AUTHORISATION

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joanna Parissis'.

Joanna Parissis
Secretary Blue Light Victoria Inc.
04/05/2020



CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Procedures number	008	Version	1.4
Drafted by	Karen Burns	Approved by BLV on	04/05/2020
Responsible person	Karen Burns	Scheduled review date	04/05/2022

If you believe a child is in immediate danger or a life-threatening situation, contact the Police immediately on 000.

DEFINITIONS

Child means a person below the age of 18 years, unless otherwise stated under specific applicable legislative provisions.

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

Child abuse means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual harassment, abuse or behaviours that can form a reasonable belief as amounting to grooming (regardless of the intent of the perpetrator) and exploitation, neglect or negligent or reckless behaviours, 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 conduct 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 also includes child grooming, which refers to deliberate actions to befriend and establish an emotional connection with a child that may result in reducing a child's inhibitions.

Reasonable grounds for belief is a belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred or is likely to occur 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 alleged behaviour, and
- whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

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

- The child is in need of protection,
- The child has suffered or is likely to suffer "harm as a result of physical injury",
- 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 person in the same position would have formed the reasonable belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' may be formed if:

- a) A child states that they have been subject to behaviour that may amount to physically or sexually abuse;
- b) A child states that they know a child who has been the subject to behaviour that may amount to physical or sexual abuse (a child may refer to a third person when in fact they are talking about themselves);
- c) A person knows a child who states that a child has been physically or sexually abused;
- d) The professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a person with professional credibility to form a belief that the child has been the subject to behaviour that may amount to physically or sexually abuse or is likely to be abused; and/or
- e) There are signs of abuse that reasonably lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

RESPONSIBILITIES & PROCEDURES

The **BLV Board**, BLV Branch Committees and Blue Light Program managers and supervisors have the ultimate responsibility to ensure that Blue Light events are safe and there are appropriate and effective systems in place for the prevention, detection and reporting of behaviours that may amount to child abuse. The Board of BLV is responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Child Protection Code of Conduct are in place.

The **State Manager** of BLV is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, BLV organisational policies and procedures, and BLV's Code of Conduct;
- Ensuring that all adults within the BLV community are aware of their duty of care obligations and their legal requirement to report suspected sexual 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 protection responsibilities.
- Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse;

All **managers/ branch 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;
- Ensure that all volunteers are *screened* and legally authorised to work with children in line with BLV policies and procedures;
- Educate employees & volunteers about the prevention and detection of child abuse; and
- Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

Managers 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/volunteers/contractors** 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 BLV'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.

EMPLOYMENT OF NEW PERSONNEL

BLV undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all 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 BLV's values and commitment to protect children; and
- Prevent a person from working at BLV if they pose a risk to children.

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

BLV will require applicants to undergo a police check in accordance with the law and as appropriate, before they commence working at BLV and during their time with BLV at regular intervals.

BLV requires all employees/volunteers to hold a current Working With Childrens Check (WCC).

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

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

RISK MANAGEMENT

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

The BLV board is committed to identifying and managing risks at BLV. Board members will receive regular training in relation to child safety.

REPORTING

Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who has grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify the appropriate child protection service or the police. They should also advise their supervisor about their concern.

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.

Supervisors must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the Operations Manager and also to any external regulatory body such as the police.

INVESTIGATING

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.

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the Operations Manager 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 Operations Manager may decide to conduct such an investigation. All employees, contractors and volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

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

The State Manager 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.

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

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.

PRIVACY

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. BLV 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 two years, 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.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Constitution
- Privacy Policy
- Police Check Policy

- This policy must be read in conjunction with:
 - The law of the Commonwealth or of the relevant state or territory;
 - Code of Conduct for Working with Children

AUTHORISATION

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Burns". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Karen" and the last name "Burns" clearly distinguishable.

Karen Burns
State Manager, Blue Light Victoria Inc.
04/05/2020