

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Responsible person Executive Officer Scheduled review date Jun 2020

## VERSION CONTROL

VERSION NO.	DATE	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DETAILS
1	27 Apr 2018	Kylie Holmes	Creation of policy, biannual review of policy, and biannual review of schedules required.
2	18 Sep 2020	Kylie Holmes	Update of wording
	13 Aug 2021	Kylie Holmes	No changes proposed

## PURPOSE

The Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) Gippsland is committed to child safety and recognises its obligation to enforce appropriate behaviour with children and to help protect children from abuse.

RFCS Gippsland support and respect all children. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all Board members, Employees and Clients of RFCS Gippsland

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

[WHS Policy & Procedure Manual  
Code of Conduct](#)

[Case Management Framework  
Information Privacy & Data Protection Policy](#)

## REFERRING DOCUMENTS

***Child Wellbeing & Safety Act 2005 (Vic.)***  
*Children, Youth & Families Act 2005 (Vic.)*  
*Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic.)*  
*The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities  
Act 2006 (Vic.)*

*Family Law Act 1975 (Cth)*  
*The Commission for Children and Young People  
Act 2012 (Vic.)*

## LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

RFCS Gippsland takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Duty of Care:** 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.



- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation 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.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters**<sup>1</sup> must comply with their duties.

## POLICY

RFCS Gippsland is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children with zero tolerance of child abuse.

All safety concerns of children will be treated very seriously and consistently with procedures. RFCS Gippsland has a legal and moral obligation to contact authorities where there are concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing.

All RFCS Gippsland employees must abide by the [Code of Conduct](#) which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

RFCS Gippsland is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks, ensuring risk management strategies are in place to identify; assess; and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (eg. any doors that can lock), and online environments.

RFCS Gippsland aims for all employees (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

RFCS Gippsland is committed to train employees to identify; assess; and minimise risks of child abuse, and to detect potential signs of child abuse, with ongoing supervision to:

- develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children;
- the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds; and
- the safety of children with a disability.

New employees will be supervised to ensure they understand 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 this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further).

All records of allegations of abuse and safety concerns must be entered into our incident reporting form, including investigation updates (refer [WHS Policy & Procedure Manual](#)).

All personal and sensitive information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the child and individuals involved, whether they be employees, volunteers, parents or children and other family members, unless there is a risk to someone's safety.

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.

If an RFCS Gippsland staff member 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 observed

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<sup>1</sup> Mandatory Reporter - a legislative requirement for selected groups of people to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to government authorities.

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

All RFCS Gippsland employees who believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse must contact 000.

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<sup>i</sup> Amended 17 May 2020. <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/review-victorian-child-safe-standards>