

## Child Protection Policy

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Policy Owner: CEO  
Policy approved: 24 March 2018  
Policy last updated: 11 December 2019 (structure changes only)

### Policy objective

- To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within Oonah Health and Community Services Aboriginal Corporation (Oonah).
- To work towards an organisational culture of child safety.
- To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities of identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
- 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.
- To provide a clear statement to staff/volunteers/contractors forbidding any such abuse.
- To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

### Application of Policy

This policy applies to all Board members, staff, contractors and volunteers.

### Policy

Oonah Health and Community Services Aboriginal Corporation is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

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

Child protection is a shared responsibility between Oonah, all staff, Board members, contractors, volunteers, associates, and members of the Oonah community.

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

Oonah supports and respects all children, staff and volunteers. We are 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, call 000

## PROCEDURES

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### Responsibilities

The Board 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 Board is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Child Protection Code of Conduct are in place.

The Chair of the Board is responsible for:

- Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Code of Conduct;
- Ensuring that all adults within the Oonah community are aware of their obligation 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.

The CEO 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 staff about the prevention and detection of child abuse; and
- Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

Management 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 Oonah'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 the their supervisor is involved in the suspicion, to a reasonable person in the organisation); and

- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children’s emotional and physical safety.

Expectations of Oonah staff, contractors and volunteers:

- Staff, contractors and volunteers will ensure all youth activities are age appropriate
- Refrain from negative language around youth
- Ensure at least 2 supervisors at all times: no child/youth is to be left alone with a single supervisor
- All Staff, Contractors and Volunteers must follow the Code of Conduct and have a Duty of Care to participants

Duty of Care includes:

- Provision of suitable and safe premises
- Provision of an adequate system of supervision
- Implementation of strategies to prevent bullying
- Ensuring that medical assistance is provided to a sick or injured student
- Managing employee recruitment, conduct and performance.

The duty is non-delegable, meaning that it cannot be assigned to another party.

**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 this 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 of misconduct to the Chair and also the any external regulatory body such as the police.

**Mandatory Reporting Obligations**

<b>Legislation:</b>	<b>Mandated reporters:</b>	<b>When must a report be made?</b>	<b>Who is a child?</b>
<i>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)</i>	Oonah Staff	A mandated reporter must make a report	A person under 16 years old

	If you are a Oonah volunteer you must report to a Oonah staff member and they will then follow through with the appropriate procedures	if they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child by another person of or over the age of 18 years.  NB: exceptions may apply	
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### Making a Report

Relevant Body:	Contact:
<b>Department of Health and Human Services</b> Eastern Suburbs Southern Suburbs	1300 360 391 1300 655 795
<b>After hours and to report concerns about the immediate safety of a child:</b> Child Protection Crisis Line (24 hours)	13 12 78
<b>Victoria Police – Sexual Offence and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT)</b> Eastern Victoria	(03) 5820 5878