



# Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy

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## 4 Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy

DVAC is committed to the safety, wellbeing, and empowerment of all children and young people accessing our services including Aboriginal children & young people, Torres Strait Islander children & young people, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who identify as LGBTQIA+ and children with disability. DVAC accepts responsibility to be aware of the safety needs of the children of adult clients.

A safe environment is one in which children and young people are free from harm or abuse of any type. DVAC and all our Association Members have a zero-tolerance approach to any form of child abuse. We support the rights of all children & young people and we will act immediately to ensure an environment is maintained where children, young people and all participants feel safe, respected, valued, and always empowered.

### 4.1 Purpose

This policy was written to demonstrate the strong commitment of DVAC, and all employees to child safety and wellbeing. DVAC has established and is maintaining child safe and child friendly environments.

### 4.2 Statement

DVAC works directly with children, young people and their primary care giver, predominantly women, to support them to be safe from harm and abuse in their homes and to ensure they are always safe from harm at DVAC and from any DVAC associated person. At DVAC we acknowledge and understand our obligations under Articles 1-54 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and recognises that all children and young people have the right to be treated with respect and care, and to be safe from all forms of abuse. DVAC is compliant with the Queensland Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs Child Protection Guide, and comply with the Child Protection Act 1999, Child Protection Regulation 2011, Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000, the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011, with the QLD Human Rights Act (2019) and with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

DVAC's Child Safe Charter of Commitment states that DVAC we will maintain an environment where children, young people and all participants feel safe, valued, respected, and always empowered. DVAC commits to continue to take measures to protect the safety and welfare of children and young people by ensuring that our environments are safe both physically and emotionally for children and young people as well as their primary caregiver. DVAC further commits to ensuring all our promotional material is easily accessible; that our policies, procedures, and practice guidelines are up to date and reflect the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and that our culture reflects our commitment. At DVAC we understand that being a child safe organisation is about more than having the right policies and procedures in place. It requires conscious action and proactive behaviours to protect children from harm. It means creating a culture of safety that extends from participation and education through to ensuring all members feel safe and secure in reporting inappropriate behaviour.



### 4.3 Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees while conducting DVAC duties.
- All children and young people (0 to under 18 years) of the adult clients with whom DVAC employees have contact in the course of their duties.
- Any children and young people who are receiving services from DVAC, even when their parent/s are not.
- All situations where employees, in the course of their duties, become aware of significant harm being experienced by a child or young person, in the context of:
  - the child’s or young person’s home/s
  - outside the child’s or young person’s home, for example at school or a camp
  - while receiving services from DVAC.

### 4.4 Definitions

A Child-Safe Organisation	A Child-Safe Organisation takes action to protect children from physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and cultural abuse and from neglect. In a child-safe organisation, this commitment to protecting children is embedded in the organisation’s culture, and responsibility for acting is understood and accepted at all levels of the organisation as per the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.
Child Abuse	<p>There are four different types of child abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical abuse</li> <li>• sexual abuse</li> <li>• emotional abuse</li> <li>• neglect.</li> </ul> <p>Child abuse can be a single incident or can be several different incidents that take place over time. Under the <i>Child Protection Act 1999</i>, it does not matter how much a child is harmed, but whether a child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has suffered harm, is suffering harm, or is at risk of suffering harm</li> <li>• does not have a parent able and willing to protect them from harm.</li> </ul> <p>Harm is defined as any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing (section 9 of the <i>Child Protection Act 1999</i>). For harm to be significant, the detrimental effect on a child's wellbeing must be substantial or serious, more than transitory and must be demonstrable in the child's presentation, functioning or behaviour.</p>
Children	Children: for the purposes of this Procedure, children are under the age of 18 years, and child has the related meaning.
Duty of Care	Duty of care as a concept is part of the larger legal concept of negligence. There are no precise legislated definitions for the concepts of “duty of care” and “negligence”. Essentially duty of care means being in a position where someone else is relying on you to be careful, and where, if you are not careful, it is reasonably predictable that the other person might suffer harm.
Emotional Abuse	<p>Emotional abuse occurs when a child's social, emotional, cognitive, or intellectual development is impaired or threatened. It can include emotional deprivation due to persistent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rejection</li> <li>• hostility</li> <li>• teasing/bullying</li> <li>• yelling</li> <li>• criticism</li> </ul> <p>exposure of a child to domestic and family violence.</p>
Employees	Any paid and unpaid employees, board members, relevant sub-contractors and/or students

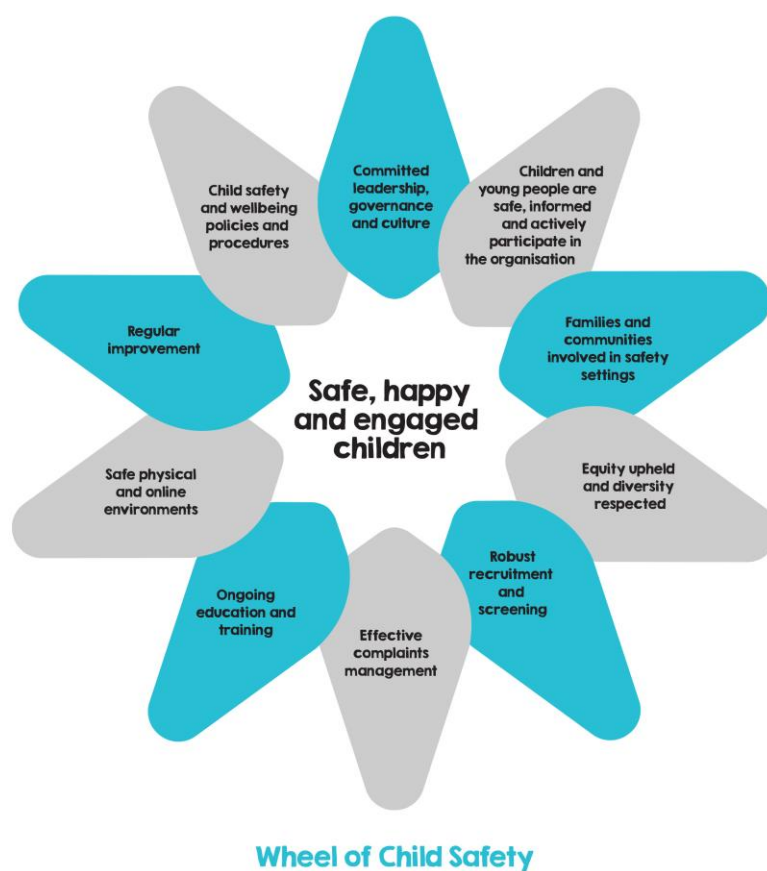


Harm	'Harm' is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a child's physical, psychological, or emotional well-being. Exposure to domestic and family violence or related trauma is emotionally and psychologically harmful to children. 'By definition', therefore, the children and young people who receive our services have been harmed and may be at risk of harm.
Neglect	<p>Neglect occurs when a child's basic necessities of life are not met, and their health and development are affected. Basic needs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• food</li> <li>• housing</li> <li>• health care</li> <li>• adequate clothing</li> <li>• personal hygiene</li> <li>• hygienic living conditions</li> <li>• timely provision of medical treatment</li> <li>• adequate supervision.</li> </ul>
Parent	A parent may be a biological parent, a step-parent, adoptive parent, foster parent, guardian or the domestic partner of a parent.
Physical Abuse	<p>Physical abuse occurs when a child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, non-accidental physical trauma or injury. Physical abuse can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hitting</li> <li>• shaking</li> <li>• throwing</li> <li>• burning</li> <li>• biting</li> <li>• poisoning.</li> </ul> <p>Physical abuse does not always leave visible marks or injuries. It is not how bad the mark or injury is, but rather the act itself that causes injury or trauma to the child</p>
Sexual abuse	<p>Sexual abuse occurs when an adult, stronger child or adolescent uses their power or authority to involve a child in sexual activity.</p> <p>Sexual abuse can be physical, verbal, or emotional and can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• kissing or holding a child in a sexual manner</li> <li>• exposing a sexual body part to a child</li> <li>• having sexual relations with a child under 16 years of age</li> <li>• talking in a sexually explicit way that is not age or developmentally appropriate</li> <li>• making obscene phone calls or remarks to a child</li> <li>• sending obscene mobile text messages or emails to a child</li> <li>• fondling a child in a sexual manner</li> <li>• persistently intruding on a child's privacy</li> <li>• penetrating the child's vagina or anus by penis, finger, or any other object</li> <li>• oral sex</li> <li>• rape</li> <li>• incest</li> <li>• showing pornographic films, magazines or photographs to a child</li> <li>• having a child pose or perform in a sexual manner</li> <li>• forcing a child to watch a sexual act</li> <li>• child prostitution.</li> </ul>

## 4.5 Child Safety & Wellbeing Procedures

The DVAC Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy and Procedures are based on the National Principles of Child Safe Organisations, the Queensland Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs QLD Child Protection Guide [2.1](#), and comply with the Child Protection Act 1999, Child Protection Regulation 2011, Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000, Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011, the QLD Human Rights Act (2019) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child

The procedure outlines our Child Safety & Wellbeing framework through the ten National Principles incorporating processes from the Department of Child Safety, Youth & Women's QLD Child Protection Guide 2.1.



### 4.5.1 Principle 1: Child Safe Culture

DVAC puts into practice our commitment to child safety and wellbeing modelling a child safe culture at all levels of the organisation by:

- A public commitment to child safety and wellbeing and the promotion and protection of children's rights by the organisation and our leadership. This is evidenced by:
  1. the DVAC Child Safe Charter of Commitment being visible in age appropriate poster format throughout our service sites, on our website and social media pages and in a child friendly version in the welcome pack to children & young people accessing our services.



2. All programs within DVAC that support children & young people work from a child rights-based perspective ensuring that their experiences are valued, that they are the experts of their own story and understand their own rights.
- DVAC's entire policy and procedure suite incorporates how to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children & young people in all aspects of the work done on and off site. This includes the Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy & Procedure.
  - Governance arrangements that facilitate the implementation of Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy and Procedures. The following policies & procedures in the DVAC Section 2. Governance suite includes the Safety and Wellbeing of children & young people:
    - a) Principles of Governance.
    - b) Strategic & Operational Planning.
    - c) Child Safe Charter of Commitment.
    - d) Statement of Matter Reserved to the Board.
    - e) Role of Service CEO.
    - f) CEO KPI's.
    - g) Board Performance.
    - h) Recruitment (of Board members).
    - i) Board Induction & Onboarding.
    - j) Termination of Board Positions.
    - k) Subcontracting/Brokerage Procedure.
    - l) Code of Conduct.
    - m) Child Safe Conduct
    - n) Section3 Risk Management.
  - DVAC's Risk Assessment and Management policies & procedures include processes to ensure children & young people are safe while being supported:
    - a) Risk Management Procedures
    - b) Risk Management Framework
    - c) Risk Management Framework Flowchart
    - d) On site Risk
    - e) Lockdown
    - f) Bomb Threat
    - g) Off-site Risk
    - h) Risk at Events
    - i) General Privacy Precautions
    - j) Duty of Care Policy
    - k) Acting on and Reporting Concerns of Child Abuse or Neglect
    - l) Self Harm
    - m) Suicide & Suicidal Intention
    - n) Critical Incident Policy
    - o) Auditing
    - p) Crisis Response Policy
    - q) Pandemic Response Policy
  - Policies and guidance on record keeping and information sharing in Section 5 Rights & Obligations.



#### 4.5.2 *Principle 2: Rights*

DVAC implements the following strategies to enable children & young people to have their rights respected, participate in decision-making, and have their voices heard.

- Programs or resources to educate and engage with children & young people about their rights, safe environments, protective strategies for staying safe and seeking help when needed.
- Information and training provided to employees and volunteers to ensure they understand child rights-based approaches and are skilled at engaging with young people.
- Actively seeking feedback children and young people and encourages their participation in decision-making, including on safety and wellbeing issues as per the DVAC Rights & Obligations policy & Procedure suite.
- Processes to regularly review opportunities for children and young people's participation.
- Policies as outlined in section 5.11 Feedback & Complaints and practices for seeking children's consent for relevant activities.

DVAC is committed to actively encouraging feedback and engagement to ensure that we are always current with client and community needs by:

- Asking clients including children & young people to fill in surveys/feedback forms either in-service or on-line through the DVAC website after attending the service or receiving support off-site or via the phone.
- Facilitate client feedback that is accessible and meaningful for each program for children & young people, at least annually.
- facilitate focus groups with family members or the wider communities we support at least annually.
- Asking stakeholders including children & young people to fill in surveys/feedback forms either in-service or on-line through the DVAC website after attending the service or attending meetings or training off-site or having exchanged information via the phone or email.
- Asking family members or the wider communities we support to fill in surveys/feedback forms either in-service or on-line through the DVAC website from

Service Managers and Team Leaders are responsible for ensuring that feedback is actively sought from clients, family members and the wider communities we support. Team Leaders are responsible for documenting and sharing the learnings and feedback with the wider Organisational Leadership Group.

#### 4.5.3 *Principle 3: Communication & Participation*

DVAC places at the centre of our client work their experiences by implementing effective communication and participation strategies for engaging with and responding to their diverse needs and the needs of families and communities.

- DVAC's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures are made clear and accessible to families and communities by posting information on the DVAC website and social media pages, posters in the service sites, age appropriate flyers and brochures
- DVAC seeks the input of families and communities on the organisation's approach to child safety and wellbeing, including when reviewing policies and procedures by organising focus groups, or feedback opportunities.
- DVAC engages with families and communities to build cultural safety and inclusion through partnerships and respectful relationships.
- DVAC has the following Policies and practices for seeking parental consent for relevant activities. See 5.10.4 Consent for Children & Young People.





#### 4.5.4 *Principle 4: Equity & Diversity Needs*

DVAC creates an environment where children & young people's diverse circumstances and needs are recognised, and all children & young people feel safe, welcome, and included by:

- Implementing policies on accessibility, anti-discrimination, cultural safety, diversity, and inclusion. See 5.5 Access & Diversity Policy.
- Strategies used at all levels of the organisation to counter discrimination and exclusion, including guidance on creating environments that are safe and welcoming for all children.
- Considering and addressing the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people by making sure they are represented in the feedback DVAC receives from clients, the community, regular focus groups and programs.
- Providing and supporting training for employees on identifying and responding to children and young people with diverse backgrounds and needs.
- Providing accessible, child-friendly, and culturally safe information to children and young people about the support and complaints processes available on the DVAC website, on DVAC social media pages and at the DVAC service sites through educational and informational material, posters, brochures and flyers.

#### 4.5.5 *Principle 5: Suitability & Support*

DVAC puts into practice its recruitment and employees development policies including screening, induction, and supervision to ensure that employees and volunteers reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice:

- Policies and guidance on recruitment, including advertising, selection criteria, pre-employment screening, referee checks and duty statements that includes Child Safety & Wellbeing statements and information.
- Systems for ensuring that all relevant employees have current working with children checks or equivalent background checks. See HR Policy on Staff recruitment and selection.
- Induction training for all employees and volunteers on their child safety and wellbeing responsibilities, the organisation's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures, external reporting obligations (e.g. mandatory reporting) and the Code of Conduct.
- Policies and strategies for ongoing supervision, support and performance management of employees and volunteers. See section 7 HR Policy and Procedures.

#### 4.5.6 *Principle 6: Child Focused Complaints Processes*

DVAC has detailed Child Focused Concerns and Complaints Process. The 5.11 Feedback & Complaints Policy and procedures all outline the commitment DVAC has taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and that their voices are always heard by employees and the organisation.

DVAC employees are required during the first meeting with a child or young person to introduce them to the Supervisor where possible by a face to face introduction or alternatively as a minimum providing contact details and information about their supervisor. Additionally, staff will give the client a feedback and complaints information flyer with the supervisors contact details on as well as information about the complaints process.

DVAC has the following age appropriate feedback, concerns, and complaints resources:

- How to Complain poster for children & young people
- Children & Young Persons Complaint Form



- The 'My Rights at DVAC' poster for children & young people

DVAC has developed all the material for children and young people with children and young people accessing our support ensuring minority groups are represented.

DVAC furthermore has a detailed [Duty of Care](#) that outlines the process for receiving and responding to disclosures about child abuse or neglect.

#### 4.5.7 *Principle 7: Ongoing Child Aware Training & Education for Employees*

##### **Awareness of harm and risk of harm**

DVAC employees are required to:

- When conducting a safety assessment with a client, always ascertain whether there are children or young people living in the home and include in the assessment the safety risks pertinent to the children/young people, as well as considering their needs
- Be 'child-aware' – when in contact with parents under stress, explore whether their capacity to provide safe care for their children is affected
- Remain open to the possibility that a child or young person is experiencing neglect or abuse in addition to that associated with family violence by a perpetrator.

##### **Be aware of types of parental or carer actions which are likely to cause harm:**

- Physical abuse, e.g. beating, shaking, burning, biting, or grabbing hard enough to leave a mark, throwing a child or strangulation. Non-accidental injuries may result from excessive physical discipline.
- [Emotional abuse](#) or neglect, e.g. constant criticism, belittling, teasing, withholding praise and affection, constant yelling. It can include failure to provide the psychological nurturing necessary for a child's physical and emotional growth and development.
- Neglect, e.g. the ongoing failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life and adequate supervision needed.
- [Sexual abuse](#) or exploitation, e.g. sexual innuendo, sexual exposure, showing pornographic images, sexual touch, and invasive acts.

Be aware that harm or risk of harm can arise from the actions or inaction of other persons in the child's life, as well as parents or relatives of the child or young person:

- Another carer of the child or young person.
- The child or young person themselves (e.g. self-harm).
- Another child or young person (e.g. an older sibling).
- Another adult not related to the child or young person.
- A DVAC employee.
- Another service provider.

These Child Safety & Wellbeing policy and procedures are supported by mandatory induction and training procedures. These include, for all DVAC employees:

- At induction, being made aware of the policy and their roles and responsibilities in implementing them.
- Being offered internal and external ongoing professional development to support the application of the policy & procedures.
- Encouragement to access additional training about identifying and responding to child protection issues.



- Regular practice development meetings to improve child aware processes.
- At program meetings and internal and external supervision.

#### 4.5.8 *Principle 8: Promoting Safe physical & Online Environments*

DVAC is very mindful of the impact of potential harm in the service environment including our on-line spaces. Cyberbullying is when someone uses the internet to be mean to a child or young person so they feel bad or upset. It can happen on a social media site, game, app, or any other online or electronic service or platform. It can include: posts, comments, texts, messages, chats, livestreams, memes, images, videos and emails.

These are some examples of ways the internet can be used to make someone feel bad or upset:

- Sending hurtful messages about them.
- Sharing embarrassing photos or videos of them.
- Spreading nasty online gossip about them.
- Leaving them out online.
- Creating fake accounts in their name.
- Tricking them into believing you are someone else.

DVAC does not allow comments on our social media pages and ensures they are managed to maximise the safety of children and young people who may be interacting with the service or each other through our social media pages and our programs. DVAC furthermore, has clear procedures for staff that outlines how they ensure that children & young people are safe physically, emotionally, and online while engaging in a DVAC program. Our processes are informed by Online safety information for children and Young People such as:

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/kids/i-want-help-with>  
<https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/toolkit-schools>

Our processes include:

- Ensuring the safety of DVAC services online
- Client use of own device using DVAC Programs
- Client not accessing DVAC WiFi
- Children not accessing external material when doing programs with DVAC

DVAC is committed to training all employees who work within this scope on online environments and safety for Children and Young people, and this training is accessible via the e-safety commissioner and integrated into the foundational training plan for staff.

#### 4.5.9 *Principle 9: Review Process for Child Safe Principles*

The 3 Quality Improvement Policy guides how DVAC continuously assess our organisation and the services we offer to ensure that we are providing the best possible quality support to clients, including children & young people and people of diverse backgrounds and identities. That paired with our Feedback & Complaints Policy ensures that DVAC has constant eyes on the work any of our employees do with children & young people and that their experiences and opinions are valued and incorporated into service improvement strategies.



#### 4.5.10 *Principle 10: Policies & Documents Demonstrating the Organisation is Safe*

As outlined in previous principles all DVAC's policies, procedures, feedback documents, educational material and information outline demonstrates our commitment to ethical, professional, and safe processes and services for children and young people that focuses on their expertise and wellbeing.

## 4.6 Acting on and Reporting Concerns of Child Abuse or Neglect

DVAC employees have a duty of care to ensure that children & young people are safe while engaging with DVAC and during any other life circumstance they or their care giver may have shared with them. If an employee has concerns that a child is experiencing harm or is at risk of experiencing harm or being neglected, then they are expected to take appropriate action. Harm can also include children's exposure to violence, current and historic, demonstrating a perpetrator's pattern of behaviour in making parenting choices to perpetrate domestic violence in front of children. Staff are encouraged to refer to the Safe and Together framework to support the documentation included in a notification.

If an employee believes a child or a young person is in immediate danger or a life-threatening situation, they will call **Triple Zero (000)**. If a child has a serious illness or injury requiring immediate medical attention, OR a crime has just been or is about to be committed, OR a child has just caused or is about to cause serious harm to self or others, employees will first call '000' and ask for the appropriate service to respond to the emergency. Any matter that requires this level of escalation should be discussed with a Team Leader and relevant Manager as soon as possible.

### ***"Working Across Difference***

*Workers engage with families, children, and communities whose ethnicity, economic status, age, gender, culture, religion, spirituality, sexual orientation, and upbringing may differ greatly from their own. Intrinsicly, people are influenced by personal experiences and therefore can be biased when assessing others who differ from themselves." © 2019 by NCCD, All Rights Reserved*

DVAC provides training and support for employees to be professional, mindful, and aware of diversity and able to work without bias or judgement while supporting any people accessing DVAC for support. Employees are especially mindful of the strengths and diverse experiences of children & young people who identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Culturally & Linguistically Diverse, LGBTQIA+ and/ or having a disability. Employees will make considered, professional decisions respecting the voices and experiences of all children & young people about the level of risk and harm and what actions should be taken to improve safety and wellbeing.

Harm is defined as any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological, or emotional wellbeing (section 9 of the Child Protection Act 1999). For harm to be significant, the detrimental effect on a child's wellbeing must be substantial or serious, more than transitory and must be demonstrable in the child's presentation, functioning or behaviour.

There are four different types of child abuse: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.

### 4.6.1 *General Indicators of Child Abuse*

Some general indicators of child abuse may include:

- Showing wariness and distrust of adults
- Rocking, sucking, or biting excessively
- Bedwetting or soiling
- Demanding or aggressive behaviour
- Sleeping difficulties, often being tired and falling asleep
- Low self-esteem
- Difficulty relating to adults and peers
- Abusing alcohol or drugs



- Being seemingly accident prone
- Having broken bones or unexplained bruising, burns or welts in different stages of healing
- Being unable to explain an injury, or providing explanations that are inconsistent, vague or unbelievable
- Feeling suicidal or attempting suicide
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Being withdrawn or overly obedient
- Being reluctant to go home
- Creating stories, poems, or artwork about abuse.

#### 4.6.2 *Indicators of Neglect:*

Some general indicators of child neglect may include:

- Malnutrition, begging, stealing or hoarding food
- Poor hygiene, matted hair, dirty skin, or body odour
- Unattended physical or medical problems
- Comments from a child that no one is home to provide care
- Being constantly tired
- Frequent lateness or absence from school
- Inappropriate clothing, especially inadequate clothing in winter
- Frequent illness, infections, or sores
- Being left unsupervised for long periods.

It is not the role of DVAC employees to investigate Child Abuse. It is the responsibility of DVAC employees to assess whether a Duty of Care is owed to act. This action could include but is not limited to:

- Supporting the primary caregiver to move the family to a safe location.
- Referring the primary caregiver and the family to a Family & Child Connect Service or another relevant service.
- If the situation is deemed to have a detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological, or emotional wellbeing then discuss if possible with the primary caregiver the obligation to report the matter to Child Safety. The employee should always when possible encourage the primary caregiver to be the one reporting to the Department themselves or be reporting alongside the organisation. If that is not possible the employee will have to report after discussing the matter with a Team Leader or relevant Manager.

Depending on the issue ongoing support and assistance to the child or young person and their family may be required to help them to meet their safety and care needs.

The decision to report child protection concerns is not an easy one, and the consequences of the decision are considerable.

Employees will be asked to provide information to help work out the best way to respond to the situation. It is important for employees to call to report concerns and to provide as much detail as possible. Even if they do not have all the details, the information may be critical in helping to keep a child safe.

Employee details are kept confidential and their identity is strictly protected. Employees can remain anonymous if they wish, however it is preferable for them to provide their details so that the Child Safety Officer can call them if information needs to be clarified.

Employees dealing with a potentially reportable matter will case note the process and continue to discuss with their Team Leader or relevant Manager. The Team Leader, Manager and employee dealing with the matter will come together after the notification has been finalised to review the process and assess whether further improvements must be implemented to policies, procedures, or other internal systems.



#### 4.6.3 *Responding to a Disclosure by a Parent, Child, or Young Person*

- Stay calm, and listen carefully, allowing them to go at their own pace.
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- If a child or young person discloses sexual abuse, validate their disclosure but avoid asking too many detailed questions – it is better that this information is given to someone in authority.
- If appropriate, tell them that you will talk with someone whose specific job it is to help families who have had these things happen, and remind them of your duty of care obligations.
- As soon as possible record what the parent, carer or young person said, where possible using their words rather than your own.

If a child or young person discloses that they are being harmed, inform the child or young person that you will need to discuss the concerns with a safe parent. However, prior to discussing the matter with their parent, consider whether this action would jeopardise the child's safety or well-being.

##### Considering whether to discuss a child's disclosure with a parent

If a child or young person discloses that they are being harmed, prior to discussing the matter with a parent, consider the child's safety or well-being if you take this action. Consider whether:

- The parent may be the person causing the abuse, and disclosure would place the child at risk (remember that a parent might be a victim of domestic violence and in turn be harming a child).
- A young person is unwilling to consent to the matter being discussed with their parent.
- The matter may involve police action (e.g. a disclosure by the child of sexual abuse) and disclosure to a parent (including to the non-abusive parent) could jeopardise this.
- A safe parent is unavailable and there is an urgency to act to protect the child.

Particularly in cases of sexual abuse and serious physical abuse of a child, where a report to police or other authorities is likely, consider these issues:

- Whether there is a risk that prior knowledge by a parent that the authorities are to be advised may thwart actions to protect the child or young person, e.g. police action.
- How and when to best talk with the parent or carer about informing the authorities.
- How and when to best talk with a child or young person about informing the authorities, if they have disclosed in the absence of a parent.

In general, it is emotionally dangerous for a child or young person, following their disclosure of sexual abuse or significant physical abuse, to inform them that the authorities will be advised and then have them return home without any action having been taken. In such cases, act immediately to have the appropriate authorities speak with the child and support them.

Disclosures of sexual abuse or serious physical abuse must be handled in a way which does not jeopardise the child's or young person's safety or any possible criminal proceedings. If any of the concerns outlined in above may apply, discuss the matter with the Team Leader or relevant Manager before deciding about speaking with a parent.

In cases of disclosures of sexual abuse or serious physical abuse, avoid:

- Trying to 'investigate' and gather further information yourself.
- Asking a child or young person leading questions.
- Delaying acting on the disclosure.

If a person, including a child or young person, wants to make a disclosure in confidence, remind them about the duty-of-care limits to keeping such information confidential (see Section 5.9 Privacy, Confidentiality & Consent Policy). However, parents and children have the right to expect that the information will not be given to other family members except where



it is essential to safeguarding the child or another person. Where some information will inevitably be disclosed, for example in informing a parent about a Child Protection Notification, take care where possible to avoid any direct disclosures by a child or young person (e.g. telling a parent what a child actually said about them).

When responding to disclosure by a parent or by a child or young person, encourage and support the safe parent to act protectively, including, if necessary, to be involved in making a Child Protection Notification to the relevant authorities.

If a child protection disclosure is made by a member of a family where others of the family are also engaged in counselling with DVAC, inform the other counsellor/s, relevant Team Leader and Manager in a timely manner so that an updated risk assessment can inform ongoing support.

#### *4.6.4 Deciding About Making a Child Protection Notification*

DVAC will meet its Duty of Care to report any reasonable concerns that a child or young person is being significantly harmed or is at risk of significant harm. If employee become aware that a Child Protection Notification may be warranted, discuss the matter without delay with the Team Leader (or in their absence, the relevant Manager).

Consult with the Team Leader or relevant Manager to consider:

- Whether the observations and information indicate reasonable grounds for concern about significant harm or risk of harm to a child or young person.
- The urgency of the matter.
- Whether an identified risk of harm can be averted by supporting the child's safe parent to take protective action.
- Whether a notification to Child Safety or the Queensland Police Service is warranted.
- If so, whether the child's safe parent can be included in the process of reporting.
- How the family and child might be supported during any process of investigation.
- Professional support for the DVAC employee person if necessary.

It is not the responsibility of DVAC employee (including the Team Leader or Manager) to investigate the matter, or to prove that significant harm has occurred or is likely.

In the case of children being exposed to domestic violence, DVAC believe this to be a serious form of emotional abuse which has a detrimental long-term impact on children and young people. As part of deciding whether a child protection notification is warranted, the Team Leader or relevant Manager will consider:

- The period over which the exposure has been occurring.
- Whether it is likely to continue.
- The intensity and frequency of the violence to which the child is likely to be exposed.
- The risk of the child being physically harmed because of the violence.

It is the responsibility of the Team Leader or relevant Manager, in consultation with relevant employee, to decide whether a Child Protection Notification is to be made. In considering the decision of whether to report, the online Queensland Child Protection Guide decision making tool may be consulted. If so, the outcome is downloaded and held on the client's CRM file.

If a decision is made that a Child Protection Notification is warranted, DVAC has an obligation to report, even if a parent or other family member has stated an intention to report concerns themselves to the authorities. Alternatively, an DVAC employee member may support a parent to make the report (and therefore witness that it occurred).



#### 4.6.5 *Child Safety concerns when home visiting*

DVAC staff are required to comply with the child safe policy and legislation at all times. This includes, observations or concerns whilst home visiting where a child may be considered to be at risk of harm or there are concerns of neglect. In the instance where a staff member has concerns for child safety, wellbeing and/or neglect staff are required to discuss their concerns with their team leader or site manager on return to the office. A case discussion would be undertaken to review the concerns, protective factors, actions to support safety and follow up action required. This will be documented on the client file.

Reporting requirements would be followed as outlined in section 4.6.6.

#### 4.6.6 *Making a Child Protection Notification*

When a decision has been made by the Team Leader or relevant Manager, in collaboration with the relevant employees, to make a Child Protection Notification, the primary worker contacts the relevant authority (Child Safety or the Police). The child's safe parent will be made aware of this intention and encouraged to participate in making the report unless doing so is likely to place the child at further risk of harm. Employees will not discuss concerns (or a decision to report) with a parent or other family members, if the discussion could put the child or young person or other family members at risk. This is relevant if any of the following apply:

- A parent or child or young person has disclosed serious physical or sexual abuse (as discussion could jeopardise criminal investigation).
- A family is likely to leave the area with the child if they are aware a report is to be made.
- Talking with the family is likely to have repercussions for the child or young person, or for another family member, including the triggering of family violence.
- There is likely to be retribution of a serious nature towards the employee person, including any risk of violence.

Complete the online Make a Report to Child Safety form as soon as a decision is reached that a report is to be made. Be thorough in completing all sections of the form with all relevant details.

We may also make a verbal report to the relevant authorities in the first instance (the relevant Department of Child Safety Regional Intake Service, or the police).

#### 4.6.7 *Who to Contact*

If the situation has been deemed reportable the employee will contact Child Safety.

- **During normal business hours** - contact the Regional Intake Service.
- **After hours and on weekends** - contact the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre on **1800 177 135**. The service operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Employees can also report concerns to Child Safety Services by telephone or via the online reporting form referring to the Child Protection Guide for detailed information.

Report to the Police when:

- There is immediate risk of serious harm and it has not been possible to contact Child Safety or they are not available to respond.
- The matter involves an alleged perpetrator who is not a family member with whom the child or young person resides.
- The matter involves a DVAC employee person or other agency (see Section 7 Risk and WHS and Section 7 *Human Resources*).





When reporting to police in relation to an alleged perpetrator who is not someone with whom the child or young person resides, inform the parent/s so that they may act to protect and support the child or young person. However, do not inform them prior to reporting if:

- The parent may have been complicit in the abuse or knows about it but has not acted to protect the child or young person.
- A disclosure involves sexual abuse.
- The perpetrator has made threats of a serious nature, e.g. to physically harm someone.

#### 4.6.8 *Timeframe for Reporting*

Report immediately (preferably within 2 hours; at latest before the end of the day):

- Any concerns about a child's or young person's immediate physical safety.
- Disclosures of sexual abuse.
- Disclosures of, or indications of, serious physical abuse of the child.
- Situations where a child has disclosed serious direct abuse at home, and the disclosure has been made without the knowledge and support of a parent.
- Neglect which could have serious imminent consequences (e.g. small children left alone).

Report as soon as possible (within two working days):

- All other concerns about significant harm or risk of harm.

The immediate safety and welfare of any child or young person is always the first priority of employee. If necessary, attend to the child's or young person's urgent needs prior to reporting an incident (for example, ensure medical care is arranged if required).

Any difficulty in contacting a Leader for consultation should not delay reporting when the matter is urgent. If a report is made without prior consultation with a Leader (i.e., both are out of contact), consult with the CEO and advise the Leader of the report as soon as possible.

#### 4.6.9 *When to Include the Child's or Young Person's Parent*

At times, a decision will be made to report a child protection concern without any person having made a disclosure. In such cases, in consultation with the Team Leader, decide the extent to which the child's safe parent should be informed about steps which DVAC may need to take to respond to the matter. The general policy position is that DVAC will discuss any child protection concerns with the client's parent prior to a decision to report, and ensure the necessary support is provided to the parent during any reporting process.

However, do not discuss concerns (or a decision to report) with the mother or any other family members, if the discussion could put the child or young person or other family members at risk. This is relevant if any of the following apply:

- A parent or child or young person has disclosed serious physical or sexual abuse (as discussion could jeopardise criminal investigation).
- A family is likely to leave the area with the child if they are aware a report is to be made.
- Talking with the family is likely to have repercussions for the child or young person, or for another family member, including the triggering of family violence.
- There is likely to be retribution of a serious nature towards the employee person, including any risk of violence.

Continue to support the mother and child/ren during this potentially stressful time, and where possible provide support and/or appropriate referrals to help lessen the risk of harm.



#### 4.6.10 *Monitoring Responsibilities*

The Team Leader or relevant Manager is responsible for keeping a central record of all Child Protection Notifications made by DVAC employee in the course of their duties. These enable the Team Leader or relevant Manager to:

- Maintain a bring-up monitoring system to check, as far as possible, whether action has been taken in response to the reported concerns.
- Maintain quality control of the standard of written reports.
- Inform training and professional development around reporting.
- In consultation with the CEO, review the *Child Protection* policy.

## 4.7 References

- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child](#)
- [Child Protection Act 1999,](#)
- [Child Protection Regulation 2011,](#)
- [Working with Children \(Risk Management and Screening\) Act 2000,](#)
- [Working with Children \(Risk Management and Screening\) Regulation 2011](#)
- [The QLD Human Rights Act \(2019\)](#)
- [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.](#)
- [Child sexual abuse – Things you need to know.](#)
- [QLD Child Protection guide 2.1.](#)

## 4.8 Supporting Documents

### Section 2 Governance

- Principles of Governance.
- Strategic & Operational Planning.
- Child Safe Charter of Commitment.
- Statement of Matter Reserved to the Board.
- Role of Service CEO.
- CEO KPI's.
- Board Performance.
- Recruitment (of Board members).
- Board Induction & Onboarding.
- Termination of Board Positions.
- Risk Management.
- Subcontracting/Brokerage Procedure.
- Blue Cards
- Code of Conduct.
- Child Safe Conduct.

### Section 3 Risk & WHS

- Risk Management Procedures
- Risk Management Framework
- Risk Management Framework Flowchart
- On site Risk
- Lockdown
- Bomb Threat
- Off-site Risk
- Risk at Events
- General Privacy Precautions



- Blue Card Procedure
- Duty of Care Policy
- Acting on and Reporting Concerns of Child Abuse or Neglect
- Self-Harm
- Suicide & Suicidal Intention
- Critical Incident Policy
- Quality Improvement Policy
- Auditing
- Crisis Response Policy
- Pandemic Response Policy

**Section 5 Rights & Obligations.**

- Feedback & Complaints
- Consent for Children & Young People
- Access & Diversity Policy
- DVAC Child Safe Charter of Commitment
- <https://www.esafety.gov.au/kids/i-want-help-with>
- <https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/toolkit-schools>

**4.9 Review Schedule**

Version	Date Endorsed	Review Date	HSQF Standard	Approved by	Content reviewed/ purpose
1	9/11/2020	11.09.2023	3,4,5	CEO	Complete policy & procedure review to include Child Safe Organisation National Principles.
2	21/02/2023	21/02/2024	3, 4, 5	CEO	Inclusion of Acting on and Reporting Concerns of Child Abuse or Neglect and update of Principle 8: Promoting Safe physical & Online Environments
3	5/12/2023	5/12/2024	3,4,5	CEO	Inclusion of Child Safety concerns when home visiting.