

SAFETY OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE - STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Preamble

- Victoria University (VU) expects all staff to observe appropriate standards of behaviour towards and in the company of young people who are under 18 years of age, including online conduct.
- The purpose of the standards is to:
 - protect *Young People*;
 - reduce any opportunities for *Child Abuse or Harm* to occur; and
 - promote the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of *Young People* at VU.
- These standards provide guidance on:
 - how to best support *Young People* including identifying whether staff behaviour towards *Young People* is safe and appropriate; and
 - avoid or better manage difficult situations.
- The standards form part of the Staff Code of Conduct Policy.

STANDARDS

VU has the following expectations of behaviours and boundaries for all staff interacting with *Young People*.

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff **must**:

- Adhere to VU's [Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) including VU's Commitment to Child Safety, at all times.
- Be mindful that *Young People* cannot always be easily identified when integrated into a university environment, both on campus and online.
- Take all reasonable steps to protect *Young People* from *Child Abuse or Harm*.
- Listen and respond appropriately to the views and concerns of *Young People*, particularly if they are telling you that they or another *Young Person* has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another.
- Treat everyone with respect valuing their ideas and opinions.
- Welcome all *Young People* and their families and carers and be inclusive.
- Model appropriate adult behaviour.
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of *Young People* from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage (for example, by accepting self-identification by a young Aboriginal person).
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of *Young People* from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination).
- Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of *Young People* with a disability (for example, by identifying appropriate ways to physically and emotionally assist *Young People* with a disability).
- Encourage *Young People* to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant VU *Activities* where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.
- In planning *Activities* ensure as far as practicable that an *Adult* is not left alone with a *Young Person*.
- Be open and transparent and keep other *Adults* informed of the *Activities* you do with *Young People*.
- Where *Activities* require staff to have physical contact with a *Young Person* (for example, sport or other recreational activity, providing medical treatment) ensure that the reason for the contact is explained and permission is sought from the *Young Person*.
- If occupying positions requiring a Working with Children Check ensure that its currency is maintained and VU and Department of Justice and Regulation are notified of any changes to personal details.
- Report any allegations of *Child Abuse or Harm* or concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a *Young Person* through the [Child Safety Reporting Process](#) using the [Online Reporting form](#) and if appropriate given the severity and urgency of the matter report directly to Victoria Police or Child Protection (Department of Health and Human Services - Victoria).

- Report any suspected breaches of these standards, using the [Child Safety Reporting Process](#) and Part F of the Staff Code of Conduct.
- Respect the privacy of *Adults* and *Young People* and only disclose information to people who have a need to know.

If you believe that a *Young Person* is at immediate risk of abuse or if there is sexual abuse involved - phone the Police on 000

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

Staff **must not**:

- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed *Child Abuse or Harm*.
- Develop any 'special' relationships with a *Young Person* that could be perceived as grooming (for example, offering of gifts or special treatment of a specific *Young Person*).
- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with *Young People*.
- Put *Young People* at risk of abuse (for example, lack of risk mitigation strategies for *Activities* involving *Young People*, inadequate supervision).
- Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature (for example, personal social activities) or use inappropriate language (including swearing) in the presence of *Young People*.
- Engage in inappropriate conversations of a sexual nature with a *Young Person* including making sexually suggestive comments or sharing sexually suggestive material.
- Discriminate against any *Young Person* because of age, race, religion, culture, sexuality or disability.
- Express inappropriate or disrespectful personal views on cultures, ethnicity, sexuality or disability in the presence of *Young People*.
- Exchange personal contact details such as a phone number, social networking site or email address with *Young People* or their families unless required by specific work related circumstances.
- Engage in inappropriate personal communications with *Young People* or their families online or by phone.

KEY DEFINITIONS:

The terms in *italics* have the same meaning as the [Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People Policy](#).

REFERENCES & RESOURCES:

- Code of Conduct - Child Safe Standards toolkit (Department of Health and Human Services - Victoria)
- Sample Code of Conduct – A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation (Commission for Children and Young People - Victoria)
- Commission for Children and Young People – Tip Sheets for Child Safe Organisations
 - [Cultural safety for Aboriginal children](#)
 - [Safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds](#)
 - [Safety of children with a disability](#)
 - [Empowerment and participation of children](#)