

Safeguarding Vulnerable People Procedure and Code of Conduct

Date of Issue: May 2024

Policy approved by: Governance and Risk Committee

Responsibility: People and Culture, Education, Health & Safety Committee

To be reviewed every two years, or after an incident has been received.

This *Safeguarding Vulnerable People Procedure and Code of Conduct* is to be read in conjunction with

- NTAV Safeguarding Vulnerable People Policy
- Mandatory Reporting - Child Protection Policy
- Whistleblowing Protections Policy

Purpose

- This document outlines the National Trust of Australia (Victoria)'s procedure and code of conduct for staff and volunteers to safeguard vulnerable people including children, young people and adults at risk.
- Set standards regarding the ways in which staff and volunteers in the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) environments are expected to behave and conduct themselves when interacting with vulnerable people.
- Document the processes in place to safeguard vulnerable people including children, young people and adults at risk.

Scope

- All individuals who work in the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) environment are required to comply with this document at all times. Such individuals include those who are:
 - directly employed by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria)
 - a volunteer or a contracted service provider.
- All staff and volunteers are given the opportunity to contribute to the development and improvement of this code of conduct.

Overarching Principles

- Adult/child interactions should always be professional.
- An adult's response to a child's behaviour or circumstances should be commensurate with the child's age and vulnerability. It is the adult's responsibility to ensure the care, safety and welfare of the child.

Code of Conduct

All staff, volunteers, and contractors will:

- provide evidence of a current and satisfactory Working with Children Check, and a Police Check.
- respect the privacy of vulnerable people including children, young people and adults at risk
- protect vulnerable people including children, young people and adults at risk from violence, abuse, bullying, torment, ridicule and neglect
- respect the language and customs of all vulnerable people including children, young people and adults at risk and their families
- treat everyone in the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) community with respect
- maintain a duty of care towards vulnerable people including children, young people and adults at risk
- avoid covert or overt sexual behaviours when interacting with vulnerable people including children, young people and adults at risk
- maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries in their interactions with vulnerable people including children, young people and adults at risk
- refrain from possessing or using illegal drugs or alcohol when working with vulnerable people including children, young people and adults at risk
- behave as positive role models
- listen and respond appropriately to the views and concerns of vulnerable people including children, young people and adults at risk, particularly if they are telling you that they or another person has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/safety of another person
- promote the culture of safety, participation and empowerment of all people, regardless of age, gender, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or ability
- report immediately to a Senior Manager if they have a reasonable belief or suspicion that a child or other vulnerable person has been or is being abused or neglected (Refer to NTAV Mandatory Reporting – Child Protection Policy for actions to take when reporting suspected child abuse.)
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) is (are) safe
- behave in a respectful, courteous, tolerant, non-discriminatory way towards vulnerable people regardless of their race, culture, religion, sex or abilities.
- provide opportunities for every child to learn
- work and behave within the limits of their professional expertise
- alert a Senior Manager as soon as possible if a breach of this code is observed.

All staff and volunteers will work to these principles:

- provide a culturally safe environment which respects and values the diverse and unique identities of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- respect vulnerable people and children's individual differences and cater for their individual abilities
- work to create a safe environment which promotes mutual respect
- model and engage in respectful and impartial language
- protect vulnerable people from intimidation, embarrassment, humiliation and harm
- respect a vulnerable person's privacy in sensitive matters
- interact with vulnerable people without displaying bias or preference
- never violate or compromise the unique position that an adult holds of influence and trust in relationships with vulnerable people.

Procedures

The safety and wellbeing of vulnerable people is NTAV's primary concern.

- The decisions NTAV makes when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.
- NTAV records all allegations of abuse and safety concerns by informing a Senior Manager who will log the incident/hazard with the People & Culture team. This includes any investigation updates. All records are securely stored. If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, NTAV provides updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.
- All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. NTAV has safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legal responsibilities

NTAV takes its legal responsibilities seriously. Staff and volunteers are expected to comply, including:

- **Failure to disclose:**

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. Refer to NTAV Mandatory Reporting – Child Protection Policy for actions to take when reporting suspected child abuse.

- **Failure to protect:**

People of authority in NTAV 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 must comply with their duties.

Risk Management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, NTAV proactively manages risks of abuse to children. NTAV has risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

Feedback

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. NTAV will ensure that staff and volunteers have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible, NTAV does its best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people living with disability.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

The organisation takes all allegations seriously, prioritises the safety of children when such allegations are made and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly.

Staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations. NTAV works to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour. All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if there is reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above). If an adult 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
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour

This document was reviewed by: Education & Public Programs Manager

Date: April 2024

DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: May 2026