

Vermont Vultures Basketball Club

Child Safety Policy

Purpose

This document sets out how the Vermont Vultures Basketball Club is committed to child safety and how we work to ensure our Club creates and maintains a culture where all children are safe.

Scope of this policy

This policy guides how all our staff and volunteers behave with children in our organisation. The policy applies to all people associated with Vermont Vultures Basketball Club including; committee members, management, coaches, team managers, parents of players, supporters, and players.

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, provide children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of the Club, and to allow staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child safety issues.

The words 'child' and 'children' in this policy refer to children and young people up to the age of 18 years. This definition is consistent with the Creating Safe Environments for Children – Organisations, Employees and Volunteers National Framework, the Commission for Children and Young People Act, the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 and the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005. Not utilising the term 'young people' is not intended to diminish any emphasis on, or acknowledgement of, the safety risks to older children or teenagers.

Child Safety in Victoria

Victoria's Child Safe Standards are a set of mandatory requirements to protect children and young people from harm and abuse. Schedule 1 of the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* sets out sporting clubs as one of the categories of organisations that must comply with the Child Safe Standards

The Child Safe Standards (the Standards) commenced in Victoria in January 2016. Changes have been made to make the standards stronger. The new Child Safe Standards came into force on 1 July 2022 and organisations now need to comply with these new Standards.

There are 11 Standards, which include requirements such as:

- involving families and communities in efforts to keep children and young people safe
- a greater focus on safety for Aboriginal children and young people
- managing the risk of child abuse in online environments.



The Child Safe Standards

To ensure child safe practices at our club, we must meet the following requirements:

Standard 1

Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.

Standard 2

Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.

Standard 3

Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

Standard 4

Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

Standard 5

Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

Standard 6

People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

Standard 7

Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.

Standard 8

Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.

Standard 9

Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

Standard 10

Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.

Standard 11

Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.



Introduction

Everyone who participates in our Club's activities is entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. Vermont Vultures Basketball Club has a moral and legal obligation to ensure the highest possible standard of care for children and young people.

Vermont Vultures Basketball Club is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone in our sport accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means to follow policies and procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their safety and/or welfare to appropriate authorities.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023) approximately 22% of adults had experienced childhood abuse and/or witnessed parental violence before the age of 15, including:

- 7.5% who experienced sexual abuse
- 9.1% who experienced physical abuse
- 13% who witnessed violence towards a parent by a partner

Child Abuse Definitions

This policy seeks to ensure children in our Club are safe and free from any form of Child Abuse. There are several types of Child Abuse, the following are definitions of Forms of Child Abuse:

Physical abuse

The World Health Organisation (2006, p. 10) defines child physical abuse as:

The intentional use of physical force against a child that results in – or has a high likelihood of resulting in – harm for the child's health, survival, development or dignity. This includes hitting, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, strangling, scalding, burning, poisoning and suffocating. Much physical violence against children in the home is inflicted with the object of punishing.

Emotional abuse –

Emotional abuse is sometimes called 'emotional maltreatment', 'psychological maltreatment' and 'psychological abuse'. It occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected or frightened by threats. The abuse can involve name calling, being put down or continual coldness from a parent or caregiver to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired.

Sexual abuse

Occurs when a child is used by an adult, another child or adolescent for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification. These can be contact or non-contact acts, including grooming by perpetrators, inappropriate touching, penetrative abuse, and exposure to pornography and accessing child pornography.

Neglect

Occurs when there is a failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical attention or care to the extent that the health safety, or development of the child is significantly impaired or placed at risk.

Family Violence:

Occurs when children witness or experience the chronic domination, coercion, intimidation and victimisation of one person by another by physical, sexual or emotional means within a domestic relationship.

Grooming



Occurs when communication or conduct is linked to the intention of facilitating the involvement of a child less than 16 years of age in sexual behaviour with an adult. Indicators include but are not limited to:

- Developing special relationships with, favouring, or giving gifts to a child
- Inappropriate interactions with children either in person or via forms of media and electronic devices
- Involving children in conversations, or exposing children to content, of a sexually explicit or suggestive nature.
- Asking a child to keep a secret of any aspect of their relationship
- Testing of or ignoring professional boundaries or rules

We all have a responsibility to protect the children in our community and our Club. If you have a reasonable belief that child is at risk of abuse or is being abused, please refer the section about [Reporting allegations, concerns and complaints](#) in this Policy.



Our Commitment to Child Safety

1) Club Culture and Leadership

The Club and its leaders are working to build a child safe culture which provides children with the best possible experience and opportunities.

In Basketball and at this Club, everyone must operate within our accepted ethical frameworks, these include our Code of Conduct, Member Protection Declaration and Child Safety Policy.

It is not the responsibility of anyone working or volunteering for Vermont Vultures Basketball Club in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by making contact with the appropriate personnel and authorities so that those authorities can then make inquiries, undertake investigations; and take action to protect the child.

This applies to disclosures, allegations, and suspicions of abuse occurring within our organisation's activities and to disclosures, allegations and suspicions of abuse that personnel may become aware of that is taking place elsewhere.

If any person associated with our club is informed, or forms the belief that that abuse is occurring, or is likely to occur, that person should report their concerns to the Vermont Vultures Basketball Club Committee with all practical urgency.

Club Child Welfare and Safety Officer

The Vultures Basketball Club has a Child Safety Officer to oversee matters concerning child safety and abuse. We expect our members and staff to discuss any concerns that they may have about the welfare of a child with the Child Safety Officer.

The Child Safety Officer will ensure that the concern and/or incident is reported and remains confidential, and that the identity of the person reporting the concern or incident is not revealed unless required by the law.

The Child Safety Officer is required to report all the incidents noted by him/her to both the Club Committee and Basketball Victoria (BV).

The Child Safety Officer and the VVBC Executive will work 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.



2) Child Safety Policy Statement

At the Vermont Vultures, we want children to be safe, happy and empowered and we want to work in partnership with parents and children to create a child safe environment. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

At the Vermont Vultures, we:

- are committed to child safety, and the safety and welfare of every child is paramount.
- are committed to the participation and empowerment of all children.
- take all reasonable steps to protect children from harm, discrimination, and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes, and feelings.
- ensure all children, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief, and/or sexual identity will be able to participate in basketball in a fun and safe environment.
- do not accept that the pursuit of high performance in teams or an organisation means player, coach, or supporter safety is compromised,
- have zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously.
- take all reports of suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse seriously and respond swiftly and appropriately.
- acknowledge our legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we have concerns about a child's safety.
- are committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, as well as by working to remove and reduce these risks.
- have recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers and we ensure all employees and volunteers who work with children are screened using a Working with Children Check and are provided with guidance and/or training in good Child Safety practice and procedures.
- are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff, and volunteers to achieve these commitments.



Child Safe Practice at Vermont Vulture Basketball Club:

In complying with this Child Safe policy, all Club Management, Staff and Volunteers:

- are prohibited from engaging in any physical or sexual contact, including but not limited to massaging, pinching, punching, pushing, sitting on laps, and any form of assault or any other inappropriate touching.
- are prohibited under any circumstance from verbally or psychologically abusing or denigrating children publicly or privately or from attempts to control or manipulate children through psychological means. This includes via digital means or in an online environment.
- will not use any physical force unless it is to safeguard against immediate physical danger (for example: separating players engaged in a fight is acceptable)
- will not forbid children from sharing conversations or information with parents, other staff or volunteers, nor instruct children to “keep secrets” from their parents or carers
- will not ever engage in any activities which could be interpreted as ‘Grooming’ as outlined in this policy
- will not be alone with any child (excluding one’s own child) in any secluded area or room, wherein they cannot be seen or observed by another staff member or adult
- will not display, distribute, or share any demeaning, suggestive, objectionable, or pornographic material
- will not indirectly or explicitly invite children to engage in inappropriate, suggestive or sexual activities which may or may not include a promise to reward for complying, or a threat of reprisal for not complying
- will refrain from any sexual attention towards others in the form of remarks, jokes or innuendos about a person’s body or clothing etc, including threats of such behaviour
- will comply with this policy at all times and ensure all allegations, concerns or complaints relating to child abuse or Child Safety are referred to the correct internal and external authority immediately.
- will work to build a culture of reciprocal accountability, reminding each other of our responsibilities, pointing out risks, and asking questions to ensure that we remain vigilant in preserving the safety of children and all members of our club.



Physical Contact

Physical contact with children is permitted for coaching, wellbeing or medical reasons and only in a manner that is consistent with this policy; it should only be carried out in a public place and with another adult present.

- ‘High fives’, handshakes, fist-bumps, and pats on the back for players are **acceptable** examples of physical contact between coaches, players and supporters **except** where a player or guardian indicates a preference that these do not happen. Such preferences **must** be respected.
- When comforting a distressed child, adults are encouraged to exercise caution in the use of physical contact. For example, an extended arm around the shoulders instead of an embrace is more appropriate.
- When teaching or coaching a child in a basketball technique:
 - say something to the player to explain that contact will happen:
 - “I’m going to move you”
 - “If it is okay, I’ll move your arms...”
 - “There might be contact in the key while rebounding...”
 - “When we set screens, there will be contact...”
 - the physical contact should be the minimum required for a technique or skill to be demonstrated.
- If a child initiates physical contact with an adult, it is up to the adult to ensure it is appropriate and take measures to ensure the child understands the limits of physical contact.
- Players should be informed and reminded that physical contact with teammates; pushing, hitting, or kicking, is not an acceptable part of basketball training or games.
- Coaches and team managers should work with teams to ensure their behaviour at training and games is appropriate. Touching, pointing to, commenting on, drawing attention to, or shaming other participants’ bodies is never acceptable; where this happens, coaches and team managers should raise their concerns directly with parents/guardians of players.

Use, possession or supply of alcohol or drugs

Staff and volunteers must not use, possess or be under the influence of an illicit drug or alcohol whilst they are responsible for children associated with Vermont Vultures Basketball Club. Staff and volunteers must not supply alcohol or drugs (including tobacco) to children participating in our Club.



Transporting Children

In circumstances where a child may need to travel in a car with a staff member or volunteer **all possible steps** should be taken to ensure that another player (i.e. a coach's son/daughter) or person is present in the car.

It is essential that the staff member or volunteer drives in a safe and lawful manner;

- remaining under the speed limit
- not operating the vehicle under the influence of alcohol or other drugs
- being mindful that our personal practices with regard to driving style, comments on the driving of others and music choice / volume may not represent the choices of other families, and caution is urged.

In the scenario where transport arrangements are made, staff or volunteers must email or text the child's parent/s and obtain their permission, in writing, before the transportation takes place.

Where this is a regular occurrence, for example, a ride to training each week, the driver must ensure they have written permission from the parents or carers at the commencement of the arrangement and ensure there is an acknowledgment of the ongoing nature of the arrangement.

Where one-to-one travel is undertaken, the child must be seated in the back seat of the car and fitted with a seat belt.

Bathroom / Change Room Arrangements

From time to time, staff and volunteers may be required to supervise children in change rooms.

This must meet the requirement for a child's right to privacy. To ensure this, staff and volunteers will:

- provide the level of supervision required for preventing abuse by members of the public, adult service users, peer service users, or general misbehaviour, while also respecting a child's privacy.
- avoid one-to-one situations with a child in a change room area.
- not use the change room area to undress or change, while children are present.
- undertake same gender supervision. Female staff are not to enter male change rooms and male staff are not to enter female change rooms for any reason.
- communicate with player parents/guardians that players should use toilet facilities supervised by their parent/guardians and not disrupt training or games. Where this is unavoidable, players should use bathrooms in groups of two.



Where a change of playing top is required before a game, children are allowed to find a private area in which to change. It is advised the players know if they will need to use alternate tops prior to games or training.

The playing of 'shirts vs skins' games is not appropriate. While some participants may occasionally attempt to initiate these games, coaches and team managers must insist that players remain appropriately clothed at all times.

Child Supervision

The club takes seriously its responsibility to ensure participants are able to play in a safe environment and are protected from external threats and/or intruders and are supervised at all times.

- Staff and volunteers are responsible for supervising children **on court during club games and training.**
- Staff and volunteers will make every effort to supervise players at programs and events.
- **Parents/guardians should actively supervise** their players in stadiums / training venues / car parks, ensuring they are with their team and have been acknowledged by coach / team manager before assuming their player is being supervised.

Parents, Staff, and volunteers should work together to ensure **we never leave a child unsupervised** in/outside of any stadium where a training / game is about to commence or has been completed.

Children are expected behave appropriately toward one another, for example, no bullying or harassing behaviour.

Appropriate language

Language and/or tone of voice used in the presence of children should provide clear direction, boost their confidence, encourage and/or affirm, and not be harmful in any way.

All people associated with Vermont Vultures Basketball Club should avoid language that is discriminatory, racist or sexist, derogatory, belittling or negative or intended to threaten, demean, abuse or frighten any other person.

Electronic Communication

Use of electronic media and communication must comply with this policy, including:



- In instances where a team operates a 'WhatsApp' or similar group messaging service for communication:
 - Messaging service participants should be chosen **ONLY** from the club registration documentation, i.e. the parent/guardian listed from communication with the club.
 - **Do not** add / agree to add a member to a messaging service who is not listed on registration documentation **without first checking** with the listed parent / guardian.
 - Volunteers / staff should communicate with parents / guardians and not players.
 - Where players are in the messaging service, their parents / guardians must also be in the group.
 - All communications via group messaging services must comply with this policy.
- Club Staff and volunteers must not initiate social media contact with children nor initiate children becoming their social media 'friend' or 'follower'.
- If a child requests to 'friend' or 'follow' any adult staff or volunteer on social media the child's parent or carer permission must be granted in writing.
- If you are an adult and you are currently 'friends' with children that you know through the Basketball Club you must immediately 'de-friend' or 'unfollow' the child/ren and refer them to this policy when doing so. If and when parental permission in writing is granted the child can 're-friend' you.
- Adults should never use social media private messaging when communicating with children
- All Adults must conduct themselves in a manner consistent with this policy at all times when using electronic communication.
- Electronic communication to parents and children can be sent from personal email accounts and must only relate to Vulture Club business (eg: training times, game details etc.) and should be sent as a 'broadcast' emails to all parents.
- Emails to parents / guardians should never disclose personal information about players (addresses / phone numbers / parents marital status). It is advisable to use the 'bcc' function in email distribution until teams are established and parents / guardians have communicated they are happy for their emails to be shared.
- All emails from personal emails accounts relating to Vulture Club basketball business must be provided to the Club upon request, if ever required for evidentiary or investigation purposes.

Overnight Stays/Camps

Overnight stays or camps relating to Vultures Club business may occur from time to time. All overnights arrangements can only be made with the prior-authorisation of the Club Committee in writing.



Staff / volunteers must be aware that making camp / overnight arrangements represents a significant increase in the responsibility for child safety, effectively extending this for the entirety of the camp/event. Practices and behaviour by staff and volunteers during an overnight stay must be consistent with this policy, practices and behaviour expected during delivery of any and all club programs and events for the entirety of the camp/event.

As a minimum, standards of conduct that must be met by staff and volunteers during an overnight stay include:

- Children's accommodation must be safe and secure at all times. Staff or volunteer accommodation should be in close proximity to children accommodation.
- Under no circumstances will adult staff and volunteers sleep in the same room, tent or bed as a child or young person on their own.
- Children must be provided with access to private facilities for bathing and dressing.
- Observing appropriate personal standards when children are present. Under no circumstances should children be exposed to adult nudity or any state of undress.
- If medical or emotional circumstances warrant separate sleeping arrangements, two staff members or two children must always be present.
- Not leaving children under the supervision or protection of unauthorised persons such as maintenance staff, stadium staff or friends.
- Children must be able to contact their parents, or another trusted adult, if they feel unsafe, uncomfortable or distressed at any time during their time away.
- Ensuring children are not exposed to age inappropriate material of any kind including movies, television, the internet or magazines.

Giving Gifts / Rewards

No player or participant should be singled out as the recipient of a gift from a staff member or volunteer.

Awards will be determined and presented to participants, including sponsored awards for discounts and free products at restaurants and shops.

There should be no secrecy about any award presented to any participant at the club.

Where coaches like to offer treats of lollies to players after training or at games, care should be taken to ensure this is consistent with the wishes of parents / guardians and does not present a risk in the form of dietary requirements or allergies.



Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

Vermont Vultures Basketball Club takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. We have staff and volunteers who are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We take our legal responsibilities seriously and we abide by all existing and new laws relating to child safety in Victoria and Australia.

The following sets out the Victorian laws that apply to every adult person who is a staff member or volunteer of the Vermont Vultures Basketball Club. They include:

- **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.
- **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.
- **Mandatory reporters:** In Australia doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers including early childhood teachers, principals and police are all mandatory reporters. They must report to [child protection](#) if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse. Any personnel who are mandatory reporters whether at work or not, must comply with their duties.

Reporting

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim of abuse, or if they notice inappropriate behaviour. We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a 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 observed¹
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

The Vermont Vulture Committee has appointed a Child Welfare and Safety Officer to support the club in our child safety endeavours. Our Child Welfare and Safety Officer is trained to deal appropriately with allegations any disclosure, allegation or observations relating to child safety and child abuse.

If you have received an allegation, have concerns or a complaint about child safety you should direct your calls to Child Welfare and Safety Officer via email.

If you want to make a report about a child that is in immediate risk or danger of an offence, please call Triple Zero (000).



All other reports can be made by contacting your local police station or the Victorian Child Protection Agency on 13 12 78 or Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

Victimisation

Disciplinary measures can be imposed on anyone who harasses or victimises another person for making a complaint or supporting another person's complaint.

Improper and Vexatious Complaints

If at any point in the complaint handling process, the Club considers that the person(s) making the complaint has knowingly made an untrue or vexatious complaint, and the complaint is malicious, frivolous or intended to cause distress to the person who is the subject of the complaint, disciplinary action may also be taken against the person(s) who made the complaint.



Volunteer Training

Training and education are important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. We will continue to develop specific policies, procedures and training that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve the commitments set out in the Child Safe standards.

Our aim is for all volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and safe in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We will train our volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes training after recruitment to help staff and volunteers to:

- Attend induction and training sessions prior to and in the course of their voluntary work with the club
- Work safely and effectively with children
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice and/or abuse
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child in a supportive and safe way
- Analyse their own practice against what is deemed good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations

Staff and Volunteer Supervision

We support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse. Volunteers should assume they will be observed in their work with children and ensure they uphold our commitment to child safety and their role to play in protecting children from abuse. Staff and volunteers' will be held accountable for their approach to their role and their behaviour towards children to ensure it is safe and appropriate at all times.

END OF PART A