



Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

2022



Our commitment to children as a priority in our Library Plan:

We will support children, their curiosity, and their joy of reading. We will support the brain development of babies. Support parents as baby’s first teacher and invest in best practices for our youngest citizens. We will welcome and present opportunities for young people to have a voice, as they move toward adulthood.

1. Purpose

This policy ensures that Goldfields Library Corporation complies with, adheres to and supports the Victorian State Government Child Safe Standards and the work of the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP).

The policy outlines the GLC collective commitment to being a child safe organisation through the implementation of practices and processes for the recruitment of staff and volunteers, the delivery of services and the provision of facilities and resources.

2. Scope

It is designed to ensure all Board members, employees, direct contractors, volunteers and work placement and work experience students of the Goldfields Library Corporation (the **GLC**) understand that the organisation is committed to providing a child safe organisation and their own responsibilities for the protection and empowerment of children.

3. Context

The 2013 Betrayal of Trust report was an outcome of the 2012/13 Victorian Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations.

The report provided 15 recommendations, initially introducing seven Child Safe Standards, to change the culture within organisations to one that placed child-safety as a key priority.

The GLC was initially required to enter the scheme no later than January 2019.

2022 Victorian Government Legislation

The Victorian Government established a three-phase implementation plan to help protect children. The three areas of focus apply to criminal law reform, civil law reform and the creation of child safe organisations.

GLC is a provider of services for children and families and, as a child safe organisation, has implemented the Victorian Child Safe Standards and will continue to embed and fulfil our obligations within these standards. There are 11 new Standards, to be introduced in July 2022 to supersede the previous 7 standards.

These increased standards better align with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. Victorian Child Safety Standards are mandatory for organisations in accordance with the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005. (Commission for Children and Young People Oct 2020)

The Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme is also established by the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 and was developed to improve organisational responses to allegations of child abuse and neglect by employees, workers, contractors, volunteers, or other positions directly engaged by an organisation covered by the scheme. Heads of organisations have specific obligations under the reportable conduct scheme, including notifying the Commission for Children and Young People of any reportable allegations and undertaking appropriate investigations. There is extensive information available as part of the GLC Child Safety Resources as well as via the Commission for Children and Young People Website:

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/new-child-safe-standards-start-in-victoria-on-1-july->

[2022-to-better-protect-children/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwhqaVBhCxARIsAHK1tiM9Nb9DXHJ45DH8A88VLeglqjtpiWeGUJzEa3NywbHeBluy4JvZ5AaAg_REALw_wcB](https://www.glc.org.uk/2022-to-better-protect-children/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwhqaVBhCxARIsAHK1tiM9Nb9DXHJ45DH8A88VLeglqjtpiWeGUJzEa3NywbHeBluy4JvZ5AaAg_REALw_wcB)

4. Child Safe Statement

The GLC is committed to being a child safe and child friendly organisation and has a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse in all its forms. Children - people under the age of 18 - are an integral part of the communities we serve and we welcome their participation in, and enjoyment of our library services.

We understand the significant role libraries play in our communities and our place in providing a safe and welcoming environment where the voices, opinions and views of children are valued and encouraged.

We welcome all children and their families and do not tolerate discrimination in any form. We respect and celebrate the cultural and religious diversity of our communities and endeavour to provide services and spaces that promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of all children, including; Aboriginal children; children of culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds; and children of all abilities.

We encourage families to participate together in all aspects of the services we provide and to utilise the library as a place to learn and enjoy together. We expect parents and carers to actively supervise their children in our libraries for their own safety. We also expect other library patrons to show respect to children in our libraries and to model appropriate adult behaviour.

We provide programs, resources and facilities that encourage participation and individual learning and our staff are highly skilled to assist families and children to access these services and find new avenues for learning, enjoyment and participation.

We manage risks within the organisation through our *Risk Management Policy* (draft 2018) and this includes identifying and managing any risks to children in our libraries. We will report, investigate and act on any issues of child safety, and report allegations or incidents of child abuse and neglect to the appropriate authorities.

We recognise our responsibility in keeping children safe from abuse from those associated with our organisation. We have rigorous processes for recruitment to ensure staff are well suited to their roles and all staff are required to abide by our Code of Conduct, including conduct related to working with children. Under the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act* (2005) we will thoroughly investigate and report any allegations of child abuse and neglect by staff, direct contactors and volunteers to the Commission for Children and Young People as required through the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

5. The Eleven Child Safe Standards for 2022

Child Safe 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.

In complying with Child Safe Standard 1, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 1.1 a child's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights is encouraged and actively supported
- 1.2 Strategies are embedded within the organisation which equip all members to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and young people
- 1.3 Measures are adopted by the organisation to ensure racism within the organisation is identified, confronted, and not tolerated. Any instances of racism are addressed with appropriate consequences.
- 1.4 The organisation actively supports and facilitates participation and inclusion within it by Aboriginal children, young people, and their families
- 1.5 All of the organisation's policies, procedures, systems, and processes together create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal children, young people, and their families

Child Safe Standard 2

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

In complying with Child Safe Standard 2, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 2.1 The organisation makes a public commitment to child safety
- 2.2 A child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the organisation from the top down and bottom up
- 2.3 Governance arrangements facilitate implementation of the child safety and wellbeing policy at all levels
- 2.4 A Code of Conduct provides guidelines for staff and volunteers on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities
- 2.5 Risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying, and mitigating risks to children and young people
- 2.6 Staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and recordkeeping

Child Safe Standard 3

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

In complying with Child Safe Standard 3, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 3.1 Children and young people are informed about all of their rights, including to safety, information, and participation
- 3.2 The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated
- 3.3 Where relevant to the setting or context, children and young people are offered access to sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant related information in an age-appropriate way
- 3.4 Staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children and young people to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns
- 3.5 organisations have strategies in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and young people
- 3.6 organisations provide opportunities for children and young people to participate and responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening confidence and engagement

Child Safe Standard 4

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

In complying with Child Safe Standard 4, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 4.1 Families participate in decisions affecting their child
- 4.2 The organisation engages and openly communicates with families and the community about its child safe approach and relevant information is accessible
- 4.3 Families and communities have a say in the development and review of the organisation's policies and practices
- 4.4 Families, carers and the community are informed about the organisation's operations and governance

Child Safe Standard 5

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

In complying with Child Safe Standard 5, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

5.1 The organisation, including staff and volunteers, understands children and young people's diverse circumstances, and provides support and responds to those who are vulnerable.

5.2 Children and young people have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible, and easy to understand

5.3 The organisation pays particular attention to the needs of children and young people with disability or special needs, children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people

5.4 The organisation pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal children and young people and provides / promotes a culturally safe environment for them

Child Safe Standard 6

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

In complying with Child Safe Standard 6, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

6.1 Recruitment, including advertising, referee checks and staff and volunteer pre-employment screening, emphasise child safety and wellbeing

6.2 Relevant staff and volunteers have current working with children checks or equivalent background checks

6.3 All staff and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their responsibilities to children and young people, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations

Child Safe Standard 7

Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.

In complying with Child Safe Standard 7, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

7.1 The organisation has an accessible, child focused complaint handling policy which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of leadership, staff, and volunteers, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report

7.2 Effective complaint handling processes are understood by children and young people, families, staff, and volunteers, and are culturally safe

7.3 Complaints are taken seriously, and responded to promptly and thoroughly

7.4 The organisation has policies and procedures in place that address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and co-operates with law enforcement

7.5 Reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met

Child Safe 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.

In complying with Child Safe Standard 8, an organisation must, at a minimum ensure:

8.1 Staff and volunteers are trained and supported to effectively implement the organisation's child safety and wellbeing policy

8.2 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and young people

8.3 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm

8.4 Staff and volunteers receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people

Child Safe Standard 9

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

In complying with Child Safe Standard 9, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

9.1 Staff and volunteers identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities

9.2 The online environment is used in accordance with the organisations' code of conduct and child safety and wellbeing policy and practices

9.3 risk management plans consider risks posed by organisational settings, activities, and the physical environment

9.4 Organisations that contract facilities and services from third parties have procurement policies that ensure the safety of children and young people

Child Safe Standard 10

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

In complying with Child Safe Standard 10, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

10.1 The organisation regularly reviews, evaluates, and improves child safe practices

10.2 Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement

10.3 the organisation reports on the finding of relevant reviews to staff and volunteers, community and families and children and young people

Child Safe Standard 11

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

In complying with Child Safe Standard 11, an organisation must, at a minimum ensure:

11.1 Policies and procedures address all Child Safe Standards

11.2 Policies and procedures are documented and easy to understand

11.3 Best practice models and stakeholder consultation informs the development of policies and procedures

11.4 Leaders champion and model compliance with policies and procedures

11.5 Staff and volunteers understand and implement policies and procedures

6. Support and Promotion of the principles which are embedded within the Eleven Child Safe Standards

All staff, board members, and volunteers have a responsibility and duty of care to protect children; to deliver the GLC child safety message and to lead cultural change throughout the community.

As providers of services and programs we maintain an awareness and commitment to:

- The cultural safety of Aboriginal children and the provision of a culturally safe environment.
- The safety of children from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.
- The safety of children with a disability, through an inclusive practice lens.

7. Developing ongoing Inclusive Practice and Culture at GLC

GLC upholds equity and respects diverse needs and experiences.

Respecting diverse needs can include, but is not limited to,

- the provision of appropriate training for team members that ensures children, young people and families with lived experience are consulted and involved in an accessible and

meaningful way

- Following CCYP recommendations that particular attention to respectful policy and practice be a priority when working with Children and Young People with disability, Children & Young people from Culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who may not be able to live at home, and to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people
- GLC recognises the need for ongoing education about the provision and promotion of our libraries as welcoming and culturally safe environments for Aboriginal Children and young people.

8. A Child Safety Focused Culture – where the needs of children are considered first

As a child safe organisation, GLC are committed to the following principles:

- Zero tolerance for child abuse
- We act in the best interests of children
- We actively promote child safe spaces
- We support and encourage the empowerment of children
- We build a culture that understands and promotes our obligation as Victorian citizens to report our concerns if we have a reasonable belief that a child may be in danger or at risk of harm.
- We are vigilant and mindful about child safety when adapting services and activities to a remote or online format.
- We examine and understand any opportunities which adults may have to initiate unwanted or inappropriate contact with children and young people via technologies
- We establish safeguards for any one-on-one contact with children via services such as live chat
- We consider the likelihood of children entering bullying or abusive contact with other children via technologies
- We consider the security and appropriateness of our online platforms and delivery from a child's perspective.

9. Child Abuse Definition

Abuse is an act or acts which endangers a child's health, wellbeing and/or development. It can be a single event, or a series of traumatic events and can have lifelong consequences. Examples of child abuse are:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Grooming
- Cumulative harm
- Multi-dimensional abuse

10. Responding to and reporting child abuse

The Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme is administered by the Commission for Children and Young People and aims to improve organisations' responses to allegations of child abuse by their staff and volunteers. The GLC will be required to comply with the scheme from 1 January 2019 and the CEO is formally responsible for reporting allegations.

All adults have a moral responsibility to protect children and act in their best interests. Adults have a legal obligation to report sexual offences against a child, acts of child abuse or family violence, or where a child is at immediate risk to police.

The Reportable Conduct Scheme does not replace any of these moral and legal responsibilities. It aims to better prevent and protect children from abuse by ensuring allegations of abuse are appropriately investigated and reported to relevant organisations, professional bodies and government departments.

See the *Child Safety Reporting Process* (attachment one to this policy) for further guidance.

11. Leading by example

The GLC is committed to child safety in our libraries, and the promotion of child safety in our communities. Our Child Safe Statement is a public declaration of this commitment and is the basis for all our conversations and public messages. We will advocate for child safety with our member Councils, partners and providers to ensure the embedding of child safety in all organisations is prioritised in our communities.

The GLC has a risk management framework that includes identifying and managing risks at an organisational, branch and project level and we have incorporated child safety into this framework. The *Risk Management Policy* (draft 2018) gives clear guidance on processes for identifying and eliminating or managing these risks and takes a whole of organisation responsibility for this.

Our libraries are welcoming places that provide opportunities for learning, entertainment and recreation for families and children. Our staff are highly skilled and trained in their areas of expertise. We expect parents and carers to actively supervise children under the age of 12 while in our libraries for their own safety and wellbeing. We recognise that it is not appropriate for children to be left alone in a library and under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic) it is an offence for a person responsible for a child to leave the child unattended for any longer than is reasonable, without making appropriate arrangements for the child's supervision and care.

As a library service, we are well positioned to promote the participation and empowerment of children in our communities. By engaging with children, encouraging them to speak up and be heard, and nurturing their own sense of self we can ensure children develop the skills and confidence they need in their formative years and into adulthood. When children feel respected and valued, they are more likely to speak up about issues of safety and wellbeing. As an organisation we achieve this by talking to children about what they want from their library service, how they wish to participate, and set boundaries for themselves and others. This aligns with child safe standard seven to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

We also recognise that some children are more at risk than others, and their voices may not be heard. We aim to find new ways of inviting all children; including those from diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal children, and children with a disability to feel welcome, comfortable and safe in our libraries. We will work with schools, parents, carers and community organisations and especially the children themselves.

12. Recruitment and staff

The GLC has rigorous recruitment processes that are open and transparent. All positions are advertised, have specific role descriptions and we undertake a thorough interview and reference check process.

We are explicit about our child safety status in our internal and external advertising of vacancies.

We clearly articulate our child-safe status at the commencement of interviews.

All staff, direct contractors and volunteers are required to have a Working with Children Check.

A child safety induction and overview take place as part of commencement induction.

Our Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers clearly articulates expectations around behaviours, including when working with children.

The GLC supports staff in their professional development and provides opportunities for staff to pursue areas of professional interest and skill development. This includes formal and informal training related to working with and providing services for children.

We advocate for safe environments for children in our community, with our member councils and with our partners.

13. Roles and Responsibilities

The following positions are responsible for approving, implementing, complying with, monitoring, evaluating reviewing and providing advice on the policy and procedures:

Implementation:

CEO and Child Safety Officer

Compliance:

All employees, volunteers, board members and contractors.

Development/Review:

CEO, Manager People and Development, Child Safety Officer

Interpretation/Advice:

CEO, Manager People and Development and Child Safety Officer

14. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The Child Safety Policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if legislation changes.

15. Non-compliance, Breaches and Sanctions

Employees have an obligation to ensure that this policy and/or any relevant legislation laws are not breached. This is in accordance with the current 'Code of Conduct'. Depending on the severity of any breach, GLC may need to initiate counselling and/or escalate disciplinary action. Unlawful actions may lead to the laying of criminal charges or legal action.

16. Further information

The Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) is the overseeing body for the Child Safe Standards, for more information see <https://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au>.

For advice on a wide range of topics, including services for families; keeping children safe; reporting child abuse or neglect; and child protection information, see <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/resources/links/>.

If you or someone you know has suffered abuse in the past and may need support, you can find a list of national and state services at: <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/contact> under 'Finding help and support'.

For more information on the GLC being a Child Safe Organisation please contact:

Goldfields Library Corporation
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PO Box 887, Bendigo, Victoria, 3552
ncgrl@ncgrl.vic.gov.au

ATTACHMENT ONE: CHILD SAFE REPORTING PROCESS (2020)



Document Title	Child Safety Reporting Process
Initial Date of Issue	November 2018
Updated	June 2022
Approval	Chief Executive Officer
Contact Officer	Chief Executive Officer
Legislative or Regulatory References	<i>Child Safety and Wellbeing Act (Vic) 2005</i>
Review Date	June 2024
Related GLC Documents These documents are available to staff on the Staff Share drive under Policies Procedures Forms	<i>Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (2022)</i> <i>Risk Management Plan</i> <i>Working with Children Checks Fact Sheet (2022)</i>

Version control

Version Review	Date	Author	Comment
Original	November 2018	Policy Officer	CEO approved for distribution
Version 2	June 2022	CEO	CEO approved for distribution

1. Purpose

The Child Safe Reporting Process provides advice and guidance to all Board members, staff, volunteers and contractors of the Goldfields Library Corporation (**GLC**) in relation to our commitment as a child safe organisation. This document should be read in conjunction with the organisation's *Child Safe Policy* (2022).

The *Child Safe Policy* outlines our collective commitment to be a child safe organisation through the implementation of practices and processes for the recruitment of staff and volunteers, the delivery of services and the provision of facilities and resources.

2. Scope

The processes outlined in this document relate to improving child safety in our libraries and responding to allegations and incidents of child abuse in all its forms. There are two specific areas that this document addresses:

1. Child Safety in the Library. Safety risks to children may include physical safety issues in the library, incidents involving patrons and children and concerns about the welfare of children in the library.
2. Reportable Conduct Scheme. Incidents of child abuse by staff, volunteers, contractors and office-bearers are required to be investigated and reported to the Commission for Children and Young People (the **Commission**).

3. Child Safety in the Library

The GLC *Child Safe Policy* (2018) outlines our commitment to providing safe and welcoming spaces, services, and activities for children and their families. Parents and carers are expected to actively supervise children in their care in our libraries and agencies, and as an accredited eSmart Library we advocate for safe and positive experiences online for children and adults.

Our incident reporting process includes reporting incidents and near-misses involving children. This can include; physical safety issues that put children at risk; online incidents such as bullying or grooming; and incidents and allegations involving child abuse in all its forms. The process for reporting and actioning incidents is outlined in section 5.

- **If staff or members of the public have concerns about the immediate safety of a child or young person, contact 000.**
- **If staff have general concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, contact the Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78.**
- **All incidents or concerns must be reported using the Incident/Near Miss/OHS Reporting Form on the staff share drive.**

All adults have a moral responsibility to protect children and act in their best interests. Adults have a legal obligation to report to police sexual offences against a child, acts of child abuse or family violence, or where a child is at immediate risk.

4. Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme is administered by the Commission and aims to improve the response by organisations to allegations of child abuse by their staff and volunteers. The GLC is required to comply with the scheme from 1 January 2019 and the CEO is formally responsible for reporting allegations to the Commission.

The Reportable Conduct Scheme has been designed to ensure that the Commission will be aware of every allegation of certain types of misconduct involving children in relevant organisations. It aims to better prevent and protect children from abuse by ensuring allegations of abuse are appropriately investigated and reported to relevant organisations, professional bodies and government departments.

A reportable allegation can be made about certain workers or volunteers over 18 years of age who are or were:

- an employee of an organisation covered by the scheme
- a minister of religion, religious leader or officer of a religious body
- a foster or kinship carer
- a volunteer, contractor, office holder, officer or other position directly engaged by an organisation covered by the scheme to provide services.

There are five types of 'reportable conduct' listed in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005)*:

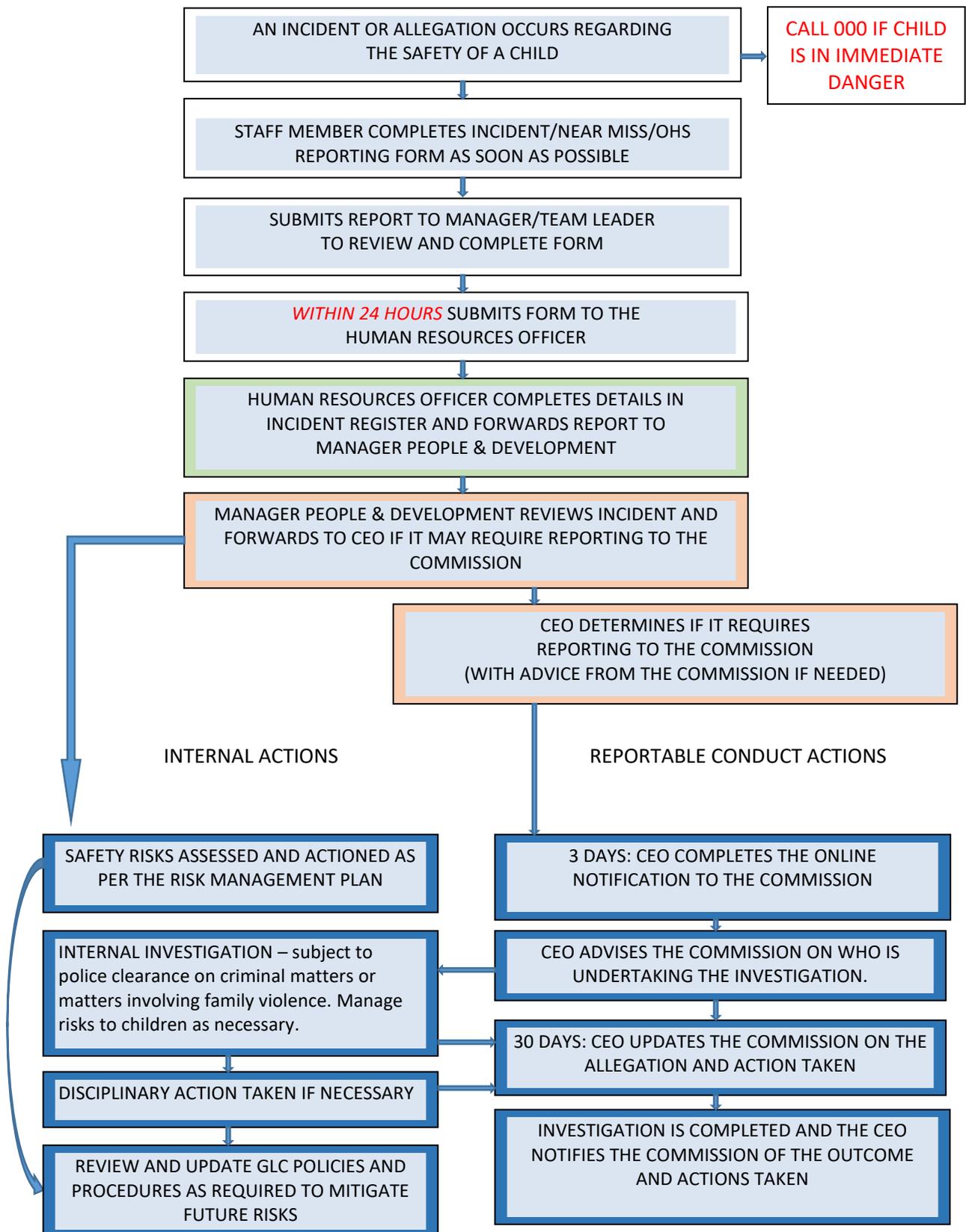
- sexual offences (against, with or in the presence of, a child)
- sexual misconduct (against, with or in the presence of, a child)
- physical violence (against, with or in the presence of, a child)
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm
- significant neglect.

Staff are required to complete an Incident/Near Miss/OHS Reporting Form (available on the staff share drive) for any incidents, allegations or concerns regarding child safety and submit it to their Manager immediately.

The process for responding to incidents and allegations is outlined in section 5.

It is the responsibility of the CEO to determine whether the incident or allegation meets the criteria for reporting to the Commission. The Commission provides support and advice to organisations considering reporting an incident or allegation under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

5. Reporting Process Flowchart



6. Further information

The Commission for Children and Young People is the overseeing body for the Child Safe Standards, for more information see <https://www.cyp.vic.gov.au> . Section 4 of this document provides information sourced from the Commission's website.

For advice on a wide range of topics, including services for families; keeping children safe; reporting child abuse or neglect; and child protection information, see <https://cyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/resources/links/> .

If you or someone you know has suffered abuse in the past and may need support, you can find a list of national and state services at: <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/contact> under 'Finding help and support'.

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