



Country Education Foundation of Australia

Child Protection Policy

Introduction

Country Education Foundation of Australia (CEFA) and its member foundations are committed to promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of all children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working with CEFA and its member foundations are responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

Purpose

- Promote a culture of child safety and prevent child abuse within CEFA and its member foundations;
- Ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for preventing child abuse; and
- To provide guidance on action that should be taken where a person suspects any child abuse within or outside of CEFA and its member foundations.

Scope

Member foundations are required to adopt and implement this policy and to inform CEFA national office of the approval of the policy by the relevant committee in accordance with its constitution. Member foundations must also undertake to ensure that all volunteers are bound by this policy and are made aware of this policy and what it says.

This Policy applies to:

- all employees, directors, volunteers and contractors of CEFA and its member foundations, whether they work face-to-face, online or remotely with children;
- Children and young people accessing grants, programs or services of CEFA or its member foundations.

Policy

This Policy is based on the following principles:

- CEFA and its member foundations have zero tolerance for child abuse;
- The best interests of the child are paramount;
- Child protection is a shared responsibility;
- All children have a right to feel safe, and have the right to protection from abuse;
- CEFA and its member foundations will consider the opinions of children and young people, and use their opinions to develop child protection policies and procedures;
- CEFA and its member foundations are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for students living with a disability;
- Everyone covered by this policy should familiarise themselves with the CEFA Child Protection Procedures that accompany this policy; and
- Everyone covered by the Policy must also comply with CEFA's Child Safety Code of Conduct, which sets stringent standards for personal behaviour.

Child Protection Officers

The national office will nominate two Child Protection Officers (CPOs), available to listen, discuss and clarify issues confronting individual employees, directors, volunteers and contractors in relation to child physical and sexual abuse. CPOs will make reports on behalf of CEFA and its member foundations and ensure that adequate records are maintained.

Member Foundations may choose to nominate a CPO from within their committee who will make reports on behalf of their foundation and ensure that adequate records are maintained. A CPO may be the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer or Committee member. Member Foundations not wishing to nominate a CPO will be represented by the national office CPOs.

Recognising child abuse

Child abuse may be divided into four categories: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional and psychological abuse and neglect:

- **Physical abuse:** Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental physical injury, injury or violence which results from willful or neglectful failure to protect a child or young person;
- **Sexual abuse:** Sexual abuse is when a child or young person is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others (this includes grooming behaviour);
- **Serious emotional and psychological abuse:** Emotional and psychological abuse is when a child has suffered or is likely to suffer emotional or psychological harm of such a kind that the child's emotional or intellectual development is or is likely to be, significantly damaged.

- **Neglect:** Neglect is an omission, where the child or young person suffers serious harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care.

“Child” means a person under the age of 18 years unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child. Collective term for a “child” is “children”.

Reporting obligations

Mandatory reporting obligations

Employees, directors, volunteers and contractors at CEFA and its member foundations must comply with all applicable mandatory reporting laws. Mandatory reporting is a term used to describe the legislative requirement imposed on selected classes of people to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to government authorities. All Australian states and territories have enacted mandatory reporting laws. However, the laws are not the same across all jurisdictions.

Information about the mandatory reporting obligations in each state and territory can be found here - <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>

Reasonable Grounds to Notify

You have reasonable grounds to notify when:

- a child tells you that they have been physically or sexually abused;
- a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child is talking about themselves);
- someone else, such as a relative, friend, acquaintance or sibling of the child, tells you that a child has been abused;
- your observations of the child’s behaviour or knowledge of children lead you to believe that the child has been abused; or
- you observe physical signs or indicators of abuse (e.g. bruises, cuts etc.).

Voluntary reporting

If an employee, volunteer or contractor at CEFA or its member foundations reasonably suspects or believes that a child needs protection, they should report their concerns immediately to the police or the relevant government agency.

If a person would like internal guidance or support with addressing their concerns, they are encouraged to speak with the CPO.

Recruitment

CEFA and its member foundations undertake a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all employees, directors, volunteers and contractors which aims to:

- promote and protect the safety of all children at CEFA and its member foundations;
- identify and recruit the safest and most suitable candidates who share CEFA and its member foundations' values and commitment to protect children; and
- prevent a person from working at CEFA and its member foundations if they pose an unacceptable risk to children.

All employees, directors, volunteers and contractors required to work with children must comply with the working with children obligations in their state or territory. This **may** involve an employee, volunteer or contractor undertaking a Working with Children Check (WWCC) to determine their suitability to work in a paid or volunteer capacity with children.

Information about statutory working with children obligations can be found in the URLs below:

- New South Wales: www.check.kids.nsw.gov.au/
- South Australia www.families.sa.gov.au/pages/protectingchildren
- Queensland: <http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au/>
- NT: <http://www.workingwithchildren.nt.gov.au>

The National Office of CEFA will record all WWCCs and check to identify when renewals are required.

Communication

CEFA and its member foundations are pro-active in preventing child abuse and will communicate the National Child Protection Policy in the manner below. CPOs are responsible for disseminating and communicating the National Child Protection Policy in the manner below.

STUDENTS	PARENTS, GUARDIANS, COMMUNITY, SPONSORS, PARTNERS	EMPLOYEES, DIRECTORS, VOLUNTEERS, CONTRACTORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant application form • Student resources • Publications • Website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Information evenings • CEFA Newsletters • Grant application form • Publications • Student resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Letters of appointment/contract • Induction training of new employees, directors, volunteers and contractors • Policy and Procedures Manual

Responding & Reporting

In the case of an allegation being made against an employee, volunteer and/or contractor at CEFA or its member foundations, the CPO will follow the relevant state based Child Protection Procedure. CEFA will work with its member foundations and take all steps to ensure that the safety of the child is paramount.

The first step is to withdraw the accused person from active duty, which could entail standing down (with pay, where applicable), re-assignment to other duties that do not have direct contact with children, or to work under increased supervision while the matter is being investigated.

Case Management

In the event of a child or young person disclosing an incident of abuse to someone they trust, it is essential that it is dealt with sensitively and professionally.

Investigations

The Chair Person will conduct an independent investigation into the allegation to the extent that it will not interfere with investigations by the police or relevant government authority, and will co-operate with the authorities as required.

All people covered by the CEFA Child Protection Policy must co-operate fully with any investigation by the government authority, the police or CEFA and its member foundations.

The Chair Person will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other employees, directors, volunteers and contractors may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation (e.g. to provide witness statements).

The outcome will depend on the findings of the investigation, but may include withdrawal from active duty, re-assignment to duties with no contact with children, increased supervision, disciplinary action, dismissal, termination of the volunteer's engagement, or criminal prosecutions.

Record Keeping

All reports of alleged abuse or harm, or risk thereof, must be recorded in the form of an Incident Report. Reporting should be factual and not conjectural or interpretative. Places, times, dates, names of people, observable behaviours or evidence of harm are what is recordable. Reports must be to be securely stored by the national office CPO or if applicable, committee CPO.

Privacy and Confidentiality

There are two guiding principles in respect to a child or young person's privacy.

- First, CEFA and its member foundations will operate on the best interests' principle. All employees, directors, volunteers and contractors will do what they believe to be in the best interest of the child or young person. This principle supersedes all others.
- Second, CEFA and its member foundations will respect a child or young person's confidentiality except in situations where it conflicts with the best interests' principle.

As much as is reasonably possible, an individual's confidentiality is to be protected. Both those who are making reports and those about whom accusations are being made are entitled to confidentiality. Where there is suspected abuse or misconduct, employees, directors, volunteers and contractors must not disclose or make use of the information in a manner that breaches confidentiality, other than to report and act consistent with the National Child Protection Policy, and relevant statutory requirements.

Photographs/videos of a child

In line with the CEFA Child Safety Code of Conduct, employees, volunteers and contractors at CEFA or its member foundations must not photograph or video a child without the consent of the parent or guardians. In order to gain consent of the parent or guardian, we recommend individuals use [CEFA's Authority to Publish Waiver](#).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wendy Cohen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Wendy Cohen, CEO
Country Education Foundation of Australia



CEFA Child Safety Code of Conduct

Introduction

Any form of abusive, derogatory, discriminatory, offensive or intimidating behaviour or language by adults towards children and young people, or children towards other children and young people, is not acceptable. Any action that may risk being interpreted by a reasonable observer as grooming behaviour is unacceptable. Comments or actions that are negatively and unreasonably critical of a person's culture, ethnicity, language, gender identity, disability, sexuality or age, are unacceptable.

Employees, directors, volunteers and contractors at CEFA and its member foundations are required to abide by this Code.

Acceptable and unacceptable behaviours

The following list includes examples of what is acceptable and not acceptable behaviour.

Acceptable behaviour

All people that have direct contact with children on behalf of, or in connection with, CEFA and its member foundations must:

- Conduct themselves in a manner consistent with their position as an employee, partner, director, volunteer or contractor of CEFA or its member foundations and as a role model to children and young people;
- Treat all people with respect and be open to and accepting of diversity and difference in people's backgrounds, work style and personal preferences;
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children and young people (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island child or young person's self-identification);
- Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children and young people with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination);
- Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children and young people with a disability;
- Listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they are or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child;
- Raise concerns, issues or problems about suspected abuse with a CPO;

- Record and act upon all allegations or suspicions of abuse, discrimination or harassment;
- Respect confidentiality when sharing information about children and young people in accordance with the National Child Protection Policy and your reporting obligations;
- Establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work;
- Be professional in their actions;
- Maintain strict impartiality; and
- Contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse (telephone 000).

Unacceptable behaviour

All people that have direct contact with children on behalf of CEFA or its member foundations must not:

- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse;
- Develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children);
- Put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors);
- Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, a comment made in jest or a comment that is inappropriately open to interpretation);
- Express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children;
- Discriminate against any child, including because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability;
- Have any online contact with a child (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc) or their family unless it is a part of their official role at CEFA or its member foundation or other professional line of work.
- Provide any personal contact details to a child unless it is justified in terms of an educational or professional purpose;
- Photograph or video a child without the consent of the parent or guardians. In order to gain consent of the parent or guardian, we recommend you use [CEFA's Authority to Publish Waiver](#);
- Work with children whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs;
- Spend time alone with a child or young person where there is risk, particularly while transporting the child or young person;
- Take a child or young person to their home or encourage meetings outside CEFA and its member foundations' usual activities;
- Engage in rough physical games, hold, massage, kiss, cuddle or touch children in an inappropriate and or/culturally insensitive way;

- Speak to a child or young person in a way that is or could be construed by any observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Some examples are:
 - Swearing in the presence of a child;
 - Yelling at a child or young person, except in an emergency situation where the child's safety may be in danger;
 - Dealing with a child while the adult is angry with the child; and
 - Use of hurtful sarcasm.
- Using, possessing, or being under the influence of illegal drugs while in the presence of a child;
- Providing or allowing a child to consume alcohol or illegal drugs;
- Engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with a child.
- Being naked in the presence of a child;
- Possessing sexually oriented or morally inappropriate printed materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.); and/or
- Engaging in sexual contact with a child. For the purposes of this Policy, sexual contact is defined as intercourse or the touching of an erogenous zone of another (including but not limited to the thighs, genitals, buttocks, pubic region or chest).

Physical Contact / Touching

All people that have direct contact with children on behalf of CEFA or its member foundations are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for behaviour management of children and young people. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviours by children and young people.

Physical contact may be required in an emergency situation to remove children and young people quickly from danger or threat of danger. Appropriate contact between employees, directors, volunteers, contractors, and children is part of normal human relationships. Some considerations and guidelines include the following:

- Consider the child or young person's age, developmental level, maturity and level of care required, for example, touching a child to gain their attention, guiding or comforting a distressed child or young person;
- Work in an open environment; for example, in confidential interviews or a one-to-one meeting, the door should be open with visual access. Exceptions apply for professions with strict confidentiality requirements;
- Be alert to cues from children about how comfortable they are in your proximity and respect their need for personal space;

- Be sensitive when interacting with children who may misinterpret your actions, such as those who may have been traumatised by abuse or adolescents seeking attention from a member of the opposite sex;
- Be aware of cultural norms that may influence the interpretation of your behaviour;
- Physical contact should be made in a way that makes children people feel comfortable, for example, shaking hands, a congratulatory pat on the back or rub on the side of their arm for reassurance. Massaging a child or allowing a child to massage you is inappropriate physical contact;
- The use of images of children (other than your own) as screen savers or backgrounds on personal electronic devices is not appropriate. The collection and storage of photographs of children (other than your own) must be for educational or professional purposes;
- Be aware that the giving and receiving of gifts, giving extra attention, accepting a different standard of behaviour from a child or young person having 'special time' with a child or young person must be appropriate and justified.
- It is not appropriate for employees, directors, volunteers and contractors to initiate out of hours contact with a child unless it is in the context of an emergency or it is a part of their official role at CEFA or its member foundation or other professional line of work.

All forms of physical contact should therefore be avoided where possible.

Transportation and off-site events

Other than in an emergency or other abnormal situation where no other option could be reasonably foreseen, it is not acceptable to transport children or young people without written permission of their parent, carer or guardian.

It is prohibited to have unnecessary and/or inappropriate physical contact with children or young people while in vehicles.

It is strongly recommended that if transporting children or young people, another adult be present in the vehicle.

Children and young people should be transported directly to their destination. No stops should be made other than those that are reasonably scheduled for meals or comfort stops.

It is prohibited to have children or young people spend the night at the residence of an employee, volunteer or contractor without parental/guardian prior approval.

Changing and showering facilities or arrangements for adults must be separate from facilities or arrangements for children and young people.



Wendy Cohen, CEO
Country Education Foundation of Australia