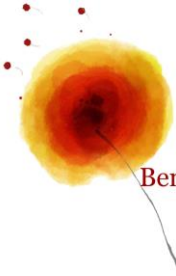


# BAASS Child Protection Policy

 <p>Bendigo Autistic Advocacy and Support Service</p>	<h2>BAASS Child Protection Policy</h2>
Scope	All BAASS Co-Convenors, Staff, Volunteers, Clients/Participants and affiliates
Date authored	15 <sup>th</sup> October 2016
Authorised by all Co-Convenors	
Author	Susanna Flanagan
Reviewed/updated	For review January 2017

## About this policy

### **Bendigo Autistic Advocacy and Support Service is committed to child safety.**

We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.

Being a member of BAASS, employee of or volunteer with and carrying out duties on behalf of the Bendigo Autistic Advocacy and Support Service (BAASS) you accept a position of trust and responsibility.

All BAASS Co-Convenors, staff and volunteers in any capacity, agree to comply with:

- BAASS Values
- BAASS Code of Conduct
- BAASS Child Safety Code of Conduct
- BAASS Child Protection Procedures, and

- all relevant BAASS policies that apply to you, including this Child Protection Policy

BAASS and its affiliates in all capacities have a legal and moral obligation to contact authorities when we are concerned about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

BAASS will have a robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

BAASS is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

We will have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

## **Children**

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that disabled children are safe and can participate equally.

## **BAASS Co-Convenors, staff and volunteers**

This policy guides our Co-Convenors, staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

All of our Co-Convenors, staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

## **Training and supervision**

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility and our utmost priority.

Our organisational culture aims for all Co-Convenors, staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. BAASS Co-Convenors ensure our staff and volunteers are briefed on identifying and minimising risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of disabled children.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this BAASS's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of

Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

### **Recruitment**

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and disabled people.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Further information about the Working with Children Check can be found at this website [www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) for further information.

### **Fair procedures for personnel**

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting procedure. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

### **Privacy**

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. We have 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.

### **Images- photographs and video**

- BAASS respects the right of every child's privacy and preferences as an utmost priority.
- Bendigo Autistic Advocacy and Support Service (BAASS) recognises the need to ensure the welfare and safety of all young people taking part in any activity associated with our organisation.
- BAASS will not permit photographs, video or other images of young people to be taken without the consent of the parents/carers and children. This applies to all visitors and associates of BAASS.
- BAASS will obtain parent/guardian/young person's consent to take photographs/videos during BAASS activities/event. These images may be used as:
  - a record of the activity or the event
  - publicity material for further activities or events on leaflets/websites/magazines
  - illustrations of the activities or events in published articles (eg. Newspaper, TV)
  - future grant applications
  - BAASS will take all steps to ensure these images are used solely for the purposes they are intended.

### **Legislative responsibilities**

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, 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.<sup>1</sup>
- **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.
- 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, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify 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.

### **Regular review**

This policy will be reviewed every two years, more frequently during establishment phase, and following significant incidents if they occur. We welcome staff, volunteers, community, families and children to have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and disabled people.

### **Allegations, concerns and complaints**

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to review thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

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, and 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 observed<sup>2</sup>
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Adapted from the Child safe policy and statement of commitment

Victorian Government.

© State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services, December 2015.

Where the term 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Indigenous is retained when it is part of the title of a report, program or quotation. Throughout this paper we refer to 'Aboriginal peoples' rather than 'Aboriginal people' to reflect the plurality and diversity of Victorian Aboriginal communities.

Available at: [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards)

