

Policy number:	B04	Version:	2-122016
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Responsible person:	RGG		

## Commitment to Child Safety

Scripture Union Victoria is committed to the highest standard of child safety, and will take all appropriate steps to develop, implement and maintain principles, policies and procedures which ensure children are safe and protected from harm.

SU Victoria will fulfil all legal and other compliance requirements in relation to child safety and will fulfil the 7 Victorian standards for child safety for organisations working with children.

SU Victoria's commitment to child safety includes taking all such steps as may be necessary to embed a continually improving culture of child safety throughout all levels of the organisation. To this end, we will:

- help leaders and managers create an organisational culture that protects children from abuse
- ensure the organisation's policies and practices reflect a commitment to child safety
- ensure responsible leaders are aware of allegations and substantiated cases of abuse and responds in ways that protect children from abuse
- ensure staff and volunteers know and understand the organisation's commitment to child safety
- commit to continuous improvement through regular reviews and updating policies and practices, and being open to scrutiny.

SU Victoria uses the ChildSafe SP3 safety management system to fulfil these commitments. All SU Victoria staff and volunteers are required to agree to comply with the ChildSafe SP3 Code of Conduct and procedures for the period of their engagement with SU Victoria.

SU Victoria's commitment to child safety will be communicated to participants and their families where our activities take place, including information about how any concerns can be reported to the appropriate authorities.

SU Victoria's commitment to child safety includes a commitment to the safety of Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability.

SU Victoria has zero tolerance for child abuse, is committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe, and actively works to empower children. SU Victoria will not knowingly engage any person as a staff member or volunteer who poses an unacceptable risk to children.

## ChildSafe SP3

ChildSafe SP3 is an integrated child safety management system. SP3 stands for 'Safe People, Safe Programs and Safe Places'. Using risk management principles, ChildSafe SP3 involves policies and processes for:

- the appointment of staff and volunteers who work with children and young people, including leaders with specific safety responsibilities under SP3
- the training of staff and volunteers in their safety responsibilities under SP3
- the safety planning for programs and activities
- permission for programs and activities to proceed, based on the required appointment and training of team members and safety planning
- review of safety practice and auditing of compliance to SP3
- response to emergency situations

SU Victoria recognises that child safety relates not only to the physical environments in which we conduct our programs and activities but also in on-line environments in which children and young people regularly interact.

## **Responsibilities under this policy**

One of the key principles of ChildSafe SP3 is levels of responsibility and accountability. The system involves different levels of leadership, with a Risk Management Officer overseeing the whole system, Coordinators overseeing program areas, Team Leaders overseeing local teams, and Team Members. Every SU representative is responsible for specific child safety actions and is accountable to a higher role for those actions.

SU Victoria's State Director has responsibility to ensure that this policy and ChildSafe SP3 is thoroughly implemented and in a continuously improving way across the organisation. The State Director is responsible to report compliance to the SU Victoria Board periodically.

The SU Victoria Board has overall responsibility for the governance of SU Victoria's child safety in line with this policy.

## **What constitutes child abuse**

Child abuse may be defined as any deliberate act or omission which endangers a child's physical or emotional health or development. Abuse may be a single incident or occur over a period of time. It may include:

- **Physical violence:** Physical violence occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from a non-accidental injury or injuries inflicted by another person. Physical violence can be inflicted in many ways, including beating, shaking, burning or use of weapons. Injury may be inflicted intentionally or may be an inadvertent consequence of physical punishment or aggression.
- **Sexual abuse:** Sexual abuse occurs when a person involves the child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to his/her age and development. Child sexual abuse can involve a range of sexual activity including fondling, masturbation, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exposure to or exploitation through pornography or prostitution, as well as grooming behaviour.
- **Emotional or psychological abuse:** Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when harm is inflicted on a child through repeated rejection, isolation, or by threats or violence. It can include derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent and deliberate coldness from a person, to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired. Serious emotional or psychological abuse could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.
- **Neglect:** Neglect is the continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention or adequate supervision, to the extent that the child's health, safety and/or development is, or is likely to be, jeopardised. Serious neglect can also occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child where the child is exposed to extremely dangerous or life threatening situations.

## **Zero tolerance of child abuse**

SU Victoria will not tolerate child abuse in any form or circumstances by any of its staff or volunteers. Such action attracts criminal, civil and disciplinary actions up to and including termination of employment.

SU Victoria works to reduce the risks of child abuse associated with delivering our programs and activities, using the ChildSafe SP3 system. Further, SU Victoria trains its staff and volunteers in how to identify possible child abuse and report it appropriately.

## **Providing Policy Information to Participants, Families and the Public**

The Policy Sections 'Commitment to Child Safety' and 'ChildSafe SP3' will be displayed at each location where an SU Victoria program or activity is run.

Information will be provided at each SU program location on how a participant, family member or member of the public can notify the State Director or Board Chair about any concern they have about a child's safety or to notify an allegation of abuse.

### **Notification of abuse**

If an SU Victoria staff member or volunteer develops a reasonable belief that child abuse has occurred, the following process will be used.

1. If a staff member or volunteer is notified of an allegation, suspects or forms a reasonable belief that child abuse has occurred and involves another SU staff member, contractor or volunteer, this must be immediately reported directly to the State Director or Board Chair. Where reported to the State Director, as appropriate and as soon as possible, the State Director will advise the SU Victoria Board Chair, insurer, other appropriate SU Victoria staff and police; and ensure that appropriate records are maintained. Where the Board Chair is notified, they will advise the insurer, other appropriate SU Victoria staff and police; and ensure that appropriate records are maintained.
2. If a volunteer suspects or forms a reasonable belief that child abuse has occurred (but not involving an SU representative), they will consult their relevant SU manager or Emergency Response Team (ERT) within 24 hours. The relevant manager or ERT will inform the State Director as soon as possible. An incident report will be completed by the volunteer and their Team Leader.
3. SU Victoria Chaplains are required to mandatorily report to DHHS if they develop a reasonable belief that child abuse has occurred. (This is a requirement of SU Victoria's service agreement with the Department of Education and Training, and Chaplain's employment agreement.) The Chaplain will ensure that appropriate records are maintained. The Chaplain is required to inform their relevant SU manager if they have made a mandatory report within 3 days.
4. Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence. An Information Sheet from the Department of Health and Human Services explains these requirements and specific exemptions. SU Victoria staff member or volunteer over the age of 18 will report to police if they develop a reasonable belief that child abuse has occurred, unless exempted. (An exemption includes if a mandatory report has been made.)
5. Any SU Victoria staff or volunteers who have a mandatory reporting obligation because of their profession (eg. teacher, nurse) will fulfil their obligations.