

## **Dance Lab**

### **Statement of Commitment to Child Protection**

Our Dance Studio 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.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

Our Dance Studio is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

Our Dance Studio has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

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

### **Our Children**

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our Club. 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 Dance Studio, 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 children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

## **Child Protection Policy**

### **1) Introduction**

Everyone who participates in our Dance Studio's activities is entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. Dance Lab has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for young people, teachers, administration, volunteers, staff members and parents provide them with the highest possible standard of care.

Dance Lab is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone in dance accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means to follow procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities.

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

#### Child:

The words 'child' and 'children' in this guide refer to children and young people up to the age of 18 years. This definition is consistent with the national framework, Creating Safe Environments for Children – Organisations, Employees and Volunteers, the Commission for Children and Young People Act, the Child Well being and Safety Act 2005 and the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005. The term 'child' in this guide is inclusive of anyone under 18 years of age. 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.

### **1.1) Policy Statement**

Dance Lab is committed to the following:

- the welfare of the child is paramount
- all children, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in dance classes a fun and safe environment
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings
- all suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- all Dance Lab employees who work with children will be recruited with regard to their suitability for that responsibility, and will be provided with guidance and/or training in good practice and child protection procedures
- working in partnership with parents and children is essential for the protection of children

## **2) Promoting Good Practice**

To provide children with the best possible experience and opportunities in basketball everyone must operate within an accepted ethical framework such as The Codes of Conduct.

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore NOT the responsibility of employees or participants in dance to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place. It is, however, their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and act if they have concerns about the welfare of the child.

Please read the attachment below to help you identify good practice and poor practice.

## **3) Children's Rights to Safety and Participation**

Dance Lab is committed to the safety and well being of all children accessing our service. We support the rights of the child and will act without hesitation to ensure a child safe environment is maintained at all times.

Dance Lab also promotes the involvement and participation of children and young people in developing and maintaining child-safe environments.

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 Dance Studio, 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 children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

## **4) Identify and Analyse Risk of Harm**

Dance Lab will develop and implement a risk management strategy, which includes a review of existing child protection practices, to determine how child-safe and child-friendly the organisation is and to determine what additional strategies are required to minimise and prevent risk of harm to children because of the action of an employee, volunteer, teacher, administration, parent, player or another person.

## **5) Ensure that Adults and Children Adhere to the Codes of Conduct**

Dance Lab will ensure that all adults are aware of and adhere to the organisation's Codes of Conduct that specify standards of conduct and care when dealing and interacting with children, particularly those in the organisation's care. The organisation will also implement a code of conduct to address appropriate behaviour between children.

All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Codes of Conduct.

## **6) Training and Supervision**

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

Our organisational culture aims for all 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. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise 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 children with a disability.

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 organisation'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.

## **7) Club Welfare Officer**

It is not the responsibility of anyone working for Dance Lab 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 through contact with the appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the young person. This applies **BOTH** to allegations/suspicions of abuse occurring within our organisation's activities and to allegations/suspicions that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

Dance Lab will ensure that a Dance Studio Welfare Officer is appointed to look over 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 IMMEDIATELY with the nominated the Dance Studio's welfare officer. The Dance Studio's welfare officer will ensure that the concerns/incident reported to him remain confidential and that the identity of the person reporting the concern/incident is not revealed.

The Dance Studio's welfare officer will be required to report all the incidents noted by him to the appropriate authority, who will then ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident play a role in the organisation and act accordingly.

## **8) Screening and Recruitment**

Dance Lab ensures that all reasonable steps are taken in order to engage the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. This is achieved using a range of screening measures. Such measures help us minimise the likelihood of engaging (or retaining) people who are unsuitable 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 people with a disability.

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. Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information.

## **9) Interview, Induction and Training for Personnel**

### Interview and Induction

All employees and volunteers will be required to undertake an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. All employees and volunteers will receive formal or informal induction during which:

- A check will be made that the application form has been completed in full, including sections on criminal records and self-disclosures
- Their qualifications will be substantiated
- The job requirements and responsibilities will be clarified
- They will sign up to the organisation's Codes of Conduct and the Member Protection Declaration
- Child Protection Procedures will be explained and training needs will be identified e.g. basic child protection awareness

### Training

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

- Analyse their own practice against what is deemed good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice and/or abuse
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child
- Work safely and effectively with children

## **10) Fair and Just Procedures for Personnel**

The safety and well being 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, including investigation updates. 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.

## **11) Privacy**

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, officials, 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.

## 12) Legislative Responsibilities

Our Dance Studio 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>i</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.<sup>ii</sup>

Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.<sup>iii</sup>

## 13) 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 pro actively manage risks of abuse to our children.

## 14) Regular Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

## 15) Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate 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>iv</sup>

someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it  
observing suspicious behaviour.

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