**Child Safety Code of Conduct**

Bellarine Catchment Network
**Last updated:** January 2023

All employees and volunteers of Bellarine Catchment Network are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below. These child safe practices are representative of the ethos instilled by BCN and are not intended to be the only behaviours and practices to consider when you are interacting with children. It is important to consider all behaviours towards children and their appropriateness. If you have any concerns regarding activities involving children which you are required, as a representative of Bellarine Catchment Network, to initiate or take part in, please consult either the Leadership Team or the Child Safety Officer.

**All members are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:**

* Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse and harm;
* Treating everyone with respect;
* Adhering to BCN’s Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Procedures, Child Safety Code of Conduct and reporting responsibilities at all times;
* When relevant, appropriate and possible, aim to have 2 BCN staff members present when working with children and plan activities to ensure they are not left alone with a child;
* Always undertaking a child focused risk assessment prior to initiating any activity including the completion of a written risk assessment if deemed appropriate;
* Encouraging children to be empowered and to ‘Use Your Voice’ and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them;
* Listening and responding to the views and concerns of all children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused/harmed and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another;
* Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal child’s self-identification);
* Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having zero tolerance of discrimination);
* Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, adjusting activities to be inclusive/accessible);
* Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of LGBTIA+ children;
* Always use age appropriate and inclusive language when engaging with children;
* Reporting any child safety concerns to BCN Child Safety Officer and the Leadership Team;
* If an allegation of child abuse or harm is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe and that you follow all the Child Safety and Wellbeing Incident Reporting procedure, legal and mandatory reporting responsibilities.

It is the responsibility of the BCN employee who has witnessed, received a complaint or concern from a child, parent, guardian or carer to complete the ‘Child Safety Incident Report’ form and conducting the initial interview and to call the police if the child is in danger of immediate harm or a they believe a crime has been committed. It is the responsibility of the Leadership Team / Child Safety Officer to investigate and respond to the incident and liaise with the relevant authorities which could include Police, Child Protection, relevant Partners if deemed appropriate.

**BCN employees, committee members, relevant contractors and volunteers must not:**

* BCN endeavours to maintain a ‘Hands-Off’ Policy. Employees must endeavour to not have physical contact with children except for (state approved) high fives or in circumstances to ensure a child’s safety;
* BCN employees and volunteers must not develop any ‘special’ relationships with children or parent/carers that could be seen as favouritism or grooming. Grooming is defined as the development of a special relationship with a parent/carer or a child with the view to conduct abuse (e.g., preferential treatment);
* Put children at risk of abuse or harm (for example, by locking doors);
* Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes;
* Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities);
* Use inappropriate language in the presence of children;
* Express personal views on cultures, politics, race or sexuality in the presence of children;
* Discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or disability;
* Have contact with a child or their family met through BCN activities, outside of the organisation without BCN Leadership Team knowledge and/or consent. BCN acknowledge that accidental meeting is acceptable (for example in the street) but should be communicated to the Child Safety Officer and Leadership Team;
* Communicate with children online via private channels and without the presence of a parent/guardian/carer or teacher;
* Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse or harm; and
* Photograph, film or publish an image of a child without the consent of the parent or carer.

Some children with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. Advice can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website <[click here](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-adisability-in-the-community/communicate-and-consult-with-people-with-a-disability/communication-with-peoplewith-disabilities)>.

By observing these standards, you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to BCN Child Safety Officer and the Leadership Team.

Failure to comply with the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action including the possibility of dismissal.

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

I agree to adhere to this Code of Conduct:

Name: ………………………………............................ Witness: …………………………………………………….

Signature: …………………………………………………… Signature: ………………………………………………….

Role with BCN: ……………………………………………… Date: …………………………………………………………