

Child Safety Policy and Statement of Commitment

Mzuri Dance ArtisTree



Purpose

This policy sets out Mzuri Dance Artistree’s commitment and approach to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and protected and provides a framework for Mzuri Dance ArtisTree’s approach to child safety standards.

This policy has been reviewed and updated ahead of schedule due to the Victoria State Government new Child Safe Standards updated as of 01/06/2022. Resources available for the updates here and this presentation linked below will form part of inductions and professional development for all staff including volunteers employed or contracted to carry out responsibilities and duties at Mzuri Dance ArtisTree.

Record of Policy Development		
Version	Date Approved	Date for Review
V1. 21/04/2021	10/08/2021	23/04/2023
V2. 01/06/2023	20/08/2023	25/05/2024
V3. 01/06/2024	04/06/2024	21/08/2025

Responsibilities and delegations	
This policy applies to	Board, staff members, volunteers and contractors

Relevant Legislations and standards	
Legislation/Guiding References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child • Child Safe and Wellbeing Act 2005 – Victorian Legislation • National Principles for Child Safe Organisations – Australian Human Rights Commission 2018 • Worker Screening Act 2020 – Victorian Legislation (Working With Children Check Policy)
Record keeping and other documents	Appendix 1 – Child Safety and Wellbeing code of conduct Appendix 2 – Incident Report Form Appendix 3 – Definitions of Child Abuse Appendix 4 – Contact Details for Reporting Child Abuse

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Our commitment to child safety

Mzuri Dance ArtisTree 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.
- Mzuri Dance ArtisTree is committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- Mzuri Dance ArtisTree has robust human resources and recruitment practices to reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing board members, staff and volunteers.
- Mzuri Dance ArtisTree is committed to regularly training and educating our board members, staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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 and procedures in place that support our board members, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
- We are committed to making our child safe policy available for parents, carers and guardians of children online via our website, and in physical form at all programs as well as making sure they understand how to report in the case of an incident, and our procedure in the event of an incident.

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

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children, who are vital and active participants at Mzuri Dance ArtisTree. 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. Mzuri Dance ArtisTree is also committed to:

- a. Promoting diversity and acceptance at Mzuri Dance ArtisTree, 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.
- b. Providing age appropriate programs, activities and services that do not exploit children and young people. Mzuri Dance ArtisTree promotes this through the use of age appropriate:
 - Music
 - Uniforms and costumes
 - Choreography/dance moves
 - Stages make up (on performances only)
- c. We do not tolerate any bullying of children and young people by any party. Mzuri Dance ArtisTree recognizes that bullying can take place on the premises and also off site through electronic communication such as social media. Mzuri Dance ArtisTree does not accept bullying of any kind and will take action to rectify any reported bullying, including taking legal action if necessary.
- d. Ensuring that physical contact with a child and young person should only occur for dance technique correctional purposes, with prior consent, and openly in front of other students.

Physical contact in choreography between children and young people should occur only in choreography when necessary e.g., lifts, partnering; with prior consent; and openly in front of other students and instructors.

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children at Mzuri Dance ArtisTree.

All our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

Training and supervision

Training and education are important to ensure that everyone at Mzuri Dance ArtisTree understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all board members, staff, volunteers, families, parents, carers or guardians and children to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our board members, staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our board members, staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children living with a disability.

New board members, staff and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand Mzuri Dance ArtisTree's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse. This will include checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to Mzuri Dance ArtisTree's code of conduct for information about appropriate behaviour). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing 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 legal responsibilities. Mzuri Dance ArtisTree understands that when recruiting board members, staff and volunteers, we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people, culturally and/or linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and people living with a disability.

All people who are engaged in child-related work and who are not exempt, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this check. For more information, please refer to the Working with Children website <<http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/>>.

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history, then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Fair procedures for staff and volunteers

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and reasonable to all staff and volunteers. 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 form. 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 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, families or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what it will be used for and who will have access to it. This is intended to protect reporters and to ensure that all members Mzuri Dance ArtisTree are comfortable to disclose any allegations or concerns in relation to child safety without repercussions.

Legislative responsibilities

Mzuri Dance ArtisTree takes its legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** 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 Victoria Police
- **Mandatory reporting:** Any board members, staff or volunteers who are mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teacher, principals and police officers) must comply with their duties
- **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
- **Reportable conduct:** The head of our organisation must be made aware of any allegations of physical and sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, significant emotional or psychological harm or significant neglect by an employee or volunteer towards a child. We are also legally required to notify the Commission for Children and Young People of the allegation

- **Duty of care:** If a child is abused by an individual associated with our organisation, our organisation is presumed to have breached its duty of care unless it can prove that it took 'reasonable precautions' to prevent the abuse in question. For more information, please refer to the new organisational duty of care to prevent child abuse page <<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/betrayal-of-trust-fact-sheet-the-new>> on the Department of Justice and Regulation's website.

Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. 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, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Mzuri Dance ArtisTree takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our board members, staff and volunteers are trained to deal with allegations appropriately.

We work to ensure all children, families, board members, 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. If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred, then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may include:

- 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
- Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- Observing suspicious behaviour.

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 will do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Appendix 1 – Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct

All paid and unpaid staff, including volunteers, interns or trainees of Mzuri Dance ArtisTree are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who engage with Mzuri Dance ArtisTree. All paid and unpaid staff are expected to act in accordance with this Code of Conduct in their physical and online interactions with children and young people under the age of 18 years.

I WILL:

- Act in accordance with Mzuri Dance ArtisTree’s child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures at all times.
- Behave respectfully, courteously and ethically towards children and their families and towards other staff.
- Listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they communicate (verbally or non-verbally) that they do not feel safe or well.
- Promote the human rights, safety and wellbeing of all children in Mzuri Dance ArtisTree.
- Demonstrate appropriate personal and professional boundaries.
- Consider and respect the diverse backgrounds and needs of children.
- Create an environment that promotes and enables children’s participation and is welcoming, culturally safe and inclusive for all children and their families.
- Involve children in making decisions about activities, policies and processes that concern them wherever possible.
- Contribute, where appropriate, to Mzuri Dance ArtisTree’s policies, discussions, learning and reviews about child safety and wellbeing.
- Identify and mitigate risks to children’s safety and wellbeing as required by Mzuri Dance ArtisTree’s risk assessment and management policy or process.
- Respond to any concerns or complaints of child harm or abuse promptly and in line Mzuri Dance ArtisTree’s policy and procedure for receiving and responding to complaints.
- Report all suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse as required by the Child and Wellbeing Safety Act 2005, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and by Mzuri Dance ArtisTree’s policy and procedure on internal and external reporting.
- Comply with Mzuri Dance ArtisTree’s protocols on communicating with children.
- Comply with Child and Wellbeing Safety Act 2005, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and Mzuri Dance ArtisTree’s policies and procedures on record keeping and information sharing.
- Make sure our child safe policy is available for parents, carers and guardians of children either via our website or in physical form at all programs as well as making sure they understand how to report in the case of an incident.

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I WILL NOT:

- Engage in any unlawful activity with or in relation to a child.
- Engage in any activity that is likely to physically, sexually or emotionally harm a child.
- Unlawfully discriminate against any child or their family members.
- Be alone with a child unnecessarily.
- Arrange personal contact, including online contact, with children I am working with for a purpose unrelated to Mzuri Dance ArtisTree’s activities.
- Disclose personal or sensitive information about a child, including images of a child, unless the child and their parent or legal guardian consent or unless I am required to do so by Mzuri Dance ArtisTree’s policy and procedure on reporting.
- Use inappropriate language in the presence of children or show or provide children with access

to inappropriate images or material.

- Work with children while under the influence of alcohol or prohibited drugs.

- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse.

If I think this Code of Conduct has been breached by another person in Mzuri Dance ArtisTree I will:

- Act to prioritise the best interests of children.
- Take actions promptly to ensure that children are safe.
- Promptly report any concerns to my manager, Mzuri Dance ArtisTree's Child Safety Officer, the Chief Executive Officer or another manager or leader in Mzuri Dance ArtisTree.
- Follow Mzuri Dance ArtisTree's policies and procedures for receiving and responding to complaints and concerns.
- Comply with legislative requirements on reporting if relevant, and with Mzuri Dance ArtisTree's policy and procedure on internal and external reporting.

I agree to abide by this Code of Conduct during my employment with Mzuri Dance ArtisTree.

I understand that breaches of this Code of Conduct may lead to disciplinary action or termination of my employment with Mzuri Dance ArtisTree.

Signature

Full Name

___/___/___

Date

Appendix 2 – Incident Report Form

All incident reports must be stored securely.

Incident details

Date of incident:	
Time of incident:	
Location of incident:	

Name(s) of child/children involved:	
Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved:	

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

Does the child identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

No Yes, Aboriginal Yes, Torres Strait Islander

Please categorise the incident

Physical violence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual offence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Serious emotional or psychological abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Serious neglect	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please describe the incident

When did it take place?	
Who was involved?	

What did you see?	
Other information	
Date of incident:	
Time of incident:	
Location of incident:	
Name(s) of child/children involved:	
Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved:	

Office use:

Date of incident report received:	
Staff member	
Follow-up date	
Incident ref. number	

Has the incident been reported?

Child protection	
Police	

Another third party (please specify)	
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Incident reporter wishes to remain anonymous?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

Yes No

Appendix 3 – Definitions of Child Abuse

The legal definition of child abuse varies between States and Territories. Legal definitions of child abuse set a point at which statutory or legal intervention is required. They define a level of significant harm at which it is deemed that a child is likely to be in need of protection and in most jurisdictions set a threshold for mandatory reporting. It is important for you know the legal definitions that apply in your State or Territory.

The legal definitions become important when you are deciding whether you should make a report to child protection authorities or the Police. You can source information from the relevant government

department in your state or territory through their web sites.

Some classes of people e.g. teachers and doctors are required by law in most States to report child abuse. They are called 'mandated reporters. The AIFS also has a summary of these requirements.

<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>

Historically definitions have been referred mostly to abuse by parents and/or caregivers and have not considered abuse within organisations. While child abuse most commonly occurs in families and extended family networks, children and young people also experience abuse in organisational settings. Acts of child abuse can be committed by people who work in organisations in a paid or voluntary capacity, either directly or indirectly with children and young people. An example of a person who works directly with children is a childcare worker whereas an example of person working indirectly with children is a gardener or cleaner working at a school.

Types of Harm

In order to decide whether we think a child is being harmed it is helpful to understand a bit about the types of harm that children may suffer. These are generally considered under the headings of:

- Physical Harm
- Sexual Harm
- Emotional Harm
- Neglect

Physical Harm

Physical harm is when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from an injury inflicted either intentionally or inadvertently. This includes where the child's parents or caregivers have failed to protect the child from dangerous or life-threatening situations

Sexual Harm

Child sexual harm happens when an adult, adolescent or child uses their power or authority to involve a child in sexual activity.

Sexual abuse isn't always sex – it can also include a range of sexual behaviours that can be physical, verbal or emotional.

Emotional Harm

Emotional harm is when a person repeatedly rejects and denigrates the child or uses threats to frighten the child to the extent that it damages the child's physical, social, intellectual or emotional development.

Exposure to domestic violence is a significant cause of emotional harm in children to the extent that it is often included as its own category of harm.

Neglect

Neglect is when a child’s parent or caregiver doesn’t provide the child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision, to the extent that the child’s health and development is significantly harmed. While these areas embody some of the most easily recognisable forms of neglect, researchers have identified many other types, including: foetal abuse; bullying; peer and sibling abuse; witnessing domestic violence and community violence; institutional abuse; organised exploitation; and state-sanctioned abuse.

Indicators of Harm

Often a child will not tell anyone that they have been harmed or will make seemingly vague statements about what is happening to them. We need to be alert to behavioural or physical signs of harm. These are known as indicators of harm. Generally physical indicators are things that you would see in the physical presentation of the child. Behavioural indicators are things that you would see in the behaviour of the child or their carers. The following table shows examples of physical and behavioural indicators of harm:

Type of abuse	Physical indicators	Behavioural Indicators
Physical	Bruises, burns, cuts, broken bones	Aggression and hyperactivity, passivity and compliance, fear
Sexual	Injuries and infections of the genitals and anus	Age-inappropriate sexual activity and knowledge, self-harming, regression, depression
Neglect	Hunger, poor growth, hygiene and medical care	hunger, poor growth, lack of hygiene and medical care
Emotional	Delays in physical, emotional and social development	Withdrawn, passive, low self-esteem You may observe a whole range of indicators or a single indicator that leads you to believe that harm is occurring.

* A whole range of indicators or a single indicator that leads you to believe that harm is occurring.

The presence of an indicator does not always indicate that a child is being abused; and the absence of the signs does not indicate that the child is not being abused. As you can see from these indicators, child abuse and neglect affect a child's intellectual, physical, emotional and social development.

Appendix 4 – Contact Details for Reporting Child Abuse

Child Abuse should be reported to one or all the following authorities:

Victorian Child Protection Service	Phone Number
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Northern & Western Region <i>or</i>	1300 664 977
After Hours Child Protection Crisis Line	131 278

Life Threatening Concerns	Phone Number
Call Victoria Police	000

Other Emergency Contacts	Phone Number Phone Number
Statewide CASA Crisis Line after business hours weekdays, weekends and public holidays –	(03) 9344 2210
Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre	(03) 9486 9866

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