

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Policy number	CP1	Version	001
Drafted by	Board	Approved by board on	30.08.2024
Responsible person	Board	Scheduled review date	First anniversary of the effective date

INTRODUCTION

Shira Hadasha Melbourne is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse. Shira Hadasha Melbourne is thereby committed to complying with the Child Safe Standards (**Standards**) introduced by the Victorian Government, which set out the compulsory minimum standards for organisations that provide services for children and young people (or are used by children and young people), to help protect them from harm.

Everyone working at Shira Hadasha Melbourne is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

APPLICATION

This policy applies to all staff, contractors and volunteers and to the broad range of situations where interaction with children and young people may occur in the delivery of Shira Hadasha Melbourne's services.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. ensure that all staff, contractors and volunteers engaged by Shira Hadasha Melbourne are aware of the organisation's commitment to creating and maintaining a childsafe environment that meets the Standards
2. facilitate the prevention of child abuse within Shira Hadasha Melbourne
3. establish the framework for an organisational culture of child safety
4. outline the responsibilities that various parties have for identifying possible occasions for child abuse, for establishing controls and procedures for preventing abuse, and for detecting abuse when it occurs
5. provide guidance to staff, volunteers and contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation
6. provide a clear statement to staff, volunteers and contractors forbidding any such abuse

7. provide assurance that all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

SHIRA HADASHA MELBOURNE'S COMMITMENT

Shira Hadasha Melbourne is committed to promoting and protecting the best interests of children involved in its programs, and to providing a child-safe and child-friendly environment for all children and young people who engage with Shira Hadasha Melbourne. Shira Hadasha Melbourne is committed to complying with the Child Safe Standards (**Standards**) introduced by the Victorian Government, which set out the compulsory minimum standards for organisations that provide services for children and young people (or are used by children and young people), to help protect them from harm.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse. Shira Hadasha Melbourne has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at Shira Hadasha Melbourne is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between the Shira Hadasha Melbourne and all staff, contractors, volunteers, associates, and members of the Shira Hadasha Melbourne community.

Shira Hadasha Melbourne will consider the opinions of children and use their opinions to develop child protection policies.

Shira Hadasha Melbourne supports and respects all children, staff contractors and volunteers.

Shira Hadasha Melbourne is committed to the cultural safety of children, and pays particular attention to the safety and cultural safety of the following groups of children, in recognition of their increased vulnerability, and diverse and unique identities and experiences:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children living with a disability
- children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans
- children who are intersex, non-binary or gender diverse
- children in and out of home care and the youth justice system.

Any person who believes a child is at immediate risk of abuse must contact the police (telephone 000).

SHIRA HADASHA MELBOURNE'S APPROACH TO CHILD SAFETY

In continuing to implement and promote a child-safe system of work, Shira Hadasha Melbourne will:

- develop an environment in which children feel listened to and valued, and in which their concerns are acted upon, including encouraging and allowing children to participate in decisions important to them
- consult with staff and other appropriate parties, including families and children
- ensure that parents are aware that during children's programs, they are to remain with their children at all times, and that parents have a duty of care towards their children whilst on Shira premises
- assess and manage the risk of abuse to children who interact with Shira Hadasha Melbourne, including through recruitment practices and online
- take a proactive approach to child safety, including fostering a culture of openness that encourages all staff to report any concerns of child safety and supports them in this process
- report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authority, whether or not the law requires reporting
- ensure children know the options available to them if they are concerned or feeling unsafe, and foster an environment where children are safe to raise such concerns
- recruit staff who are suitable to work with children and provide high quality training, supervision and professional development to staff
- have policies, procedures and supports in place to reflect these commitments, and review these regularly.

RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff, contractors and volunteers are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who engage with Shira Hadasha Melbourne. All staff are expected to act in accordance with the Shira Hadasha Melbourne's Child Safety Code of Conduct in their physical and online interactions with children and young people under the age of 18 years.

The board of Shira Hadasha Melbourne has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place. The board is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Child Safety Code of Conduct are in place.

The board will ensure that parents of children who attend the Shira Hadasha children's programs (excluding the Bnei Mitzvah program) are made aware that they hold the duty of care for their own children while on Shira's premises. They will ensure that parents are made aware that during services, or children's programs (excluding Bnei Mitzvah program) they must remain with their children at all times.

The President of Shira Hadasha Melbourne or a person nominated by the President for such purpose (child safety officers) is responsible for:

- dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse
- ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Code of Conduct
- ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- providing support to staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

All workers must ensure that they:

- promote child safety at all times
- assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and eradicate or minimise any risk to the extent possible
- educate employees about the prevention and detection of child abuse
- facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

Workers should be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within their area of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

All staff, volunteers and contractors share responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- familiarise themselves with relevant laws, the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and Shira Hadasha Melbourne's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements
- report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police or the state child protection service) and fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters
- report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to their supervisor (or, if their supervisor is involved in the suspicion, to a responsible person in the organisation)
- provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

DEFINITIONS

Child means a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years.

Child protection means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.

Child abuse means

- a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of a child, whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the offence has been commenced or concluded, or
- sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child, or
- physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child, or
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child or significant neglect of a child.

Child sexual assault is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

Reasonable grounds for belief is a belief based on reasonable grounds (see below) that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it

was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- the child is in need of protection, or
- the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury, or
- the parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

A “reasonable belief” or a “belief on reasonable grounds” is not the same as having proof, but it is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A “reasonable belief” is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would form the belief on the same grounds. For example, a “reasonable belief” might be formed if:

- a) a child states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- b) a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (the child may be talking about themselves)
- c) someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused
- d) professional observations of the child’s behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused
- e) signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

EMPLOYMENT OF NEW PERSONNEL AND TRAINING

Shira Hadasha Melbourne’s recruitment procedure, including advertising, referee checks and staff and volunteer preemployment screening, emphasises child safety and wellbeing in line with its commitment to promoting child safety. Shira Hadasha Melbourne has an appropriate recruitment and selection process, to ensure the recruitment of suitable staff and minimise the risk of recruiting individuals who may commit child abuse.

Shira Hadasha Melbourne undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all staff and volunteers. This process aims to:

- promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of the organisation
- identify the safest and most suitable people who share Shira Hadasha Melbourne’s values and commitment to protecting children, and
- prevent a person from working at Shira Hadasha Melbourne if they pose a risk to children.

Shira Hadasha Melbourne requires all staff and volunteers to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening processes before commencing their engagement.

All relevant staff must have current Working with Children Checks to support the ongoing culture of child safety.

Shira Hadasha Melbourne may require applicants to provide a police check in accordance with the law and as appropriate, before they commence working and during their time with Shira Hadasha Melbourne at regular intervals.

Shira Hadasha Melbourne will undertake thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure.

Once engaged, workers and volunteers must review, and acknowledge their understanding of, this policy.

Shira Hadasha Melbourne is committed to ensuring that staff, contractors and volunteers have access to appropriate induction and ongoing training in relation to their child safety responsibilities, including Shira Hadasha Melbourne's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures, external reporting obligations (e.g. mandatory reporting) and the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Training will be available to staff who are likely to come into regular contact with children and young people. This training will include how to identify, assess and minimise the risk of child abuse and detect potential signs of child abuse. Position-specific training will also be provided.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Shira Hadasha Melbourne will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach.

REPORTING

All staff, volunteers and contractors are responsible for reporting child safety concerns to their supervisor or Shira Hadasha Melbourne's child safety officer as soon as possible after receiving such information or forming a belief that a child is at risk.

In situations where the supervisor or child safety is suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to President.

Supervisors must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the child safety officer and also to any external regulatory body such as the police.

If any staff member, volunteer or contractor has a reasonable belief that reportable conduct may have occurred, then they must report the incident to the child safety

officer] directly and immediately. If the incident potentially involves a criminal offence, the incident must also be reported to the local police station or by calling 000 after consulting with the child safety officer if reasonably practicable.

Reportable conduct includes the following incidents:

- a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child, whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the offence has been commenced or concluded
- sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child.

Where a law enforcement agency is seeking to investigate child safety concerns, staff members must co-operate to the best of their ability.

Shira Hadasha Melbourne's child safety officer can be contacted by email at admin@shira.org.au

Shira Hadasha Melbourne also works to ensure all children, young people, families and staff understand their obligations and know who to tell if they observe abuse, are a victim, or notice inappropriate behaviour.

INVESTIGATING

If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to investigate and report, all employees, contractors or volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the President will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the President may decide to conduct such an investigation. All employees, contractors and volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Any such investigation will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.

The President will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of staff may need to be consulted in relation to the investigation.

After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the President must coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process as deemed appropriate.

RESPONDING

If it is alleged that a staff member, contractor or volunteer may have committed an offence or breached the organisation's policies or its Code of Conduct, the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted.

If the investigation concludes that, on the balance of probabilities, an offence (or a breach of the organisation's policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred, then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. The findings of the investigation will be reported to any external body as required.

PRIVACY

Shira Hadasha Melbourne will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Shira Hadasha Melbourne will have safeguards and practices in place to ensure that any personal information considered or recorded remains confidential.

In accordance with privacy laws, everyone is entitled to know how the personal information will be recorded, what will or can be done with it, and who may be able to access it.

REVIEWING

Every two years, and following every reportable incident, a review will be conducted to assess whether the organisation's child protection policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children under the organisation's care.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- This policy must be read in conjunction with:
 - The law of the Commonwealth or of the relevant state or territory
 - The organisation's Child Safety Code of Conduct
 - Any other policies of the organisation

AUTHORISATION

Presidents

S.H