

Child/Client Protection Policy



Summary

Feathertop Chalet is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for its Employees, Visitors, Volunteers, Program Participants and particularly to Children, and Vulnerable People. We are committed to safeguarding children and young people in our care and ensuring that they feel and are safe at all times.

Feathertop Chalet's Child/Client Protection Policy aims to ensure that a caring and appropriate approach is maintained towards the welfare and wellbeing of all those who are under our care. This policy is designed to provide guidelines for Members, Volunteers and Employees in planning Feathertop Chalet camps, programs and services.

Feathertop Chalet's Board are committed to implementing the Child/Client Protection Policy and to training or briefing our Employees, Contractors and Volunteers in its content and application.

Related Policies and documents

Practise and Behaviour Guidelines and Commitment

Chabad Youth recruitment procedure

Feathertop Chalet Reference Questions

Register of Contractors

Feathertop Chalet Volunteer Application/Details

Child Abuse Incident - ACF Report Form

Introduction

Purpose

We take seriously our responsibility to deliver a safe environment that is caring, nurturing and protective. We are committed to safeguarding children and young people in our care and ensuring that they feel and are safe at all times. At Feathertop Chalet we believe that the welfare of all children and young people is of paramount importance and that our organisation has an obligation to defend the child's right to care and protection.

This Child/Client Protection Policy applies to all Employees, Members, Volunteers, Contractors and Visitors within Feathertop Chalet or engaged by Feathertop Chalet. This Client Protection Policy was adopted for use by Feathertop Chalet on April 19th, 2017.

Responsibility

Employees and supervisors must ensure that this policy is communicated and applied within their programs and activities.

Members, Volunteers and Employees must adhere to the requirements of this policy. The core expectation of any responsible organisation requires us to treat all people with fairness and dignity and to care for those who are less powerful and in need of nurture and protection.

All relevant organisations within Australia are bound by Federal and State legislation and principles established through common law. Feathertop Chalet are committed to adhering to all relevant legislation.

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Definitions

Abuse

Emotional abuse, any act including confinement, isolation, verbal assault, humiliation, intimidation, infantilization, or any other treatment which may diminish the sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth.

Physical Abuse, any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as: Hitting, punching, kicking shaking, burning (irons, cigarettes), biting, pulling out hair, alcohol and/or other drug administration.

Sexual Abuse, any assault or abuse of a sexual nature, sexual molestation, indecent exposure, sexual harassment or intimidation. Emotional Abuse, the chronic attitude or behaviour of one person which is directed at another person, or, the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a person's self esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include:

- Insulting, bullying, devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or other extreme acts in the vulnerable person's presence.

Financial Abuse may include:

- Misappropriation of money, valuables or assets,
- Forging signatures on cheques
- Denial of access to personal assets
- Accessing a person's funds electronically and/or
- Forced or unauthorised changes to legal documents

Neglect, characterised by the failure to provide for basic needs. Any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a person's health or development.

Child, any person under the age of 18.

Contractor, means any person or company which is engaged to provide services to Feathertop Chalet.

Duty of Care, is a common law concept that refers to the responsibility of the organisation and individual to provide children with an adequate level of protection against harm. It is the duty of the organisation and its individuals to protect children from all reasonably foreseeable risk of or real injury.

Employee, means any person employed by Feathertop Chalet.

Volunteers, any Non-Member who attends Feathertop Chalet activities as a member of the camp's staff under direction of a Camp Employee.

Member, means a member of the Feathertop Chalet board or any of their subsequent guests.

Participant, any person who attends a Feathertop Chalet program as a participant or a grouper.

Visitor, any person invited to visit a Feathertop Chalet program as a visitor.

Vulnerable Personal, any person who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of intellectual or other disability, age or illness.

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Implementation

1. Recruitment, Selection & Screening

All available positions will be advertised and all advertisements contain the following statement, or where space is at a premium, an abbreviated form of the statement:

Our organisation is committed to protecting children and young people from harm. We require all applicants to undergo an extensive screening process prior to appointment.

Employees, Contractors, Members and Volunteers involved in activities or programs with children, aged and/or vulnerable people must be carefully selected and screened.

Prior to commencing employment services the following precautions will be taken:

- All prospective employees must complete an application form which requests details of relevant past experience, positions held, details of two referees and permission to contact them.
- Referees will be checked and spoken to, seeking to establish the applicant's suitability for the role or position and the conversation will be documented and retained on file.
- All short-listed candidates must undertake a formal interview which includes an analysis of past experience working with children, the elderly and or vulnerable people.
- A national police check and a Working with Children check which complies with the legislative requirements of Victoria will be requested and received prior to the Employee commencing their proposed role. The checks must show that the individual is not precluded from working with children or vulnerable people.

'Working with children' checks

The person responsible for recruiting an 'involved' person must sight the applicable 'working with children' check (WWCC) documentation and record relevant details using our organisation's 'working with children check record'. If an applicant does not possess a 'working with children check', the applicant must complete an application form prior to our confirming their employment with our organisation.

Our organisation will not employ a person who is deemed a prohibited person based on 'working with children' check legislation in our jurisdiction.

It is a serious breach of this policy if an individual, who has convictions that would make him/her ineligible to be granted a Working with Children Check (or equivalent) clearance, gains employment or is allowed to volunteer with children or young people who access our services, programs, events or facilities. It is also a serious breach if an individual continues in his/her employment, coaching or volunteer role with us if he/she has been charged or convicted of a crime that would make him/her ineligible to be granted a Working with Children Check (or equivalent) clearance. All personnel within our organisation are advised that they must report before their recruitment and during their employment, any criminal conviction or charge that indicates that they present a potential risk to the children or young people to whom they help deliver service.

Criminal History Record Checks (National Criminal History Record Checks)

We require our preferred candidates to undergo a 'national criminal history record check' (also known as a 'police check'). We require applicants to provide a national criminal history record check or complete an

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application form and provide consent for the check to be undertaken on behalf of our organisation. It is our policy to advise applicants that, unless their criminal history suggests that they may pose a risk to children and young people, a criminal history does not automatically preclude them from obtaining work within our organisation. If information on their criminal history is relevant to our employment decision, we provide the applicant with an opportunity to respond to the contents of their criminal history check (if they wish to do so).

In such cases, the person within our organisation who is responsible for recruiting for the position is to document the matter and refer it to Director for assessment of the applicant's suitability in accordance with the requirements of the role for which they have applied.

The Director will provide a written decision with respect to employing, or not employing, the applicant. The decision to employ, or not employ, an applicant because of a criminal history check result, along with the rationale for that decision, must be communicated to the applicant.

Whenever possible no applicant is to be offered a position until after completion of their 'working with children' check or 'national criminal history record' check. When this is not possible, we appoint the person contingent upon them receiving a satisfactory check. The person is to be subject to additional supervision until the check procedures are completed.

Undertaking reference checks

We conduct a minimum of two reference checks for all shortlisted applicants as a means to gather additional information about the applicant's suitability to work in the role for which they have applied.

Applicants being considered for appointment should, in the first instance, be asked to provide contact details for two professional referees who can provide information relating to the applicant's suitability to work with children. Professional referees:

- should include a representative of the applicant's current or most recent employer
- must have had a direct managerial relationship with the applicant and so be capable of commenting knowledgeably in relation to the applicant, and ideally have been the applicant's supervisor or line manager. Personal referees are not recommended. However, if there is no option but to include a personal referee, then that referee:

- should include a representative of the applicant's current or most recent employer
- must have had a direct managerial relationship with the applicant and so be capable of commenting knowledgeably in relation to the applicant, and ideally have been the applicant's supervisor or line manager. Personal referees are not recommended. However, if there is no option but to include a personal referee, then that referee:

- should not be related to the applicant
- should have known the applicant for at least 12 months
- must be able to vouch for the applicant's reputation and character.

The referee checks we undertake must involve directly contacting the referee. Written character references are not sufficient unless also followed up and verified through direct contact.

Difficulty in contacting referees, such as those based overseas, or those who have left an organisation, is not justification for accepting lower standards of scrutiny.

We use a 'referee discussion' form to record details of our discussions with referees in relation to the suitability of an applicant to work with children. We use 'Referee questions' to guide our discussion with a referee. A completed 'Reference check' form is to be filed in a successful applicant's personnel file prior to the applicant starting work with our organisation.

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Formal Interviews

During we examine at least the following issues relating to the applicant's suitability to work with children and young people:

- the applicant's beliefs and values in relation to the treatment of children and young people
- the applicant's professional experience, qualifications and competence
- the applicant's reasons for leaving previous positions involving work with children and young people
- any potential concerns our organisation may have with the applicant's resume or work history, such as gaps in their work history, frequent job changes, inability to nominate precise start or end dates for previous roles
- the applicant's general awareness and understanding of child protection issues.

In undertaking an interview with any applicant for an 'involved' role we refer to our organisation's 'Interview questions'. We document an applicant's responses and, if they are the successful applicant, we add that documentation to their personnel file.

As part of the face-to-face interview we highlight our organisation's commitment to protecting children and young people from abuse. We also explain our screening requirements and their purpose.

Volunteers

Prior to participating as a volunteer on a Feathertop Chalet Official Camp or Programs the following precautions will be taken:

- All volunteers must complete an application form for a camp program or activity
- All volunteers at Feathertop Chalet are required to have a current Working with Children (WWC) Check, distributed by the Department of Justice, which enables a volunteer to work with young people under the age of 18. The check must show that the individual is not precluded from working with children.
- Feathertop Chalet must be a nominated organisation on the submitted check for the volunteer to participate on Feathertop Chalet programs with young people under the age of 18.
- A record of a member/ volunteer WWC Check must be stored on file at the Feathertop Chalet office.
- Victorian Teachers or Police Officers are excluded from this requirement but must submit proof to Feathertop Chalet of their relevant Victorian Teacher or Police Officer Registration Number.

Identified persons

Where the Organisation has identified that an Employee/ Member / Volunteer has previously committed a violent or sexually related offence, they cannot, under any circumstances, be considered for Employment, Membership or to Volunteer with Feathertop Chalet.

A register of any identified persons who have previously committed a violent or sexually related offence will be securely maintained at the Feathertop Chalet Office.

2. Training

All new Employees and Volunteers will be issued with a copy of this policy.

All new employees will be required to undertake online training through the Safeguarding Children Program.

Employees will receive annual briefings or training in:

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- The content and application of this Child/Client Protection Policy,
- Client Protection risk assessment, selection and screening.
- Reporting procedures and the associated legal requirements.

3. Providing a Safe Environment

Our Practise and Behaviour Guidelines as well as position descriptions set clear boundaries in regard to staff interaction with vulnerable people in particular children and young people. A commitment to abide by these guidelines is to be signed by new employees prior to direct interaction with children.

Incidents of Abuse are less likely to take place in front of another person and the presence of a witness can assist in clarifying questionable allegations. For these reasons all staff and volunteers, wherever possible, when working with vulnerable people, must work in pairs at all times.

Wherever possible, Employees, Volunteers and Members will not visit vulnerable persons or children in their lodges or accommodation areas unless a friend or relative is present or another Employee, Volunteer or accompanies them. Employees, Volunteers and Members will not sit on the beds of clients.

When transporting people under their care, Employees, Volunteers and Members will take them directly to and from arranged venues and will not spontaneously detour or make additional arrangements. A minimum of two Employees or Volunteers (including the driver) over the age of 18 must be in the vehicle when transporting people in their care.

All personal counselling is generally considered the role of group leaders, if being carried out by employees or volunteers of Feathertop Chalet counselling is to be conducted within sight of another Employee or Volunteer.

Adults and Children are expected to respect each other's privacy during times that require undressing, dressing or changing clothes. Volunteers and Employees will set an example by protecting their own privacy in similar situations. No Volunteer or Employee will be alone in a room with a Child or an Elderly or Vulnerable Person while any/ either is changing clothes.

Employees and Volunteers have the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at such activities to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.

In situations where Employees or Members are required to communicate with participants via Electronic communication Practise and Behaviour Guidelines must be adhered to.

Visitors must sign in at reception, wear a visitor tag and where a valid WWC cannot be produced be accompanied by a Volunteer or Employee at all times when visiting a Feathertop Chalet program or activity.

Contractors must sign in at reception, have details filed in Register of Contractors wear a visitor tag and where a valid WWC cannot be produced be accompanied by a Volunteer or Employee at all times when working at the same time as a Feathertop Chalet program or activity is taking place.

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4. Disclosures of abuse

If a disclosure of abuse is made, the person who receives the disclosure will maintain appropriate care to the one making the disclosure. This will include:

- Treating each allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim. The matter should not be swept under the carpet.
- Not pushing the claimant to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempting to investigate the allegation.
- Assuring the person that they are understood: that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has happened is not their fault, and that they are correct in disclosing the incident.
- Reporting the alleged Abuse to the police and Feathertop Chalet's insurer.
- Not making contact with the alleged perpetrator. If an Employee or Volunteer/ Member is already providing counsel to the alleged perpetrator, it may be advisable for another person to assume this responsibility for the duration of the investigation.
- If the alleged assault has taken place recently, clothing worn by the alleged victim should be, if reasonably practical, retained and handed to the police for forensic examination.
- Maintaining confidentiality.

5. Reporting Procedures

In Victoria the following laws apply:

- Professionals such as doctors, nurses, police and school teachers are legally obliged to report suspected child abuse. In addition, any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child needs protection can make a report to the Victorian Child Protection Service.
- Failure to disclose child sexual abuse offence - The failure to disclose child sexual abuse offence applies to any adult who holds a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child (aged under 16) who fails to disclose that information to police. The offence applies to all adults in Victoria, not just professionals who work with children, unless they have a reasonable excuse.
- Failure to protect offence - The failure to protect offence applies to any person within an organisation who knew of a risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.
- Grooming offence - The grooming offence targets individuals who communicate with a child or their parents with the intent of committing child sexual abuse.

Feathertop Chalet actively encourages the reporting of all abuse including sexual abuse.

Feathertop Chalet is committed to building an environment where either a victim or Employee/Volunteer feels able to report such abuse.

Employees and/or Volunteers must report 'reasonable suspicions' of abuse to Feathertop Chalet management or the Director. Reasonable Suspicion means a fair, well-founded and practical reason to believe an incident involving Abuse has occurred based on either verbal communication, hearsay, rumour or observation of behaviour.

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Feathertop Chalet management or the director will ensure that reasonable suspicions are reported to the Victorian Police or the **Victorian Department of Human Services on 1300 360 391, or after hours at 131 278**, immediately (i.e. before the end of the person's shift / session of work).

An independent person will be appointed by Feathertop Chalet with the specific duty of dealing with any allegations of harm or abuse that may arise.

The details of those reporting abuse will be kept private and confidential.

All instances, allegations, disclosures or reasonable concerns of abuse or neglect of a child or young person arising from an action by an employee or volunteer within our organisation will be investigated and will be the subject of a critical incident review. This will also be reported to the Australian Childhood Foundation within 28 days, using the Child Abuse Incident - ACF Report Form in accordance with the requirements of the Safeguarding Children Program. This report will be made by our director.

If there is reasonable suspicion that an employee, volunteer or member has been or is suffering abuse, the Police and Feathertop Chalet's Insurer will be contacted immediately.

The police will also be notified if a Volunteer/ Participant discloses an incident of Abuse that has occurred somewhere other than Feathertop Chalet's premises (e.g. an outing).

Confidentiality and privacy

Our organisation maintains the confidentiality and privacy of all concerned (including the alleged perpetrator), except if doing so would compromise the welfare of the child or young person and/or investigation of the allegation.

Documentation

All instances, allegations, disclosures or reasonable concerns of abuse or neglect and all the details of the subsequent investigation will be documented promptly and the documents will be held in a secure location where a breach of privacy cannot occur.

All incidents detailed above involving a child or young person will reported to the Australian Childhood Foundation within 28 days, using the Child Abuse Incident - ACF Report Form.

Consequences of breaching policy

If employees of Feathertop Chalet fail to report instances, allegations, disclosures or concerns in relation to abuse or neglect of a child or young person – by personnel within our organisation or by others – we view such failure as a serious matter that, depending on the circumstances, may result in disciplinary action or be grounds for dismissal.

Our policy prohibits all personnel from:

- Discussing any concerns or allegations with unauthorised personnel – within or outside our organisation – such prohibition not being designed to limit, in any way, their rights and

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responsibilities to report their concerns or allegations, but rather as part of our organisation's commitment to ensuring privacy, confidentiality and natural justice

- Making deliberately false, misleading or vexatious allegations.

Our personnel are obliged to raise any concerns they might have in relation to:

- Our organisational policies designed to safeguard children and young people – such as outlined in our 'Practice and behaviour guidelines'.
- Actions of other personnel within our organisation that contravene our policies, or that may otherwise have the potential to harm a child or young person.

Escalating procedures has been established by Feathertop Chalet for handling allegations of abuse in regard to employees.

The escalating procedures will be as follows:

- The automatic suspension from all work or other duties within Feathertop Chalet of any person while under investigation by Feathertop Chalet, or by the police, for committing Abuse. If a Feathertop Chalet Employee, he/she will be provided with support while investigations take place.
- The automatic termination of their employment, or involvement with Feathertop Chalet, if found guilty of committing Abuse, either by internal investigation or by a court.

6. Monitoring and Review

This document will be reviewed at least every 3 years, in consultation with stakeholders. Some circumstances may trigger an early review, this includes but is not limited to legislative changes, organisational changes, incident outcomes and other matters deemed appropriate by the Board and/or Chief Executive Officer. We retain 'evidence' to document each review undertaken. Such evidence may include minutes of meetings and documentation of changes to policies and procedures that result from a review.

External audit and verification based on a sample, conducted by the Australian Childhood Foundation shall occur at 3 yearly intervals.

Approval and Endorsement from the Director

This Policy has the approval and endorsement of the Feathertop Chalet Director, Moshe Kahn and all division heads. We take seriously our responsibility to deliver a safe environment that is caring, supportive and nurturing. Our directors are committed to ensuring the safety of all children and young people to whom we provide services or who participate in our programs.

Moshe Kahn

Date 19/4/17

Director

Camp Gan Welfare Ass. Inc. T/A Feathertop Chalet