

1. Purpose

- 1.1. Launceston City Mission (LCM) is committed to keeping children and young people safe and promoting their safety and well-being with a 'zero tolerance' approach.
- 1.2. LCM recognises that early identification and effective intervention can lessen the initial and long-term effects of harm, abuse, neglect and maltreatment and promote the recovery of children, young people and their families.
- 1.3. The purpose of this policy is to assist LCM employees, program facilitators, volunteers and board members in how to understand, identify and respond to child wellbeing and safety concerns, that may be reported or observed directly or indirectly with an individual; and to affirm the organisation's commitment in doing so.
- 1.4. The Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act, 1997 sets out the legal framework and the responsibilities of government, non-government services, the wider community, and families in relation to the care and protection of children.
- 1.5. Children are also protected from harm through the Family Violence Act 2004.

2. Scope & Context

- 2.1. LCM is committed to the principle that all children and young people are protected from child abuse and neglect, and grow up feeling safe, nurtured and with hope for the future.
- 2.2. LCM is committed to meeting its moral, ethical, professional and legal duties to protect children from the risk of abuse and neglect and to promote child safety and wellbeing. This commitment includes all LCM employees, program facilitators and volunteers from all service areas of the organisation, intervening so that any child or young person who is currently at risk of significant harm through child abuse or neglect is protected.
- 2.3. LCM will oversee Child Safety through the Safeguarding Children's Committee and the provision of a dedicated role of Child Protection Officer within that committee to have oversight of safeguarding of children matters. This committee and Child Protection Officer will also function as a conduit to the CEO and board to enable full oversight of any issues that arise. Child safety matters will be part of the organisation's regular reporting protocols with information flowing to the leadership team, CEO and board.
- 2.4. The following overarching principles guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices and procedures to protect children and young people from abuse or neglect. LCM recognises:

- the safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child or young person are paramount;
- the right of children and young people to feel safe and to be protected from abuse and neglect.

2.5. This policy is focused on prevention and the organisation's commitment and approach to safeguarding children and young people by:

- Outlining expectations regarding child safety principles;
- Detailing procedures and processes to follow to ensure the safety of children and young people;
- Complying with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Tasmania;
- Adhering to appropriate record keeping, information sharing and confidentiality protocols;
- Collaborating with other agencies where appropriate and in the best interests of the child or young person;
- Utilising a system for continuous improvement and review; and
- Providing workers with appropriate training regarding the safety of children.

2.6. We expect all within our organisation to promote equity and respect diversity by:

- actively anticipating children and young people's diverse circumstances and responding effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities
- informing children and young people of their rights and giving all children and young people access to information, support and complaints processes
- respecting the rights of children and young people to participate in decision making, paying appropriate attention to the needs of the following groups:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
 - Children and young people with a disability
 - Children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

- Children and young people identifying as LGBTQI+ (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex)
- Children and young people who are unable to live at home

2.7. Where an individual 18 or over discloses an incident of abuse or neglect, workers are encouraged to direct them to the FindHelp Tas website (www.findhelptas.org.au) where a relevant community service support organisation may be accessed.

3. Policy statements

3.1. Mandated Reporters/Prescribed Persons

- Certain professional groups within the community have a mandated legal responsibility to report their knowledge, belief or suspicion that a child or young person has suffered, is suffering, or is at unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm.
- Professionals required by the Children, Young Person's and Their Families Act (1997) to report their suspicions of harm are known as 'mandatory reporters' or 'prescribed persons'. These include medical practitioners, nurses, dentists, police officers, psychologists, probation officers, child safety officers, school principals, teachers, or those volunteering in government agencies or organisations funded by the Crown that provide health, welfare, education or care for children. This will apply to all workers, whether paid or unpaid, at LCM making them Mandated Reporters.
- In Tasmania, mandatory reporting requirements are outlined in the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act, 1997 which states: "if a prescribed person, in carrying out official duties or in the course of his or her work (whether paid or voluntary) believes, or suspects, on reasonable grounds, or knows:
 - That a child has been or is being abused or neglected or is an affected child within the meaning of the Family Violence Act 2004 (an "affected child" means a child whose safety, psychological wellbeing or interests are affected or likely to be affected by family violence) or

- That there is a reasonable likelihood of a child being killed or abused or neglected by a person with whom the child resides.
- Any suspicion or belief that a worker may be responsible for the harm of a child is reportable through the Mandatory Reporting process and should be reported to the worker's manager immediately.

3.2. Sharing Information

- The flow of relevant information between agencies is crucial to ensuring an appropriate and timely response to, and possible investigation of allegations of child abuse or neglect.
- Sharing information for the purpose of making a report to child protection does not constitute unprofessional conduct or a breach of professional ethics where a reasonable belief of significant harm to a child has been formed. This applies to all child safety notifications.
- The following guidelines support decisions around when to provide information:
 - When requested by a Child Safety worker, you must share all relevant information about a child who is being assessed for possible risk of harm or neglect;
 - When requested by an information-sharing entity (such as the Integrated Family Support Service) relevant information may be shared in order to ensure that the best interests of the child are met.
- The following guidelines pertain to when not to share information:
 - When there are no concerns regarding the safety or wellbeing of a child and the client has not consented to their information being shared;
 - When the information requested is not relevant to the child or a significant person in the child's or young person's life;
 - When the information is not relevant to the best interests, health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person;

- When the request for information has come from someone who is not a representative of an information sharing entity.

3.3. Training

- Team Leaders and Program Managers are responsible for ensuring all workers receive training in relation to their legal obligations and the requirements of this Policy.
- New workers must be informed of their mandatory reporting responsibilities, this policy and of LCM's reporting procedures, as part of their Induction.
- LCM welcomes workers to seek clarity in relation to the commitments and behavioural expectations set out in this policy at any time.

4. Related documentation

Note that it is important to also read the following policies and documents.

4.1. Policies

- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy (GD01-006)
- Alcohol and Drugs in the Workplace (WHS05-014)
- Cultural Diversity (GD01-015)

4.2. Procedures, guidelines and forms

- Mandatory Reporting Procedure PR DSP08-015
- Children and Youth Services Code of Conduct GD01-017
- Professional Ethics & Conduct Declaration Form HR04-033
- Safeguarding Children Training Plan PR HR04-035

4.3. Legislation and other requirements

State:

- The Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act (1997)
- Family Violence Act (2004)

All available at www.thelaw.tas.gov.au

5. Definitions

Term	Definition
Child or Young person	Person under the age of 18.
Child Abuse	<p>Child abuse is a single incident or more than one incidents that take place over time. Under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act, 1997.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has suffered harm, is suffering harm, or is at risk of harm; • Does not have a parent or guardian able and willing to protect the child from harm. • There are four different types of child abuse that lead to harm: • Physical abuse; • Sexual abuse; • Emotional abuse; neglect.
Child Safety Service	<p>The role of Child Safety Services is to protect children and young people who are at risk of harm, abuse or neglect. In Tasmania, the protection of children and young people is covered by the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997.</p> <p>Under legislation Child Safety Services have the statutory responsibility for intervening where children are at risk of abuse and neglect. Child Safety Services activities include intake, assessment, case management and out of home care services.</p>
Emotional Abuse	Emotional Abuse occurs when abuse impairs or threatens a child’s social, emotional, cognitive or intellectual development. It can include emotional deprivation due to persistent rejection, hostility and threats, teasing, bullying, yelling, criticism or exposure to domestic and/or family violence.
Family Violence	Conduct, whether actual or threatened, by a person towards, or towards the property of, a member of the person’s family that causes that or any other member of the person’s family to fear for, or to be apprehensive about, his or her personal well-being or safety. Witnessing / being exposed to family violence is a type of abuse.
Harm	<p>Harm to a child is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child or young person’s physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. Harm can be caused by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; or • Sexual abuse or exploitation; • A single act, omission or circumstances; or • A series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.
Incident Report	A form for the purpose of reporting when a mandatory report to external authorities is made.
Mandatory Report	A report to DHS Child Protection or the Police by a mandated reporter (nurse, teacher, school principal, police, medical practitioner, midwife) that is based on a reasonable belief that a child (up to the age of 18 years) is in the need of protection from harm. Under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act, 1997.
Mandatory Reporter	Person required to report, under the Act. See ‘Prescribed Person’ below.

Term	Definition
Neglect	Neglect occurs when a child’s needs are not met, affecting their health and development. Basic needs include: food, housing, health care, clothing, personal hygiene, and adequate supervision.
Physical Abuse	Physical Abuse occurs when a child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, non-accidental physical trauma or injury. Physical abuse can include: hitting, punching, kicking, strangling, shaking, throwing, burning, biting, poisoning, smothering. Physical abuse does not always leave visible marks or injuries. Regardless of marks or injuries, the act itself causes trauma to the child.
Prescribed Person	A person from a professional occupation that is listed under the Act and is required to report significant harm to children to child protection or the police.
Reportable Suspicion	A Reportable Suspicion about a child is a reasonable suspicion that the child: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has suffered, is suffering, or is at unacceptable risk of suffering, significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse; and Does not have a parent able and willing to protect the child from the harm.
Sexual Abuse	Sexual Abuse in relation to a relevant (child/young person), includes sexual behaviour involving the relevant person and another person in the following circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The other person bribes, coerces, exploits, threatens or is violent toward the relevant person • The relevant person has less power than the other person • There is a significant disparity between the relevant person and the other person in intellectual capacity or maturity.
Strong Families Safe Kids Advice & Referral Line	A first point of contact for everyone with a concern about child wellbeing and safety. 1800 000 123. Parents and children can also call to ask for help for themselves.

Quality context					
Date Approved	21/04/2022	Approved by	BOARD	Version Number:	02
Date for Next Review	21/04/2025	Please ensure any related documents listed are reviewed at the same time.			
Responsibilities					
Implementation	CEO	Maintenance	Quality Manager		
Currency and communication of updates to Quality Manager			Relevant Operations Manager		
Board Approval:	The Board of Launceston City Mission Inc. specifically endorses this policy.				