



Complaints Handling Policy & Procedure

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY & PROCEDURE

OVERVIEW:

A Better Life for Foster Kids Inc (ABLFFK) has developed this Complaints Handling Policy & Procedure in relation to receiving and managing complaints and safety concerns from stakeholders including schools, children and their families. This document is a supporting document to our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy ("Child Safety Policy") and, together with all other related documents, form our suite of policies in compliance with Victoria's Child Safe Standards.

All of our documents can be accessed by email a request to us to heather@abetterlifeforfosterkids.org.au or from ABLFFKs website: <https://abetterlifeforfosterkids.org.au/child-safety-policy/>

OBJECTIVES:

The objective of this policy and procedure is to ensure that:

- stakeholders including children, are aware of and understand our complaint handling process;
- complaints are considered on their merits and investigated promptly and impartially with a balanced view of all information or evidence; and
- steps are taken to actively protect personal information.

COMPLAINTS:

In this policy, a complaint includes any written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction about the actions of managers or staff in ABLFFK in respect of children, including alleged breaches of ABLFFK's Child Safety Code of Conduct.

All concerns and allegations of child safety, abuse and harm will be treated seriously, whether they are made by an adult or a child and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child.

If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, it must be reported in accordance with this complaint handling policy.

If there is concern for the immediate safety of a child, immediately call 000.

If an allegation involves a criminal offence, it must be reported to Victoria Police.

Criminal offences include grooming (for sexual conduct) of a child under the age of 16 years and failure to disclose a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 years of age (unless there is a reasonable excuse for not disclosing or legal exemptions apply).

If any person in a position of authority within ABLFFK becomes aware of a risk that a child may become the victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with ABLFFK (for example, an employee or contractor), and they have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, then they must take all reasonable steps to do so.

A person in authority who negligently fails to take appropriate action to address the risk may be charged with the criminal offence of 'failing to protect' and may face a term of imprisonment.

If an adult reasonably believes a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16, they must report it to Victoria Police by calling 000 or going to their local police station. Failure to disclose the information may be a criminal offence.

All staff are required to cooperate with law enforcement in their investigation of any complaint.

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT:

Any complaints or concerns about child safety should be made to the Manager, Process Improvement who has been appointed as a Child Safety Person with the specific responsibility of responding to any complaints made by employees, parents or children.

Complaints or concerns about child safety can be made to:

Child Safety Person - Heather Baird

A Better Life for Foster Kids

PO Box 1138 SALE VIC 3850

Telephone: 0412 154 424

Email: heather@abetterlifeforfosterkids.org.au

A complaint should include the name and contact number of the person making the complaint, and a clear statement of what the complaint is about.

If children make complaints or report any concerns to staff or volunteers, these should be brought to the attention of ABLFFK management.

HOW A COMPLAINT OR CHILD SAFETY CONCERN WILL BE RESPONDED TO & INVESTIGATED:

ABLFFKs authorised person will promptly and thoroughly investigate all complaints by finding out the facts, speaking with the relevant people and verifying information and explanations where possible.

ABLFFK will:

- a) acknowledge and address the complaint as soon as possible;
- b) ensure that complaints are handled confidentially in accordance with privacy and employment law obligations;
- c) take appropriate action to ensure the child is safe and cared for during the complaint procedure; and
- d) ensure that any action required to adequately address the complaint is taken promptly.
- e) If you are not satisfied with our response, you may escalate the complaint to the Commission for Children and Young People [telephone 1300 782 978; <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/contact/>] for further consideration.

OUTCOMES UNDER DISCIPLINARY POLICIES:

In terms of outcomes under disciplinary policies, staff may be subject to actions to support child safety including:

- a) being stood down with pay (during an investigation) or terminated (following an investigation);
- b) having their duties altered so they do not engage with children while at work;
- c) not allowing unsupervised contact with children while at work;
- d) removing access to our IT system and facilities.

Contractors will be dealt with by corrective action on a case-by-case basis.

SUPPORT & ASSISTANCE:

Support and assistance available to those making a complaint and ABLFFK will support anyone making or seeking to make a complaint.

Any child making a complaint will be given time and space to do so, so that their issue can be heard, and they will be asked if they wish to have another person with them at that time for support.

Any adult making a complaint may have a support person with them.

Support persons can provide moral support for the complainant but must not involve themselves in the complaint by acting as advocates for the complainant. Support for those involved in the complaint process.

We will treat anyone subject to the investigation of a complaint objectively, and:

- a) inform them of complaint about their actions;
- b) provide them with an opportunity to explain the circumstances;
- c) provide them with appropriate support; and
- d) update them on the complaint investigation and the result.

RECORD KEEPING:

Record will be created and kept in accordance with our Child Safe Policy Record process.

REVIEW:

This Policy will be reviewed in accordance with our Child Safety Policy, along with our other related documents which form part of our child safety and wellbeing system.

DOCUMENT CREATED: MAY 2024**REVIEW: 2 YEARS****LAST REVIEW: NEW DOC. VERSION 1.0**