

Early Learning Code of Conduct

Overarching Statement

The *Keeping Children Safe Policy* of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (refer to *Sources*) is the overarching whole of church policy to be implemented by individuals and entities involved with or connected to the Uniting Church. All children who are involved in any of the Church's activities, events or programs have a right to feel and be safe. The Church is committed to provide safe environments where children are cared for, respected, nurtured and sustained.

Policy Statement

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- considering the wellbeing of each child as paramount
- maintaining a duty of care towards all children
- providing a safe workplace that is free from discrimination, bullying and harassment
- respecting the rights of the child and valuing diversity
- providing an open, welcoming environment in which everyone's contribution is valued and respected
- being proactive in supporting children that: identify as Aboriginal, have a disability, and are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, to reach their full potential
- a zero tolerance of discrimination
- encouraging parents, volunteers, students and community members to support and participate in the program and activities of our services.
- communicating openly and honestly
- continually learning how to be inclusive and respectful of cultural needs.

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Content Owner	Uniting Early Learning – Head of Early Learning		Page No. Page 1 of 13
Document Author	P. Silveira	Document Version	V 2.0
Date Published	08/05/2017	Revision Due Date	08/05/18

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Executive Summary

This Code establishes a standard of behaviour to be followed within Uniting Early Learning. It includes a set of professional standards for staff outlining appropriate behaviour in their relationships with children, families and colleagues at the services. It also includes expected behaviours of parents, students, volunteers, visitors and contractors.

Each individual is required to be aware of their responsibilities in relation to discrimination, harassment, vilification, negligence, mandatory reporting, privacy, occupational, health and safety and standards relating to their professional competence and accountability.

Consideration of the Code of Ethics (Early Childhood Australia) is expected of all educators. Early Childhood Teachers will be further guided by *The Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics* (Victorian Institute of Teaching). Duty of care and the ethical principles of mutual respect, equity and fairness will guide all behaviours within Uniting Early Learning.

Current Environmental Context

As of 1 January 2016, Victorian organisations that provide services to children are required under the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Act* to ensure that they implement compulsory child safe standards to protect children from harm. To create and maintain a child safe organisation, *Child Safe Standard 3* requires services to develop and review codes of conduct that establish clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.

The following attachments contain detailed information relating to all aspects of this policy:

Attachment 7a: Responsibilities relating to the Code of Conduct Policy

Attachment 7b: Professional standards for staff

Attachment 7c: Code of Conduct for parents/guardians, students, volunteers, contractors and visitors

Form 7.1: Code of Conduct policy acknowledgement for Staff

Form 7.2: Code of Conduct policy acknowledgement for parents/guardians, students, contractors and volunteers

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Reference/Sources

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

Keeping Children Safe Policy of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Approved June 2015:

<https://www.victas.uca.org.au/UCA%20Resources/Documents/Keeping%20Children%20Safe%20Policy.pdf>

- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*
- *Interactions with Children Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*
- *Relaxation and Sleep Policy*
- *Staffing Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendments (Child Safe Standards) Bill, Vic. 2015
- *Code of Ethics*, Early Childhood Australia: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au
- Education and Care Services National Law 2010: Sections 166, 167, 174
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 155, 156, 157, 175
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements
- *Supporting Young Children's Rights* Statement of Intent (2015-2018), Australian Human Rights Commission, Early Childhood Australia
- *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) www.unicef.org/crc/
- Victorian Institute of Teaching The Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics: www.vit.vic.edu.au

Authorisation

This policy was adopted by Uniting Early Learning on: 08 May, 2017

Review

This policy is to be reviewed by 08 May, 2018

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Attachment 7a- Responsibilities relating to the Code of Conduct Policy

National Regulations & Act

AP=Approved Provider

NS=Nominated Supervisor

CS=Certified Supervisor

Victorian Regulations & Act

L=Licensee

PN=Primary Nominee

N=Nominee

Action	Approved Provider/ Licensee/	NS & PN	CS, N and Educators	Parents
Develop professional standards for staff (refer to Attachment 7b) in collaboration with the Nominated Supervisor/Primary Nominee, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff, parents and others involved with the service	X	X	X	
Ensure a copy of this policy is provided to all educators, staff, volunteers, students, parents and visitors upon their employment, enrolment or arrival at the service	X	X		
Ensure all staff complete and sign the <i>Code of Conduct Acknowledgement</i> (refer to Form 7.2) and file with individual staff records	X			
Ensure the professional standards for staff are adhered to at all times	X	X		
Ensure all children attending the service are protected from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury	X	X	X	
Notify DET in writing within 24 hours of a serious incident or within the required timeframe for a notifiable complaint/incident at the service	X			
Refer notifiable complaints, grievances or other complaints that are unable to be resolved appropriately and in a timely manner to the Grievances Subcommittee/investigator (refer to <i>Complaints and Grievances Policy</i>)	X			
Take appropriate disciplinary or legal action, or review the terms of staff engagement in the event of misconduct or a serious breach of the <i>Code of Conduct Policy</i>	X			
Contact police in an emergency situation where it is believed that there is an immediate risk (e.g. when violence has been threatened or perpetrated)	X	X	X	
Work with the Nominated Supervisor/Primary Nominee, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents and others at the service to provide an environment that encourages positive interactions and supports constructive feedback	X	X	X	X
Ensure that parents of a child attending the service can enter the service premises at any time that the child is attending, except where this may pose a risk to the safety of children or staff, contravene a court order, or conflict with any duty of the Approved Provider/Licensee, Nominated Supervisor/Primary Nominee or educators under the Law	X	X	X	
Develop and follow practices to ensure that parents on duty, or other adults participating in the program, are not placed in a situation where they are left alone with a child	X	X	X	
Respect individual abilities, needs, cultural practices and beliefs in all interactions, both verbal and non-verbal	X	X	X	

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Action	Approved Provider/ Licensee/	NS & PN	CS, N and Educators	Parents
Assist the Approved Provider/Licensee to develop professional standards for staff		X	X	
Complete and sign the <i>Code of Conduct Acknowledgement</i> (form.)		X	X	
Adhere to the professional standards for staff (refer to Attachment 7b) at all times		X	X	
Follow appropriate procedures, including reporting procedures, in the event of a serious incident, notifiable complaint/incident or a complaint or allegation regarding the health, safety and welfare of a child (refer to <i>Glossary and</i> to the Incident Reporting and Escalation Process in the <i>Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy</i>)		X	X	
Understand and accept that serious breaches of the Code of Conduct will be deemed misconduct and may lead to disciplinary or legal action, or a review of engagement		X	X	
Provide guidance to parents and volunteers through positive role modelling and, when appropriate, clear and respectful directions			X	
Ensure that parents on duty, or other adults participating in the program, are not placed in a situation where they are left alone with a child			X	
Direct any concerns about a child's actions or behaviour to an educator				X
Read the <i>Code of Conduct Policy</i>				X
Abide by the law				X
Abide by the standards of conduct set out in this policy, while at the service				X
Comply with all policies of the service				X

Note: Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

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Attachment 7b: Professional standards for staff

Relationships with children

In their relationships with children, the Approved Provider/Licensee, Nominated Supervisor/Primary Nominee, Certified Supervisor, educators and all staff will demonstrate their commitment to high-quality education and care for children by:

- being a positive role model at all times
- encouraging children to express themselves and include their opinions and ideas in decision-making
- allowing children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
- maintaining a safe environment for children
- respecting the rights of all children and including their views in matters that affect them
- contributing to a service environment that is free from discrimination, bullying and harassment
- speaking to children in an encouraging and positive manner
- listening actively to children and offering empathy and support
- giving each child positive guidance and encouraging appropriate behaviour
- regarding all children equally, and with respect and dignity
- having regard to each child's cultural values and support them to express their culture
- respecting individual difference including age, physical and intellectual development, and catering for the abilities of each child at the service
- providing opportunities for children to interact and develop respectful and positive relationships with each other, and with other staff members and volunteers at the service
- informing children if physical contact is required for any purpose, and asking them if they are comfortable with this interaction and complying with the *Interactions with Children* policy
- working with children in an open and transparent way by informing other staff about the work being done with children
- encouraging and assisting children to undertake activities of a personal nature for themselves e.g. toileting and changing clothes
- respecting the confidential nature of information gained about each child while participating in the program
- supporting and advocating for children's rights in their day-to-day practice.

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Relationships with parents and families

In their relationships with parents and families, the Approved Provider/Licensee, Nominated Supervisor/Primary Nominee, Certified Supervisor, educators and all staff will demonstrate their commitment to collaboration by:

- being respectful of, and courteous towards, parents and families at all times
- seeking and considering the perspective of parents and families when making decisions that impact on the education and care of their child
- communicating with parents and families in a timely and sensitive manner
- responding to concerns expressed by parents and families in a timely and appropriate manner
- respecting the cultural context of each child and their family
- inviting and working collaboratively with parents and families
- respecting the privacy of information provided by parents and families, and keeping this information confidential, as required under the *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*.

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Relationships with employer and between colleagues at the service

In their relationships with the employer and colleagues, the Approved Provider/Licensee, Nominated Supervisor/Primary Nominee, Certified Supervisor, educators and all staff will demonstrate collegiality by:

- encouraging others to act in accordance with the *Code of Conduct* and taking action when they observe behaviours which are outside of the *Code of Conduct*
- developing relationships based on mutual respect, equity and fairness
- working in partnership in a courteous, respectful and encouraging manner
- valuing the input of their peers
- sharing expertise and knowledge in appropriate forums, and in a considered manner
- respecting the rights of others as individuals
- giving encouraging and constructive feedback, and respecting the value of different professional approaches
- being prepared to have difficult conversations and use constructive processes to address differences of opinion.

Professional responsibilities

The Approved Provider/Licensee, Nominated Supervisor/Primary Nominee, Certified Supervisor, educators and all staff will demonstrate commitment to their professional responsibilities by:

- providing quality education and care for children
- undertaking their duties in a competent, timely and responsible way
- ensuring their knowledge and expertise is up to date and relevant to their role
- being aware of the role of other professionals and agencies and working collaboratively and within the limits of our professional expertise
- raising any complaints or grievances in accordance with the *Complaint and Grievance* policy
- understanding and complying with legal obligations including in relation to:
 - discrimination, harassment and vilification
 - negligence
 - grooming
 - disclosure of child sexual abuse
 - protection of a child from sexual abuse
 - mandatory reporting
 - privacy and confidentiality
 - occupational health and safety, including emergency evacuation procedures
 - VIT registration
 - Working with Children Check.

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Attachment 7c: Code of Conduct for parents/guardians, students, volunteers, contractors and visitors

I commit to contributing to creating an environment at Uniting Early Learning that:

- Respects the rights of the child and values diversity
- Is proactive in supporting children that: identify as Aboriginal, have a disability, and are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, to reach their full potential
- Has zero tolerance of discrimination
 - Maintains a duty of care (refer to *Glossary*) towards all children at the service
 - Is committed to the safety and wellbeing of each child at the service
 - Is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all staff at the service
 - Provides a safe and secure environment for all staff at the service
 - Provides an open, welcoming environment in which everyone’s contribution is valued and respected
 - Is committed to communicating openly and honestly and maintaining confidentiality
 - Is committed to continually learning how to be inclusive and respectful of cultural needs
 - Encourages parents/guardians, volunteers, students and community members to support and participate in the program and activities of the service.
 - Acknowledges the roles and obligations of the staff of the service.

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Relationships with children

In our relationships with children, I commit to:

- Being a positive role model at all times
- Encouraging children to express themselves and their opinions
- Allowing children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
- Maintain a safe environment for children
- Speaking to children in an encouraging and positive manner
- Giving each child positive guidance and encouraging appropriate behaviour
- Regarding all children equally, and with respect and dignity
- Having regard to each child's cultural values
- Respecting individual difference including age, physical and intellectual development, and catering for the abilities of each child at the service.

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Relationships with the Approved Provider/Licensee, Nominated Supervisor/Primary Nominee, staff and others

In my relationships with the Approved Provider/Licensee, Nominated Supervisor/Primary Nominee, staff, other parents/guardians, volunteers and visitors I commit to:

- Reading and abiding by the *Code of Conduct* Policy
- Developing relationships based on mutual respect
- Working in partnerships in a courteous, respectful and encouraging manner
- Valuing the input of others
- Sharing expertise and knowledge in a considered manner
- Respecting the rights of others as individuals
- Giving encouraging and constructive feedback, and respecting the value of different professional approaches
- Respecting the privacy of children and their families and only disclosing information to people who have a need to know as required under the *Privacy and Confidentiality* policy
- Following the directions of staff at all times
- Treating the early learning environment with respect
- Raising any concerns, including concerns about safety, as soon as possible with staff to ensure that they can be resolved efficiently
- Raising any complaints or grievances in accordance with the *Complaints and Grievances* Policy.

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Form 7.1.: -Code of Conduct Acknowledgement for Staff

Click here to enter text.

Code of Conduct Acknowledgement for Staff

I hereby acknowledge that on/...../....., I received a copy of the *Code of Conduct Policy* for Uniting Early Learning.

I have read this policy, and commit to abiding by the *Code of Conduct* and fulfilling my responsibilities as outlined in this policy.

I understand that the Approved Provider/Licensee will address any breach of this policy, and that any *serious* breach could lead to legal or disciplinary action.

I understand that a signed copy of this acknowledgement will be kept on my staff record while I am working at the service, and will be disposed of when my employment has ceased.

Signature	Name (please print)	Date
Witness signature	Name (please print)	Date

Thank you for your contribution to making Uniting an open, safe, welcoming and friendly environment.

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Form 7.2. : -Code of Conduct Acknowledgement for Parents, Students, Contractors and Volunteers

Click here to enter text.

Code of Conduct policy acknowledgement for parents/guardians, students, contractors and volunteers

I hereby acknowledge that on/...../....., I received a copy of the *Code of Conduct Policy* for Uniting Early Learning.

I have read this policy, and understand its contents. I commit to abiding by the *Code of Conduct* and fulfilling my responsibilities as outlined in this policy whilst:

- my child is attending an Uniting Early Learning
- on student placement at an Uniting Early Learning
- volunteering at an Uniting Early Learning
- visiting or conducting activities/works at an Uniting Early Learning

I agree to abide by the values, principles and practices set out within.

I understand that that a breach of the *Code of Conduct* may lead to limitations being placed on my attendance at the service.

Signature	Name (please print)	Date
Witness signature	Name (please print)	Date

Thank you for your contribution to making Uniting an open, safe, welcoming and friendly environment.

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