

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

1. Introduction

Aliya Youth Space is a community-based support organisation for young people ages 14-29. Aliya Girls Space is a community-based support organisation for young women aged 13 - 21.

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy was approved by the Chief Executive Officer (**CEO**) on 30 June 2022. It demonstrates the strong commitment of management, staff and volunteers to child safety and wellbeing, and how our organisation keeps children safe from harm, including child abuse.

2. Application

- a. This policy applies to all Aliya staff and volunteers who have contact with children.
- b. This policy applies to all activities, programs, events and excursions which involve, result in or relate to contact with children.

3. Commitment to child safety

All children who come to Aliya have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority and we have a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and harm. We aim to create a child safe and child-friendly environment where children feel safe and have fun while socialising, learning, celebrating Shabbat & Jewish festivals, going on trips etc.

4. Purpose

This policy outlines how Aliya prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and what steps we will take to do this.

5. Definitions

Child abuse means:

- a. a sexual offence committed against a child;
- b. an offence committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic), such as grooming;
- c. physical violence against a child;
- d. causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child; or
- e. serious neglect of a child.

Harm is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, including as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.

Child/Children means a person who is under the age of 18 years.



Concerns and complaints

A concern refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction to Aliya related to one or more of the following:

- a. our services or dealings with individuals;
- b. allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, a volunteer or another individual associated with Aliya;
- c. disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person;
- d. the conduct of a child or young person at Aliya;
- e. the inadequate handling of a prior concern; and
- f. general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

2. Role of the Management Committee

The Management Committee has the role of making sure Aliya prioritises children's safety and that action is taken when anyone raises concerns about children's safety.

The Management Committee will champion and model a child safe culture at Aliya. We encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern. The Management Committee will work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable to raise concerns.

Everyone at Aliya has a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. The Management Committee will make sure that staff and volunteers are conducting risk assessments and taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy. They will also ensure that appropriate child safety training for staff and volunteers is identified and completed.

The Management Committee will conduct an annual review of how effectively Aliya is delivering child safety and wellbeing. The input of people involved with Aliya will be sought as part of this review.

3. Children's empowerment and participation

Aliya is a youth-centred and child-centred organisation. We actively seek to include children's views and ideas in our organisational planning.

We want children to develop new friends through Aliya and encourage children to be supportive of each other. We do not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour between children and take action if this occurs.

We respect the rights of children and provide them with information about their rights including the right to be safe at Aliya. We actively seek to understand what makes children feel safe in our organisation. We regularly communicate with children about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

Aliya values the voices of children and will act on safety concerns raised by children or their families. Aliya supports children's participation in the following ways:

- a. regular discussions with children, including child-led conversations on what makes them feel safe and unsafe;
- b. a suggestion box for children that is regularly emptied with suggestions assessed and acted on where appropriate. Children are provided with feedback on their suggestions;
- c. consultation with children about any proposed significant changes to the physical environment, policies, procedures, programs or staffing. Children's views are collected by staff, provided to management and considered in the decision-making process; and
- d. information provided to children and families about Aliya operations, staffing and programs are made suitable for different age groups of the children.

4. **Families and communities**

Aliya recognises the important role of families and involves parents and carers when making significant decisions about their child. Parents, families and communities are welcome to provide feedback at any time through our contact email address and are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with us.

Aliya provides information to families and community about our child safe policies and practices including through:

- a. publishing this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct on our website;
- b. including information about our child safety approach, our operations and Management Committee and management structure on our website; and
- c. including articles and information on child safety and wellbeing, and reminders about our policies and procedures, in our monthly newsletter.

5. **Valuing diversity**

We value diversity and equity for all children. To achieve this, we:

- a. provide training for all Management Committee members, staff and volunteers on understanding diversity and how to support inclusion and cultural safety;
- b. welcome and support participation of all children, including children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home and LGBTIQ children;
- c. offer students and families through our enrolment forms the opportunity to provide information about themselves, including any specific needs to participate fully in our programs;
- d. have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified deliver programming that reflects the diversity of our students, their interests and cultures;
- e. have a physical and online environment that actively celebrates diversity; and



- f. commit to ensuring our facilities and online activities promote inclusion of children of all abilities.

6. **Code of Conduct**

Aliya has a Child Safe Code of Conduct. Board members, staff, volunteers and the Management Committee must comply with the Code of Conduct at all times. Breaches of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action including termination of a person's involvement with the organisation.

7. **Recruiting staff and volunteers**

Aliya puts child safety and wellbeing at the centre of recruitment and screening processes for staff and volunteers as outlined in the recruitment and screening policy. We only recruit staff and volunteers who are appropriate to engage with children. Members of the Management Committee must also be screened.

We require a Working with Children Check, Police Checks and referee checks for all staff and volunteers who have a role with children or have access to children's personal information. A copy of these checks must be provided to Aliya. We require staff to have appropriate qualifications for their roles and check to make sure these qualifications are valid. Members of the Management Committee must hold a valid Working with Children Check and a National Police Check is required.

8. **Supporting staff and volunteers**

Aliya is committed to ensuring that all leaders, staff and volunteers receive training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety and to support their engagement with children. Aliya assists its leaders, staff and volunteers to incorporate child safety considerations into decisions and to promote a safe environment where children are empowered to speak up about issues that affect them.

Issues or concerns about behaviour with children will be raised immediately and addressed in line with our Code of Conduct and Complaint Handling Policy.

9. **Complaints and reporting**

All reports of child abuse and child safety concerns 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. All complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly. Aliya has a Complaint Handling Policy that includes information for staff and volunteers about how a complaint or child safety concern will be responded to. An easy-to-understand complaints information sheet will be provided for children, families and the community to know about the complaint process and the support available to those making a complaint and those involved in the complaint process.

If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, then staff and volunteers at Aliya must report it in accordance with the Complaint Handling Policy. Aliya staff and volunteers are required to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to Victoria Police. Staff and volunteers may be subject to actions to support child safety including:

- a. being suspended during an investigation or dismissed following an investigation;



- b. having their duties altered so they do not engage with children at Aliya;
- c. not allowing unsupervised contact with children at Aliya; and
- d. removing their access to the Aliya IT system and facilities.

Complaints can be emailed to Director@aliya.org.au or you can speak directly with a Child Safety Person.

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

10. **Child Safety Persons**

Aliya has two trained child safety persons with responsibility for responding to any child safety related complaints or concerns (**Child Safety Persons**).

Names of the child safety persons are displayed on our noticeboard and in our newsletters.

If a person does not feel comfortable making a report to a Child Safety Person, they may report their concerns to Shuie Gestetner; Shuieg@gmail.com

11. **Record keeping**

Aliya is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns.

All child safety complaints, concerns, incidents and near misses will be recorded in the incident reporting system. Records which may assist with the investigation of a complaint or safety concern will be identified and kept as part of the record of an investigation. Records will be kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint.

We will record and keep the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints. This includes findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken. Records will be stored securely and kept by Aliya for at least 45 years.

12. **Information sharing**

Aliya may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, where it is appropriate and in their best interests. Aliya will keep information about complaints confidential, except where it is necessary to share information to respond properly to a complaint or to prioritise child safety. We may also need to share information about incidents or complaints with external authorities to comply with the law or to prioritise safety. More information is available in our Complaint Handling Policy.

13. **Risk management**

We recognise the importance of identifying and managing risks of child harm and abuse in the physical and online environments operated by Aliya.

We conduct regular risk assessments and have a risk management plan to address the risk of child abuse and harm at Aliya. The risk management plan will be developed in consultation with our staff, volunteers, parent representatives and children. We will ensure that any risk controls put in place balance the need to manage harm with the benefits of participating at Aliya. The Management Committee is responsible for approving the risk management plan.



Any other providers of services will always be supervised by a member of staff while working with us to ensure child safety.

14. **Non-compliance with this policy and the Code of Conduct**

Aliya will enforce this policy, the Code of Conduct and any other child safety and wellbeing policies (see list below). Potential breaches by anyone will be investigated and may result in restriction of duties, suspension or dismissal from the organisation.

15. **Review**

Aliya will review all child safe practices and policies at least every two years. We also review relevant practices and policies in response to a child safety incident or 'near miss'. Findings from reviews will be reported to the people involved in our organisation and also inform our approach to continuous improvement of our child safety practices. Reviews are overseen by the Management Committee and will be informed by consultation with children, families and staff.

16. **Supporting documents**

The following policies and procedures work together to support child safety and wellbeing across all of our operations:

- a. Code of Conduct;
- b. Complaint Handling Policy;
- c. Risk Management Plan; and
- d. Child Safe Training Plan.

Supporting legislation

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)* (including Child Safe Standards)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)* (including reporting to Child Protection)
- *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* (including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences)
- *Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)* (including Part XIII – Organisational liability for child abuse)