

## **Southern Dance Festival Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy**

This Child Safety Policy was reviewed and updated by the Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2025 as per Standard 10 of the Child Safe Standards.

The Child Safety Policy is available to view on our webpage & a hard copy can be provided upon request.

### **Commitment to child safety**

Southern Dance Festival is committed to child safety.

We will endeavour to ensure that children feel safe at our Festival.

We are committed to the participation and empowerment of all children regardless of ability, disability or cultural background.

We support, respect and value all children.

We will not tolerate any form of discrimination.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse with all safety concerns treated very seriously.

Southern Dance Festival is committed to identifying and eliminating factors that may put children at risk, including both physical and online environments.

All volunteers and third-party suppliers are required to comply with our Child Safety Policy, including having a current Working with Children Check.

*Students: Please tell your teacher or a committee member if you feel unhappy or uncomfortable at any time about something that someone says or does at this event.*

*Teachers: Please tell a Southern Dance Festival Committee member if you have any concerns regarding child safety at this event.*

### **Purpose**

This Policy outlines how Southern Dance Festival prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and what steps we will take to do this.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all Committee members, volunteers, teachers, children, third party suppliers and any other individuals involved with our organisation. This policy applies to all Southern Dance Festivals events.

## **Definitions**

*Committee* means the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and all general committee members.

*Child abuse* means:

- a sexual offence committed against a child
- an offence committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), such as grooming
- physical violence against a child causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child.
- 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 because of a series of acts or events over a period.

*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 Southern Dance Festival committee related to one or more of the following:
  - our services or dealings with individuals
  - allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, a volunteer or another individual associated with Southern Dance Festival
  - disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person
  - the conduct of a child or young person at Southern Dance Festival
  - the inadequate handling of a prior concern
  - general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

## **Role of the Committee**

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

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

Everyone at Southern Dance Festival has a role to play in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. The Committee will make sure that festival volunteers are aware of the role they play in keeping children safe during the festival events.

The Committee will conduct an annual review of how effectively Southern Dance Committee is delivering child safety and wellbeing. Any feedback or complaints provided by people involved with the festival will be used as part of this review.

## **Children's empowerment and participation**

Southern Dance Festival is a child-centred organisation.

We actively seek to include children's views and feedback in our planning and delivery of services.

We want children to develop new friendships and strengthen existing ones through Southern Dance Festival and encourage children to be supportive of each other. We do not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour between children and act if this occurs.

We respect the rights of children and provide them with information about their rights where necessary, including the right to be and feel safe at our festivals.

Southern Dance Festival values the voices of children and will act quickly on safety concerns raised by children or their families.

## **Parents, Families and Carers**

Southern Dance Festival recognises the important role of parents, families and carers. Parents, families and carers are welcome to provide feedback at any time through our contact email address and are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with us.

Southern Dance Festival provides information to families and community about our child safe policies and practices including through:

- publishing this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct on our website and Mycomp HQ rules page
- having a hard copy of this policy and Code of Conduct available on request during our events.

## **Valuing diversity and creating culturally safe environments for children and their families**

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

- 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, LGBTIQ children and Aboriginal children and their families
- commit to creating an environment where cultural diversity is celebrated
- have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and act when discrimination or exclusion is identified

## **Committee and volunteers**

Southern Dance Festival puts child safety and wellbeing at the centre of our screening process for Committee members and volunteers. We require as a minimum that all Committee and Volunteers have a current Working with Children Check available to view as an original document or as a digital copy in the Services Victoria app.

Volunteers will receive direction and supervision from committee members to support their engagement with children and to ensure compliance with our Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

Issues or concerns about behaviour with children will be raised immediately and addressed in line with our Code of Conduct, complaint handling and reporting requirements.

## **Complaints, reporting and record keeping**

All reports of child abuse and any other 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.

Any complaints should be made directly to a COMMITTEE MEMBER who will assess the situation and decide the best course of action.

## **If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000**

All reported incidents, complaints, concerns and near misses will be recorded on an incident report form.

Records and findings/outcomes will be stored securely by the Committee Secretary.

## **Risk management**

We recognise the importance of identifying and managing risks of child harm and abuse in the environments operated by Southern Festival of Dance.

As dance is an athletic sport, we also endeavor to mitigate any risk of physical injury to our participants.

Risk assessments are reviewed prior to each year's events.

We will ensure that any risk controls put in place balance the need to manage harm with the benefits of participating in the events run by Southern Dance Festival.

The Committee is responsible for approving the risk management plan.

Risk assessments can be conducted utilising existing venue documents where appropriate or by using a modified version of the template available at [https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/resources/child-safe-standards/#CSS\\_Guide](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/resources/child-safe-standards/#CSS_Guide)

## **Code of Conduct**

Southern Dance Festival has a Child Safe Code of Conduct.

The Committee, volunteers, teachers, parents and any third-party providers must always comply with the Code of Conduct.

Breaches of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action including termination of a person's involvement with the organisation.

## **Southern Dance Festival - CODE OF CONDUCT**

This Code of Conduct applies to all Southern Dance Festival personnel who work with children including committee, volunteers, suppliers, teachers and parents. It aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation.

Southern Dance Festival are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

1. adhering to Southern Dance Festival's Child Safety Policy always.
2. maintaining professional relationships with children that respect privacy in both physical and online environments.
3. listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety or the safety of another child

4. promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of all participants, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, participants with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, participants with a disability and those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex.
5. reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to any committee member of Southern Dance Festival, and child protection authorities or the police
6. understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse
7. if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the participant(s) are safe and protected from harm and unacceptable behaviours.

Volunteers involved must not:

- a. ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- b. develop a relationship with any participant that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts, promotion on social media or offering advancement via "special opportunities")
- c. exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with participants which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic purpose, or appropriate for the learning or performance context.
- d. ignore behaviours by other adults towards participants when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate.
- e. discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance.
- f. treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity.
- g. communicate directly with a participant through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc).
- h. post images of a participant on personal social media sites.
- i. take illicit drugs or alcohol at any time where participants are present.

### **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)

## **Supporting organisations**

- Kids Helpline 1800 551 800
- Lifeline 131 114
- Child Protection Crisis Line 131 278 (24 hours)
- Sexual Assault Crisis Line (after hours) free call 1800 806 292
- Gatehouse Centre, Royal Children's Hospital on 03 9345 6391 (24 hours)
- Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre 1800 015 188
- Alannah and Madeline Foundation <https://www.amf.org.au/>
- Australian Childhood Foundation <https://www.childhood.or>

## **Child Safe Standards and other resources**

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au>

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/New-CSS/A-guide-for-creating-a-Child-Safe-Organisation-27.04.23.pdf>