

# Policy & Procedure

## Giant Steps Melbourne Child Safe Standards



Reviewed May 2020

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Signed by the Chairman of the Board  
*Mr. Barry Irvin*

## CHILD SAFE STANDARDS POLICY

### Policy

Giant Steps Melbourne is committed to child safety. Giant Steps Melbourne is committed to the health, welfare and safety of each and every student. We support and respect all children, as well as all those who make up the extended school community (including staff, volunteers and parents).

Giant Steps Melbourne has ZERO tolerance of child abuse.

Giant Steps Melbourne believes that every child has a fundamental right to be safe and that the specific needs of our students living with Autism does NOT reduce that fundamental right to be safe. We have a responsibility to ensure that our students are protected from all and any harm.

Giant Steps Melbourne is committed to preventing child abuse. We believe that by identifying risks early and then removing and reducing these risks we will move well towards preventing child abuse.

### Aims

The aim of this Policy, and related Policies and Procedures, is to:

- Empower our children to be vital and active participants at Giant Steps Melbourne;
- Ensure our staff, including any contractors, and volunteers are committed to providing our students with a child safe environment;
- Ensure that any allegations, concerns or complaints about a child's safety is taken seriously and that each and every one is treated consistently with our procedures regarding such matters; and
- Promote and value the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and those from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background.

### Procedure

#### Our Students

Giant Steps Melbourne is an independent special school for children with Autism. At the forefront of every action that we take or decision that we make, we ensure that our children with Autism are safe, are valued and can participate fully in school life.

We understand that our students have a variety of abilities and levels of understanding and processing of information. We understand that our children have an increased risk and vulnerability of being subject to abuse. This increased risk is due to a number of factors, including communication difficulties, personal care needs and possible intellectual or cognitive disability. We understand that we must be more vigilant and have stronger strategies and controls to counter these risks.

At Giant Steps Melbourne we promote the value that each student must be viewed independently and that staff and volunteers must not make assumptions about the student's ability to understand.

At Giant Steps Melbourne we maintain increased vigilance in identifying indicators or warning signs of possible abuse. We understand that many actions or behaviours that may be signs of abuse by a child without Autism, may actually be manifestations of the student's Autism/ co-morbid conditions and/or developmental delay. An example of this may be inappropriate public behaviour, such as touching oneself. Therefore, we maintain records of our students' normal behaviours and are vigilant about identifying any changes in their behaviour.

Irrespective of our students' perceived limitations and abilities, Giant Steps Melbourne will endeavor to:

- Teach our children about their bodies and about being safe in all environments;
- Teach, enable and facilitate independence for all our children in regard to personal care to reduce their risks of abuse in the future; and
- Inform our children about "safe" people and the means to communicate any concerns, allegations or complaints.

### **Staff and Volunteers**

Giant Steps Melbourne has vigorous human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers. We actively encourage the recruitment of personnel who have a background and are skilled in working with children, especially with children with Autism. Our recruitment processes rigorously ensure that our personnel are equipped to deal with challenging behaviour in an appropriate and safe manner and that all staff and volunteers are aware of our legislative responsibilities.

All people engaged in child related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a valid Working with Children Check. Validation of the Check is verified upon the commencement of each person engaged at Giant Steps Melbourne.

Giant Steps Melbourne is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks. Child Safety is included as an agenda item in each weekly Whole School Meeting. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess and minimize the risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse in our children.

Giant Steps Melbourne takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate such allegations. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with such allegations, including the means by which to communicate with our children and their individual abilities.

Giant Steps Melbourne has a strict Code of Conduct which guides our staff and volunteers on the standards of conduct required when working with our children. New employees and volunteers are supervised to ensure they understand our commitment to child safety and to ensure their behaviour is appropriate and conforms to our Code of Conduct.

**Legislative Responsibilities**

Giant Steps Melbourne takes its legislative responsibilities seriously in regard to all matters of child safety.

Our Policies and Procedures in this area state that all personnel are mandatory reporters and are required to comply with their duties as such.

Irrespective of our legislative requirements, Giant Steps Melbourne is committed to reporting any inappropriate behaviour through the appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

**Risk Management**

Giant Steps Melbourne acknowledges that being a special school for children with Autism we have some unique risk factors based on our children's needs and behaviours. Our risk management procedures ensure that these unique factors are included in all areas of risk management.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess and minimize child abuse risks, including risks posed by physical environments and environments outside of school hours.

**Related Policies**

Student Welfare Policy and Procedures

A Safe and Supportive Environment

Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedure

Keeping Students Safe – Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct

Code of Conduct for the Care and Protection of Children

**Related Documents**

Recruitment Forms

- Phase 1 – Interview Questions
- Phase 2 – Educator Safeguarding Interview Questions
- Phase 3 – Referee Questions

**Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed annually. This policy will also be reviewed after any form of incident regarding child safety, no matter the severity. This will ensure effectiveness is maintained and all risks are removed.