

# ESA's Policy & Procedures (APPENDIX 4)

## Child Protection

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### 1. Objectives of this policy

To ensure the protection of children and youth within ESA's care and control.

ESA is committed to protecting children and youth from all type of harm including physical, emotional and sexual injury and abuse.

These policies and procedures aim to protect children in our care and enable Staff to deal appropriately with Disclosures made while a child is in our care. We aim to have clear guidelines regarding contact with children in order to minimise the risk of actual abuse, false allegations of abuse or misunderstandings between Staff and children.

#### **1.1 Application**

This policy applies to all Site Staff, Field Workers, Casuals, Volunteers and Contractors ("Staff"). Staff are to be given a copy of this policy before commencing any work with ESA, whether that be voluntary or paid.

#### **1.2 What is Abuse?**

Abuse includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, exploitation or excessive punishment.



When coming in contact with children, Staff should pay particular attention to:-

1.2.1 Talk about being abused.

1.2.2 Physical signs of abuse such as bruises, burns, fractures, or bleeding, and

1.2.3 Behavioral signs of abuse such as showing little or no emotion when hurt, apparent fear of parents, alcohol or drug abuse or age-inappropriate sexual behaviour.

## 2. Prevention of Abuse

### 2.1 Responsibilities

All Staff should be alert to the need for protection of children in their care, on ESA property generally (including off site camps/activities) or a child's apparent home environment. We should be aware of ESA policies and ensure that child safety is of the utmost importance. A breach of ESA policy may lead to disciplinary action including dismissal.

### 2.2 Practices

#### 2.2.1 Sleeping and living arrangements

Staff should not sleep in the same room as children (parents and guardians excepted.)

Male and Females should have separate sleeping areas.

Children's privacy should be respected regarding the changing of clothes.

Staff should avoid being in a room alone with a child with the door closed.

#### 2.2.2 Supervision

A child should not be singled out from a group unless in the presence of others generally or under the supervision of another Staff member.

Staff should not take children off-site, in a motor vehicle or otherwise, unless accompanied by another Staff member or a number of other children.

Children should be supervised by at least two members of Staff at all times. It should be noted that it is **never** appropriate for teenage/junior leaders to be in charge of activities or events involving children in the absence of an adult or adults. All persons under the age of 18 years assigned to function as teenage/junior leaders must be supervised at all times.

A single Staff member should not supervise children in a private area, including a vehicle, a bedroom or a secluded area.

Staff should be aware that these policies help to protect them as well as children, in the event of false allegations being made.

These policies should only be departed from where adherence to the policy is considered impossible or in the event of an emergency.



### 2.2.3 Safety <sup>1</sup>

Other issues that need to be considered during children/youth programs are:

- a) The space to be used needs to be large enough for the number of children/youth and Staff members involved in the activity.
- b) The area to be used needs to be checked for potential physical dangers including threats from any equipment to be used in the activity.
- c) Can people who enter and leave the area be monitored if necessary?
- d) Is the program sufficiently covered by insurance (both property and liability). The Camp Director needs to check this with the Site Manager before the camp commences.
- e) If the activity is away from the main site, Staff members running the activity need to ensure that a first aid kit is readily available and that medical help can be called upon quickly if the need arises.
- f) If the area is outside, have alternative arrangements been made to move the activity indoors in the case of adverse weather conditions?
- g) Adequate staff member ratio to children/youth needs to be ascertained to ensure the proper supervision is given. In working out staff members required, the Director of the camp needs to consider: The experience and training of the staff, the age of the children, any special needs amongst the campers, the type of activity, the nature of the area to be used and requirements of both male and female Staff members to be present.
- h) If all children/youth attending the camp are not involved in the activity being organized, then a list needs to be produced of all involved should that activity be away from the normal campsite.
- i) Only Staff members with a full licence may provide transportation to campers. No staff member on a probationary license is permitted to drive campers except for in the case of an emergency.
- j) No Staff member is to provide transport if there is any possibility that he/she may be driving while under the influence of alcohol/drugs or prescribed medications which may cause drowsiness or otherwise affect their driving ability or judgment.

<sup>1</sup> 2.2.3 was taken from 'Our Church is a Safe Place', BUV, 2003 - used with permission.

### 3. Recruitment and Selection of Staff

In recruiting and selecting new Staff, ESA's policy is that all Staff authorizes ESA to obtain a current National Police Record Check, and complete a prohibited employment declaration. Police record checks will need to be renewed every five years of involvement with ESA for those 18 years of age and over. ESA will supervise the requesting of all police checks and will pay for all permanent and casual staff's police checks. Volunteers associated with ESA's ministry camps or those working at the ESA Camping & Conference Centre will need to pay the fee for ESA to obtain these (currently \$12.70), unless there be a government grant that covers the full cost of these police checks (as currently proposed).

All Permanent Staff will begin employment with ESA with a 3 month probationary period.



## 4. Dealing with Disclosures & Allegations

### 4.1 Investigation & Notification Procedure

#### 4.1.1 Notifications

All disclosures, reports or allegations of abuse, suspicious or inappropriate behaviour ("Disclosures") should be considered seriously and reported as appropriate. Staff should adhere to the following procedures:

#### 4.1.2 Reporting Disclosures

When a Disclosure is made, a Staff member should make a report of what is said, directly after the conversation as below:-

Volunteer Camp Leader or other Casual must report to → Camp Director and/or Site Manager.

Camp Director must report to → Site Manager.

Site Manager may report to → an ESA Board representative.

#### 4.1.3 Points to consider

Don't panic.

Make notes of the conversation.

Treat the Disclosure with respect.

Follow proper process even if you suspect it is untrue.

Include another Staff member in the conversation.

You should not carry the stress of a Disclosure – report it to senior Staff.

#### 4.1.4 Investigation

Once the Site Manager becomes aware that a Disclosure has been made, the Site Manager should make further inquiries, in consultation with an ESA Board representative. Where appropriate the Site Manager should conduct inquiries with the assistance of the Camp Director.



#### 4.1.5 Non-ESA Related Disclosure

Where a child makes Disclosures that do not relate to a current or past member of Staff the following should be followed.

If a Disclosure appears to be *clearly* false (see 'Responding to Child Abuse'<sup>2</sup> for further assistance in ascertaining this), the Camp Director together with the Site Manager may decide that no further action should be taken. However, this decision needs to be stated in their report and then held on file at the Marysville site permanently.

If a Disclosure is not clearly false, the Camp Director together with the Site Manager should, where appropriate, notify the child's next of kin (unless the Disclosure relates to abuse by a parent).

If it appears there is a history of past abuse (see 'Responding to Child Abuse'<sup>2</sup> for further assistance), the Site Manager should provide information to the child enabling them to notify the police or the Department of Human Services.

2 Responding to Child Abuse, Department of Human Services (Victoria), July 2003

#### 4.1.6 ESA Related Disclosure

In the event that a child makes Disclosures regarding conduct of a current ESA Staff member:-

If a Disclosure appears to be *clearly* false the Camp Director together with the Site Manager may decide that no further action should be taken.

If a Disclosure is not clearly false, the Camp Director together with the Site Manager should restrict the duties of the Staff member until a further investigation can be made. The Camp Director together with the Site Manager should notify the child's next of kin as soon as possible, depending on the nature of the Disclosure. (i.e. if the Disclosure relates to abuse by a parent, the parent should not necessarily be told of the Disclosure).

If there has *clearly* been a case of abuse, the Site Manager should report to an ESA Board representative by telephone as soon as possible. The ESA Board representative, together with the Site Manager should consider encouraging the child and/or their next of kin to notify the police or the Department of Human Services. In addition, the Site Manager, together with the ESA Board representative should suspend the staff member immediately and seek advice from ESA's lawyers concerning dismissal.

Staff should, as best they can, act with discretion and objectivity. While there is a possibility that a Disclosure may be false, proper processes should be followed. Staff should be seen to act with transparency and independence.

#### 4.1.7 Post-notification procedure

The Site Manager should consider whether there is a further obligation to report Disclosures to the relevant authorities.

#### 4.1.8 Allegations

Where a Disclosure is made that appears to be clearly false, the Site Manager may offer to provide a member of Staff with a letter stating that after investigation the allegations made were, to the best of their knowledge and belief, found to be false.

