

DOGS VICTORIA

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

We are committed to having a Dogs Victoria that is safe for all children where child abuse and harm are not tolerated. Child safety is a priority for Dogs Victoria and the prevention and reporting of abuse is supported and encouraged. All staff, volunteers and contractors are responsible for promoting the safety, wellbeing and empowerment of children. Dogs Victoria recognises that discrimination can harm children and we treat all children with dignity and respect.

This Code of Conduct sets expectations for how staff, volunteers and contractors at Dogs Victoria should behave around children. This helps children participate safely in our activities and have fun.

Dog competition activities are a physical activity and can be highly competitive, so having behavioural standards to manage the risks to children is important. This Code of Conduct identifies positive child safe behaviours that we ask staff, volunteers and contractors to demonstrate. It also identifies behaviours that we consider unacceptable and not permitted at our academy.

Not following standards of acceptable behaviour is a breach of this Code of Conduct and may result in disciplinary action. Some behaviours on their own may not be a serious breach of the Code of Conduct but together may indicate a concerning pattern of behaviour that poses a risk to the safety of children. Our disciplinary policy provides further information on processes that will be followed if breaches are identified.

Dogs Victoria staff, volunteers and contractors must always follow these standards of behaviour, at Dogs Victoria venues, events or activities and when engaging with children and their families at any time:

I WILL:

- take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- take disclosures of harm or abuse made by a child seriously
- raise concerns with management if risks to child safety are identified. Report and act on any concerns or observed breaches of this Code of Conduct
- participate in all compulsory training and professional development including training on child safety and wellbeing
- treat all children and young people with respect, regardless of race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, cultural background, financial situation, disability or other characteristics
- consider the different needs of all children at Dogs Victoria, support them to participate fully in programs and help them and their families feel included in the association
- make Aboriginal children and families feel included and welcome at Dogs Victoria and support Aboriginal children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights
- never be racist towards anyone at Dogs Victoria and report any instances of racism I become aware of
- help Dogs Victoria be a place where people of all cultures feel safe and included
- listen to children and respond to them if they feel unsafe.
- value children and young people's ideas and opinions

- promote friendships and encourage children and young people to support their peers
- involve children and young people in decisions about the activities they participate in at Dogs Victoria and welcome the participation of parents and carers in these decisions
- report any conflicts of interest I have (such as an outside relationship with a child) that may affect my ability to perform my role
- respect the privacy of children and their families, including keeping all personal information confidential unless required by law to share it
- inform parents and carers if there are situations that need to be safely managed but are outside the boundaries of this Code of Conduct (such as driving a child to a performance or competition or undertaking one-on-one training sessions)
- ensure breaches of this Code are reported to our Compliance Team immediately
- comply with all relevant Australian and Victorian legislation and our child safe policies and procedures
- uphold the rights of the child and always prioritise their needs.

I WILL NOT:

- condone or participate in illegal, unsafe, abusive or harmful behaviour towards children – this includes physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, grooming, neglect or sexual misconduct
- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse or harm
- exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues
- use hurtful or offensive behaviour or language with children
- fail to report information to police if I know a child has been abused
- touch children in a way that is unnecessary or unsuitable and falls outside what is reasonable to engage in the activities of Dogs Victoria
- persistently criticise and/or denigrate a child
- deliberately prevent a child from forming friendships
- verbally assault a child or create a climate of fear
- offer children and young people alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs
- show children pornographic images
- share details of sexual experiences with a child
- use sexual language or gestures in the presence of children
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves such as changing clothes
- develop 'special' relationships with specific children or show favouritism through the provision of gifts or unnecessary or unsuitable attention
- have unauthorised contact with children and young people online, on social media or by phone
- take photographs, screenshots or share images of children involved in activities that are not authorised by Dogs Victoria
- be alone with a child when there is no professional reason for doing so
- enter changing facilities without first knocking.

If I suspect that this Code of Conduct has been breached by another person in the organisation:

I WILL:

- act to prioritise the best interests of the child or children
- promptly take actions to ensure the child or children are safe
- as soon as possible report the incident or concerns using the Dogs Victoria complaints process
- maintain the privacy of those involved, following Dogs Victoria record keeping, privacy and information sharing guidelines.

Complaints about a breach of this Code of Conduct must be reported to our Compliance Team via compliance@dogsvictoria.org.au or the Dogs Victoria Office on 03 9788 2500.

Some breaches of this Code of Conduct may need to be reported to the Victorian Police, or to the Commission for Children and Young People. Our Complaint Handling Policy provides more information about our reporting obligations to external authorities as well as describing protections and confidentiality provisions for anyone making a report. The policy can be found by asking at the front desk. It is also available as a link on our website.

Staff and volunteers who breach our Code of Conduct may also be subject to disciplinary action. This can include increased supervision, appointment to an alternative role, suspension or termination from the organisation. Detailed descriptions of breaches are found in our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. This can be found by asking at the front desk. It is also available as a link on our website.

PLEASE NOTE:

If any person in a position of authority within our organisation becomes aware of a substantial risk that a child may become the victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with the organisation (for example, an employee, contractor or volunteer), and they have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, then they must take all reasonable steps to do so. A person in authority who negligently fails to take appropriate action to address the risk may be charged with the criminal offence of 'failing to protect' and may face a term of imprisonment.

If an adult reasonably believes a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16, they must report it to Victoria Police by calling 000 or going to their local police station. Failure to disclose the information may be a criminal offence.

I have read this Code of Conduct and agree to abide by its terms.

Name:

Signature:

Date: Last reviewed: April 2024

Next review date: October 2024

Responsible Officer: Chief Executive