



UNITE DANCE STUDIO

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Unite Dance Studio is committed to the safety of every child enrolled as a student at our dance school. Children have the right to a safe environment at their dance school. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

PURPOSE

The Unite Dance Studio Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our studio's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our studio's approach to implementing Ministerial Order 1359 (PDF, 363KB) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in dance school environments. It informs our dance school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

Unite Dance Studio:

- has zero tolerance for child abuse
- actively works to listen to and empower children
- has systems to protect children from abuse, and will take all allegations and concerns very seriously and responds to them consistently in line with the organisation's policies and procedures
- is committed to promoting physical, emotional and cultural safety for all children
- is committed to providing a safe environment for all children.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, students and the wider School community who are engaged in child-connected work. School staffs are all individuals working in our school environment that are directly engaged or employed by Unite Dance Studio, such as our teachers, administrative staff and non-teaching staff, our volunteers and contracted service providers.

RESPONSIBILITY

We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.

Our policies and procedures will provide the name and conduct details of staff who have specific responsibilities in relation to child safety and who may receive reports of suspicion of child abuse. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

We are committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

We are committed to the emotional, physical and cultural safety of all children and to providing a safe environment for their learning.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our dance school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

OUR CHILDREN

Our strategies will empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation and provide them with opportunities to give us feedback and ensure that they feel safe and comfortable in reporting concerns or allegations of abuse.

OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation. All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our Child Safety Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

Our staff will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of, and responding to abuse
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone at Unite Dance Studio understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

New employees and volunteers are briefed on commencement and provided with information to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

RECRUITMENT

At Unite Dance Studio we take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations. All people aged 18 and over engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. We carry out thorough reference checks and pre-employment screening to ensure that we are recruiting with child safety in mind.

FAIR PROCEDURES

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

PRIVACY

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

Please refer to our privacy policy for further detail.

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

At Unite Dance Studio we take our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- Failure to disclose: Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- Failure to protect: People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

RISK MANAGEMENT

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children. We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child on personal social media platforms).

ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

Unite Dance Studio takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and with urgency. Our staffs are trained to deal appropriately with allegations and our volunteers are informed on how to report an allegation.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour. We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

All Unite Dance Studio teachers, students, and families are supported to raise any concerns or complaints regarding any risks to a child's safety, and any signs of abuse.

All concerns or complaints should be made to our Director, Rachel Brooks, and will be resolved as soon as possible. Support will be offered to all people involved.

To make a report to Child Protection, a person needs to have formed a reasonable belief that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect, and that their parent has not protected, or is unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

A reasonable belief does not require proof.

Reports will be made to the Child Protection Intake Service covering the local government area (LGA) where the child normally resides.

Telephone numbers to make a report during business hours are listed below:

Monday to Friday | 8:45am – 5:00pm : West Division Intake 1300 664 977

Please remember that, if you believe a child is at immediate risk, to call 000 as soon as possible.