



The Child Safety and Well Being Policy and Procedures

Introduction

This document will comply where possible, to the Child Safety Standards commenced in Victoria in July 2022.

The Morwell Festival of Dance Inc. (MFOD) is committed to:

- Always promoting and protecting the interest and safety of children and young people at this event
- Including families and communities in our organisations efforts to keep children/young people safe
- Having a greater focus on safety for Aboriginal children/young people
- Governance, systems and processes, to keep children/young people safe

MFOD has a zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at MFOD is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

Purpose

The purpose of the Child Safety and Well Being Policy is to outline how MFOD prioritises the safety and well-being of children/young people including;

1. To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within MFOD
2. To work towards an organisational culture of child safety and wellbeing
3. To ensure all workers, volunteers, participants, customers (audience members) and associates are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs
4. To provide guidance to employees, volunteers and others to the actions that should be taken where they suspect any abuse or grooming within or outside the organisation
5. To provide a clear statement to staff, volunteers and contractors forbidding any such abuse
6. To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated

Scope

This policy applies to all committee members, staff, volunteers, children, young people and other individuals involved in the MFOD organisation. This policy applies to all activities conducted by Morwell Festival of Dance Inc.

Policy

Morwell Festival of Dance is committed to promoting and protecting the best interests of children/young people involved in its program.



Child protection is a shared responsibility between MFOD, all volunteers, employees, contractors, associates and members of the MFOD community.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, family or social background have equal rights to child safety and wellbeing and protection from abuse.

Morwell Festival of Dance Inc has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at the Morwell Festival of Dance Inc is responsible for the care and protection of the children under our care and for reporting information about suspected child abuse.

MFOD's commitment to the 11 Child Safe Standards

Child Safe Standard 1: Establish a culturally safe environment in which diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.

MFOD acknowledges and actively supports a child's right to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights. We appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understands its importance in the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and young people. All steps will be taken to ensure racism within the organisation is identified, confronted and not tolerated in any form. Instances of racism will be addressed with appropriate consequences. MFOD will actively support and facilitate participation and inclusion within the organisations activities by Aboriginal children, young people and their families.

Child Safe Standard 2: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.

MFOD will make a public commitment to child safety and ensure a child safety and wellbeing culture is embraced and embedded within our structure. MFOD will implement risk management strategies focused on preventing, identifying and mitigating risk to children and young people. All staff and volunteers will be required to abide by a Code of Conduct that provides guidelines on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities when engaging with children and young people. Staff and volunteers will understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping.

Child Safe Standard 3: Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

MFOD will seek to ensure children and young people are informed about their rights to safety, information and participation. The importance of friendship is recognised and support from peers is encouraged to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated. Where appropriate and relevant, children and young people will be offered access to sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant information in an age-appropriate way.



MFOD staff and volunteers will be attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child friendly ways for children and young people to express their views, participate in decision making and raise their concerns.

Strategies and opportunities will be provided to develop a culture and environment that facilitates participation, is responsive to the input of children and young people and contributes to strengthening confidence and engagement.

Child Safe Standard 4: Families and communities are informed, and involved promoting child safety and wellbeing.

MFOD will seek to ensure that families participate in discussions affecting their child and both families and the community are aware of our Child Safe approach and policies. Families and the community will be consulted in the development and review of policies, procedures and practices, where appropriate and feedback will be welcomed and taken seriously.

Child Safe Standard 5: Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

MFOD will ensure staff and volunteers understand children and young people's diverse circumstance and will provide support and respond to those who are vulnerable. Children and young people will have access to information, support and complaint processes in a way that is culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand. Particular attention will be paid to the needs of children and young people with a disability, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those that are unable to live at home, people of diverse sexuality, genders and young people. MFOD will pay particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal children and young people and provide and promote a culturally safe environment for them.

Child Safe Standard 6: People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

MFOD will seek to ensure that our staff and volunteers are appropriately screened before commencing, including checks conducted by the MFOD committee with an emphasis on child safety and wellbeing. All staff and volunteers will be required to have a current Working With Children or equivalent documented. MFOD will ensure staff and volunteers have appropriate information about MFOD's child safety practices and that they are made aware of their responsibilities to children and young people including the need for record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.

Child Safe Standard 7: Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.

MFOD's child focused complaint handling policy will be easily accessible, will clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of leadership, staff and volunteers and will describe the approaches to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report. The complaint handling processes will be



understood by children and young people, families, staff, and volunteers and be culturally safe. Complaints will be taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly. Reporting, privacy and employment law obligations will be met.

Child Safe Standard 8: Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.

MFOD Executive Committee will be trained and supported to effectively implement our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. This will include training to recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and young people, how to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing, how to support a person who discloses harm to a child and how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people. Training will be repeated at frequent intervals and a training register will record completion of training by staff and volunteers.

Child Safe Standard 9: Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

MFOD will seek to identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments related to our operations/activities without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities. This will include having processes to prevent or reduce risks arising for the use of facilities and contracted services from third parties.

Child Safe Standard 10: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.

MFOD will review, evaluate and improve our child safe practices at least every two years. We will report findings of relevant reviews to staff and volunteers, community and families, children and young people. These reports will communicate findings in age-appropriate ways and be easy to access and understand.

Child Safe Standard 11: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

MFOD will seek to ensure that our policies and procedures address all of the Child Safe Standards and that staff and volunteers understand and implement policies and procedures.

Procedures

Responsibilities

The MFOD committee and executive has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal



control systems are in place. The committee is also ensuring the appropriate updates are included in the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures and the Code of Conduct.

The Child Safety Officers of MFOD are responsible for:

- Responding to reports of child abuse and liaising with appropriate organisations (DHHS/Victorian Police);
- Ensuring that all MFOD Committee members, staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures and the organisations Code of Conduct;
- Ensuring that all adults within the MFOD community are aware of their obligation to report sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures;
- Providing support for staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection, child safety and well-being responsibilities;
- Annually assess and document the risk of child abuse within the various environments of the venture and processes the Eisteddfod and eradicate/minimise any risk to the extent possible;

All MFOD Committee, employees and volunteers must ensure that they:

- Promote child safety and well-being at all times
- Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct and MFOD's policy and procedures in relation to child protection and comply with all requirements;
- Report any suspicion that a child's safety is a risk to the MFOD Executive, or if they have formed a reasonable belief that physical or sexual abuse may have occurred, they must report this belief directly to the police;
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety

All MFOD Committee, employees and volunteers should be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within MFOD and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

All volunteers and committee members must have a current Working with Children Check (WWC) and must have MFOD added to their list of organisations. Evidence of this must be submitted or provided as requested to the committee prior to commencing any work throughout the event.

All volunteers must provide their name, email and mobile phone number before commencing any shifts. All volunteers have a responsibility to report any behaviour that is suspicious or inappropriate directly to a committee member. Where that committee member is not the Child Safety Officer, the committee member will notify one of the Child Safety Officers immediately.

Definitions



Child: means a person below the age of 18 years unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child.

Child protection: means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.

Child abuse: means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child.

Child Safety Officer: is any member of the Executive Committee including, President, Vice President, Secretary, Vice Secretary and Treasurer.

Child sexual assault: is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include: the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving child pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

Reasonable grounds for belief: is a belief based on reasonable grounds (see below) that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- (a) the child is in need of protection
- (b) the child has suffered or is likely to suffer "significant harm as a result of physical injury" **or**
- (c) parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

A "reasonable belief" or a "belief on reasonable grounds" is not the same as having proof, but it is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A "reasonable belief" is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

For example, a "reasonable belief" might be formed if:

- (a) a child states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
- (b) a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- (c) someone who knows the child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
- (d) professional observations of the child's behaviour or development lead a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused.



(e) signs of abuse lead to a belief a child has been physically or sexually abused.

Reporting

Any MFOD Committee member, staff, volunteer or contractor who becomes aware of abusive activity must immediately notify the Child Safety Officer, who must immediately notify the appropriate child protection service or the Police.

Investigating

If the appropriate child protection service or the Police decide to investigate a report, all MFOD Committee, employees, contractors and volunteers must cooperate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, The Executive Committee will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the Executive Committee may decide to conduct such an investigation. All MFOD Committee, employees, contractors and volunteers must cooperate fully with an investigation.

The Executive Committee will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential however, from time-to-time other members of staff may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

After initial review and determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the Executive Committee shall coordinate with the appropriate investigators and /or law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process, where deemed appropriate. All internal investigations will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.

Responding to the breaches of the Code of Conduct and/or the Child Safety Wellbeing Policy

Any breaches of the MFOD policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of MFOD membership. If it is alleged that a committee member, employee, contractor or volunteer may have committed an offence or have breached the MFOD child protection policies or /code of Conduct, the person concerned may be stood down (with or without pay if applicable) and not be permitted to continue in the organisations activities, while an investigation is conducted.

If the investigation concludes on the balance of probabilities an offence (or breach of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with MFOD. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.

Reviewing



Every two (2) years, and following every reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether the organisation's Child Safety and Wellbeing policies and procedures require modification to better protect children under MFOD's care.

Related Documents

This Policy must be read in conjunction with:

- The Laws of the Commonwealth and the State of Victoria
- MFOD Code of Conduct

Next Due for Review: AGM 2024 (For 2025 festival)