

Child Safety at Mirabel

The Mirabel Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation, assisting children who have been orphaned or abandoned due to parental illicit drug use and are living in kinship care.

The Mirabel Foundation provides a range of services for children and young people between the ages of 0 and 17 years. Our organisation operates in Victoria and NSW.

We are committed to delivering services in an environment that is caring, nurturing and safe. We actively listen to and empower children and we do not tolerate discriminatory practices. We have a zero tolerance approach to child abuse.

We recognise the importance of friendships for children and young people and in our work we will encourage support from peers, to help children and young people feel safe and be connected. We will advocate for and inform children and young people about their rights such as those in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child including:

- the right to participate and be heard
- the right to be safe and not harmed by anyone
- the right to live and grow up healthy
- the right to express their views and have a say about decisions that affect them, and
- the right to information, such as information about the policies and procedures that affect them.

Mirabel recognises the increased vulnerabilities of the children we work and that some children and families may require additional support and assistance. This includes Aboriginal children and families, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, families with disabilities and children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and/or intersex.

Our Board of Management endorses the Mirabel Foundation's commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. In particular, we are committed to safeguarding the children and young people in our care from the abuse and behaviours listed below.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is any act in which a person with power or authority over a child (female or male) uses a child for sexual gratification. An abuser can be an adult, adolescent or older child. Sexual abuse spans a range of contact and non-contact behaviour.

Non-contact behaviour includes:

- Making sexual comments (in person, in letters, or by telephone, text messages or email).

- Voyeurism – including commenting on physical attractiveness.
- Exposing a child to pornography.
- Nudity – an abuser exposing parts of their body or the child’s body.

Contact behaviour includes:

- Fondling or kissing.
- Sexual penetration.
- Exploiting a child through prostitution.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse occurs when a child is subjected to non-accidental physically aggressive acts. The abuser may inflict an injury intentionally, or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a child. Physically abusive behaviour includes (but is not limited to) shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, and kicking.

Emotional or psychological abuse

Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, threatened or put down. Often there is a pattern of emotional or psychological abuse, rather than a single incident. Such abuse may involve humiliating, terrorizing, name-calling, belittlement, inappropriate symbolic acts or continual coldness, to an extent that results in significant damage to the child’s physical, intellectual or emotional wellbeing and development. It can also include witnessing family violence, which places children and young people at increased risk of harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.

Neglect

Neglect occurs when a child is not provided with the basic necessities of life. Such neglect includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision to the extent that the child’s health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed.

We expect all Board of Management, staff and volunteers within our organisation, regardless of their role or level of responsibility, to act to safeguard children from such harm by:

- Adopting the practices and behaviour we have set as our standard when carrying out their roles.
- Reporting any abuse or neglect of which they become aware of to our management and/or to external authorities responsible for child protection or to police. This is regardless of whether that abuse is being perpetrated by someone within our organisation, or by those outside our organisation including those from the child’s family, extended family, their family’s extended network or strangers.
- Record all allegations, disclosures or concerns of abuse and action taken on the form, ‘Record of Child Abuse Allegation, Disclosure or Concern’.

The Mirabel Foundation has detailed policies outlining our practice and behaviour guidelines, and our procedures for responding to child abuse reports and allegations. These policies are available from our office.

Communicating this policy to all Mirabel personnel

Mirabel ensures that all involved Mirabel personnel (including but not limited to the Board of Management, employees and volunteers) have been provided with a copy of this policy before commencing with Mirabel. Mirabel's policies, procedures and guidelines are also available for viewing and download from Mirabel's server.

As part of Mirabel's commitment to this policy, all personnel are required to sign the Policies, Procedures and Guidelines checklist.

Our organisation's commitment to providing a safe environment for the children and young people to whom we provide services is endorsed and approved by the Board of Management of the Mirabel Foundation represented by Jane Rowe (Founder and CEO).

Monitoring the way we work

Mirabel is committed to maintaining and improving its provision and documents relating to the safety, well-being and best interests of children. Mirabel has two appointed coordinators that implement and maintain the documentation on how we work. The responsibilities of the coordinators include:

- Ensuring that Mirabel has up-to-date policies and procedures that aim to keep children involved in our programs safe from abuse and neglect.
- Ensuring that our policies and procedures are followed by all staff and volunteers and that all staff are committed to taking action as outlined in the policies and procedures.
- Ensuring that all policies and procedures are reviewed and updated annually and/or as needed (i.e. after legislative changes or any incidents relating to a child's wellbeing).

*Current Coordinators – Lena Hamilton (Finance Manager) and Nicole Patton (Manager Policy & Services)

Mirabel's Child Safety Policy for Children

We at the Mirabel Foundation believe children and young people who participate in any of our recreation or family support activities, should:

- Feel comfortable
- Be cared for
- Feel safe and be safe
- Feel included
- Have fun!

Everyone who works at Mirabel does their best to make sure children are protected from any harm.

It is NOT okay for anyone to hurt your feelings or your body.

It IS okay for you to say NO to an adult if they ask you to do something that makes you feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

If you ever feel unsafe or uncomfortable, we will listen to you and act to help you.

It is always okay to tell someone if you are not feeling comfortable or safe or if you have been hurt.

If you are unhappy with the way you are being treated, please tell a staff member or another adult that you trust. When you come on Mirabel activities, we will talk to you more about how you can do this.