

PURPOSE

Evolve Housing Vic Limited's (EHVL) role in child protection is to identify, assess and report to Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) any reasonable suspicion that a child is at risk of significant harm during the course of carrying out duties as an EHVL staff member and come into contact with children at risk.

POLICY REFERENCE	VHS234.1
POLICY OWNER	General Manager, Resident Services
APPROVED BY	Evolve Housing Ltd CEO
APPROVAL DATE	1 Mar 2022
REVIEW DATE	1 Mar 2025

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK POLICY

1. SCOPE

This policy applies to tenants, applicants and all staff.

2. DEFINITIONS

Under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic):

- A child is a person who is under the age of 17 years or, if a protection order applies to the child, a person who is under the age of 18 years.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

EHVL is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children. EHVL takes a zero tolerance approach to abuse or neglect of children. EHVL works in partnership with other agencies concerning the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children by:

- Recognising the signs of abuse and neglect and reporting the name or a description of a child reasonably suspected of being at risk or significant harm to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing;
- Working with government and non-government agencies to monitor instances where a child is reasonably suspected of being at risk of significance harm; and
- Making appropriate referrals to agencies that support children and families;
- Providing appropriate housing assistance to children and their families.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

If an employee has a reasonable suspicion or concern that a child is at risk of significant harm the employee should alert their supervisor and a report should be made to DFFH Child Protection or Victorian Police. As such, it is imperative that all housing professionals are aware of the process of notifying a child at risk as well being responsible for:

- Providing housing assistance to eligible households where children are at risk.
- Assisting children in the transition from out-of-home care to independent living in private and social housing
- Providing information to assist other agencies in conducting child protection risks
- Taking into consideration the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children when

assessing applications for priority assistance from eligible clients who are experiencing domestic violence.

- Referring families in crisis to appropriate support services.
- Seeking assistance from a local Child FIRST or the Orange Door where available.
- Reporting to Department of Family Fairness and Housing if the child is known to be currently under the care of the Minister.

5. REPORTING

The Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection Manual is the primary point of reference for child protection practitioners and managers employed by the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing regarding statutory child protection policy, procedures and supporting advice. It also contains protocols, practice resources and tools, and links to materials external to the manual that are relevant to child protection practice.

<https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/>

To report concerns that are life threatening, contact Victoria Police: 000

To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child outside of normal business hours, contact the After-Hours Child Protection Emergency Service on 13 12 78.

If you have significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child, but do not believe they are at risk of significant harm, and where the immediate safety of the child will not be compromised, a referral to Child FIRST or The Orange Door may be appropriate.

6. SAFEGUARDING OF PEOPLE WHO MAKE REPORTS

Reports relating to child wellbeing may be made on a confidential basis. In these circumstances the identity of an EHVL reporter cannot be disclosed without their permission unless directed by a Judge, Commissioner or other Government Agency pursuant to law. There are certain protections for reporters who have a significant concern for the wellbeing of a child under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic)

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information concerning a report is treated in the strictest confidence. EHVL staff must not inform parents or caregivers that DFFH Child Protection or the Police are investigating an incident of suspected child abuse or neglect. Any person making an inquiry or complaint concerning a report will be referred to DFFH Child Protection or the Police.

8. PRIVACY AND PERSONAL INFORMATION

EHVL respects the privacy of individuals and will treat personal information of individuals in accordance with the EHVL Privacy Policy. However, personal information may be disclosed to stop or prevent child abuse or to take action to prevent, detect, investigate, prosecute or punish criminal offences or breaches of law relating to serious improper conduct.

9. RELATED DOCUMENTATION

- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection Services
- Australian Privacy Principles
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic)
- Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection Manual
- Department of Health and Human Services Child FIRST
- Department of Health and Human Services the Orange Door

This policy is subject to change from time to time at the discretion of EHVL.

If you have any specific questions regarding this policy, please contact EHVL on 1800 693 865 or email your enquiry to myevolve@evolvehousing.com.au

10. VERSION CONTROL

VERSION	Date Approved	Author	Key Changes
1.0	1/03/2022	GAL	Policy adopted