

Beit Aharon Child Protection Policy 2022

Purpose & Scope

1. Beit Aharon Congregation (Beit Aharon) seeks to create an environment for everyone to feel safe and secure at all times. While this policy refers to children (under 18 years old), the guidelines equally apply to all vulnerable persons, including people with disabilities or from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This policy applies to all Beit Aharon personnel (Board members, rabbis, employees, permanent contractors and volunteers), members and visitors. The application of this policy is not limited to the Beit Aharon premises or to times of services, but rather to all Beit Aharon functions and events.
2. In our Australian context, it is crucial that the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children, young people, and adults are respected and valued. All programming must be culturally sensitive, and any discrimination towards or about Aboriginal people will not be tolerated.
3. Beit Aharon is committed to safeguarding children in our care from abuse and neglect. Abuse and neglect may be intentional and/or unintentional and includes, but is not limited to, emotional, verbal, intellectual, sexual, psychological or physical abuse and exposure to domestic violence. Child abuse refers to any act which endangers a child's physical or emotional health or development. It can be a single act but usually takes place over time. For further definitions of abuse and neglect, see Appendix A.

PROCEDURES

4. In addition to our initial risk assessment of Beit Aharon's current premises, Beit Aharon undertakes to revisit a risk assessment if any temporary or permanent changes to the physical premises take place, and to assess any alternate locations in which Beit Aharon programming involving vulnerable people will take place.
5. It is the policy of Beit Aharon that no person attending or preparing for Beit Aharon services or events is to be alone in a closed room with a child or grandchild other than their own. Further, they are not to use inappropriate language in the child's presence, nor engage in grooming for the purpose of preparing a child for a sexual encounter.
6. Beit Aharon children's services and programs will take place in rooms where the door will remain open at all times. Alternatively, doors can be closed if they are unlocked and there are windows that allow people outside to easily see what is happening inside.
7. Physical contact of staff with children is strictly limited to contact that is required for an educational purpose and should be kept to a minimum (eg. tagging someone in a game, assisting putting costume on over clothes for a game).
8. Programs will only be conducted when more than one child is present or, in the event where there is only one child participating in a program, when their parent/guardian is present.
9. If a child needs to leave the program to go to the toilet, they will always be sent with another child.

10. In the event that children are being collected from a Beit Aharon event and there is only one child remaining to be collected, the Beit Aharon employee/volunteer/contractor will wait with the child in a public space (eg. outside the building).

11. In the event that an employee/volunteer/contractor engaged by Beit Aharon to work with children is requested to drive children to/from a Beit Aharon related event:

- A) the parent/guardian of the children must provide express written permission;
- B) there must be more than one child being transported throughout the journey.

12. Communications between employees/volunteers/contractors engaged by Beit Aharon and families are to be conducted between our staff and parents/guardians of the children who attend Beit Aharon programs. In the rare circumstance that it is necessary to directly contact a children's program participant (eg. organising a B'nei Mitzvah program activity, etc), communications should preferably be conducted by email or text message, preferably including another volunteer or staff member in the communication, preferably including another volunteer or staff member in the communication, and a copy of these communications should be retained by the employees/volunteers/ contractors for the duration of their engagement by the Shule.

13. The process for dealing with any People of Concern is delineated in Appendix C.

14. Children and families will be informed of the child protection policy and encouraged to report to the rabbi and/or board members anything that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL

15. Members of the Beit Aharon community must not intentionally fail to protect a child from significant harm arising out of a physical injury or sexual abuse which may harm the child's physical development or health. It is a criminal offence for any person that owes a child a duty of care to fail to comply with this obligation. If any member of the Beit Aharon community has any concerns regarding the health, safety or wellbeing of a child they must take immediate action in accordance with this Policy.

16. Beit Aharon encourages all persons, who believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection, to report their concerns to the Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection Unit (DH&HS Child Protection), Victoria Police or Child FIRST.

17. It shall be noted that in Victoria, the following are Mandatory Reporters:

- Registered medical practitioners
- Midwives
- Registered nurses
- A person registered as a teacher under the Education, Training and Reform Act 2006 or teachers granted permission to teach under that Act
- Principals of government or non-government schools
- Members of the police force

Failure by a Mandatory Reporter to report a belief based on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection may render them liable to a criminal offence.

18. Any person, whether a Mandatory Reporter or not, is required to report to Victoria Police as soon as practicable if they know or reasonably believe that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult (including a student over 18 years old) against a child under the age of 16. It is a criminal offence to fail to comply with this obligation.

19. Any person, whether a Mandatory Reporter or not, who has the power to reduce or remove a substantial risk that a child may fall victim to a sexual offence committed by an adult must not negligently fail to reduce or remove the risk. It is a criminal offence to fail to comply with this obligation.

CONSEQUENCES

20. Disciplinary measures may be imposed on any person for a breach or failure to act in accordance with this Policy, including, but not limited to:

- summary dismissal, suspension or termination of membership or employment
- requiring a verbal and/or written apology
- requiring counseling to address behaviour
- withdrawal of any awards and recognitions
- any other form of discipline that Beit Aharon considers reasonable and appropriate

Admission to Beit Aharon services, programs & events whether conducted at the Beit Aharon premises or elsewhere is at the discretion of the President and Executive of the Beit Aharon Board. From time to time, information may be received regarding a registered sex offender, a person facing charges of sexual offences or about whom an allegation of sexual misconduct has been made. The President and the Executive reserve the right to undertake an appropriate investigation and to determine the suitability of any person seeking admission.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

21. All children in attendance at Beit Aharon services or functions are to remain in the care and control of their parents/guardians. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that their children are safe and secure at all times.

22. Beit Aharon does not offer child-minding services. A parent/guardian is required to be in the presence of their children at all times. A parent/guardian may appoint another person to care for their child at Beit Aharon, however Beit Aharon is not responsible for the safety or security of the child in these circumstances.

23. Parents/guardians are expected to accompany their children to use the toilet facilities and to change their own children's nappies/clothes where appropriate. A parent/guardian may appoint another person to undertake these duties however Beit Aharon is not responsible for the safety or security of the child in these circumstances. If a parent chooses to allow a child to use the toilet on their own, they should use facilities that are not used by adults. At Beit Aharon, the best option is to use the disabled toilet which is past the larger toilet blocks. An employee/volunteer/contractor of Beit Aharon who is present at Beit Aharon in their role to work with children, is not permitted to take children to the toilet or change nappies/clothes.

24. Beit Aharon provides child education services. When engaging new employees/volunteers/contractors to work with children, publicity will include our commitment to child protection. In addition, a representative of Beit Aharon will interview candidates and analyse the past work experience with children of each candidate. Where applicable, at least two previous employers and two referees will be contacted regarding the candidates suitability for the position. Any employees/volunteers/contractors who are aged over 18 years old are required to have a valid Working With Children's check and provide a criminal record check. They will be informed of our Child Protection Policy and our Code of Conduct. Any candidate with prior convictions relating to violent or sexually related offending, will not be engaged or employed by Beit Aharon.

INCIDENTS

25. Beit Aharon will not dismiss any concerns raised in relation to the care and safety of children on our premises or at our activities. Any parent/guardian/child educator/facilitator or observer who notices concerning behavior in relation to the care and safety of a child while at Beit Aharon, is to report concerns to the President of Beit Aharon immediately. The President will determine the appropriate course of action. In the event that the President is not considered to be an independent party to the investigation, the Executive will appoint an independent investigator to investigate any alleged incident. In the event that criminal offences are suspected, the Victoria Police will be contacted immediately.

26. Any incident reported, whether by a Beit Aharon employee or attendee, will be documented at the earliest possible time. To the extent feasible and appropriate, families will be involved in dealing with incidents affecting their children. The privacy and confidentiality of all involved in the alleged incident, including the reporter of the alleged incident, will be respected however all relevant information must be provided to any investigation arising from a report of an alleged incident.

27. Any employee/volunteer/contractor being investigated will be automatically suspended from work duties whilst under investigation. If the matter is referred to police and the employee/volunteer/contractor is ultimately found guilty of committing sexual abuse (either by an internal investigation or by a court), their employment/work duties will be automatically terminated.

STAFF EXPECTATIONS

28. All current employees/volunteers/contractors engaged by Beit Aharon to provide child education services and/or work with children on an ongoing basis are expected to accept the Code of Conduct (Appendix B) and will meet annually to review the Child Protection Policy.

29. All employees/volunteers/contractors engaged by Beit Aharon will be mindful of not putting themselves in a position where their intentions could be misconstrued or where they could be vulnerable to accusations of abuse of children in their care. In addition, they will be given resources and or training regarding how to identify signs of abuse.

30. The Child Protection Policy and complaints process will be displayed on the Beit Aharon website, noticeboard and emailed yearly to all members of the community.

31. The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed by the board annually to ensure that it is compliant with all relevant child/vulnerable person legislation. Feedback and involvement will be sought from families

and children as part of this process. Any previous incidents will be analyzed to see if systems and processes can be improved in the future.

32. Beit Aharon thanks to Shira Melbourne, Temple Beth Israel, and Blake Street Hebrew Congregation, whose child protection policies were reviewed during the formulation of these policies.

Appendix A: Definitions

Vulnerable Person

“Vulnerable Person” means: (a) a Child or Children; or (b) an individual aged 18 years and above who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is any act in which a person with power or authority over a child involves the child in sexual activity. An abuser can be an adult (including a parent or caregiver), adolescent or older child. Sexual abuse spans a range of contact and non-contact behaviour, including, but not limited to, the following:

Non-contact behaviour:

- making sexual comments (orally or in writing, including by telephone, text messages or email)
- voyeurism including commenting on physical attractiveness
- exposing a child to pornography
- nudity by an abuser exposing parts of their body or the child’s body
- exposure of the child to pornography

Contact behaviour:

- kissing
- fondling of the child’s genitals, breasts, or buttocks
- masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or other object
- exploiting a child through prostitution

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from an injury. The injury may be inflicted intentionally or may be the inadvertent consequences of physical punishment or physically aggressive treatment of a child. Physically abusive behaviour includes but is not limited to shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning and kicking. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.

Emotional or Psychological Abuse

Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when a child is rejected, threatened, humiliated, terrorised, belittled or subjected to name calling, putdowns or coldness in manner (or other similar behaviour), and that behaviour results in significant damage to the child’s physical, intellectual or emotional wellbeing and development. Often there is a pattern of emotional or psychological abuse rather than a single incident. Witnessing family violence is a specific form of emotional or psychological abuse. Family violence is defined as violence between family members or extended family or those filling the role of family in a child’s life. Exposure to family violence places children at increased risk of physical injury

and harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.

Neglect

Neglect is the failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life such as 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.

Appendix B: Code of Conduct

Code of Conduct for Beit Aharon Personnel, Members and Visitors

The Beit Aharon Code of Conduct has been developed to protect children and vulnerable people engaged in Beit Aharon services, programs and activities

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Application

All Beit Aharon personnel, congregational members and visitors attending Beit Aharon services, programs and events, are required to comply with this Code.

Beit Aharon endeavours to ensure that all personnel and any congregational members directly supervising children are listed on the Beit Aharon Working With Children Check Register (WWCC)

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APPENDIX B: Conduct and Bearing of all Personnel, Members and Visitors

Acceptable Conduct

It is expected that all personnel, members and visitors will:

- behave in a manner that promotes a child safe environment and a culture of respect for the customs and practices of the community
- ensure that their actions will not endanger the health, safety and wellbeing of themselves and/or others
- behave with courtesy and consideration for others, not acting in any way that would demean, shame, embarrass others
- refrain from all forms of bullying and harassment
- use language and tone of voice that is clear and affirming in communicating with children
- ensure that all written and electronic communication to primary aged children is copied to their parents
- ensure that all written and electronic communication relates directly to Beit Aharon authorized activity and:
 - if sent to primary school age children is copied to their parents and the Beit Aharon office address
 - if sent to post primary school age children, is copied in to the Rabbi and the Beit Aharon Education officer address
- ensure that any photographs or video recordings made of any children show them appropriately clothed and respectfully posed.

Unacceptable Conduct

Unacceptable conduct includes but is not limited to:

- touching, handling, pushing or otherwise physically or sexually engaging with children, or others in a manner that is inappropriate (e.g. tickling, kissing, touching a child's genitals or breasts, oral sex or intercourse with a child) and may endanger the safety, health and wellbeing of that person
- sexualised non-contact behaviour such as flirting, sexual innuendo, exposure to pornography or nudity
- assisting with personal hygiene such as toileting without parental consent and where the child does not request assistance

Appendix C: Policy Regarding a Person of Concern

A person of concern (POC) is any person who has engaged in criminal sexual behaviour and/or is reasonably suspected of engaging or seeking to engage in harmful sexual behaviour toward a child or vulnerable person.

Some indications that someone may be considered a POC include (but are not limited to):

- > criminal charges relating to sexual offences against children and/or adults
- > conviction for sexual offences relating to children and/or adults
- > placement on the Register of Sexual Offenders
- > suspension of a Working with Children card
- > negative notice for Working with Children card
- > refusal of a positive Working with Children card
- > not having a negative notice or a suspension revoked
- > recording on the National Coordinated Criminal History Check
- > concerns in the congregation or wide Jewish community that the safety of others may be at risk

Since a POC is deemed a risk to the safety of others, safeguards must be placed around their attendance and participation at any synagogue events, activities and programs. Our POC Policy places conditions to restrict the person of concern's behaviours so that they might more safely be part of our community.

A POC is not permitted to obtain or continue to hold any leadership role or position in the synagogue or to be given any tasks or functions to perform that could be perceived by others in the synagogue and/or the wider community as exercising leadership in the community. This includes (but is not limited to) leading prayers, assisting in children's programs, and coordinating meals/functions.

A POC can only participate in the life of the Beit Aharon community in accordance with the terms of a signed Safety Agreement (SA) that is established between Beit Aharon and the POC. If the POC is a minor or a vulnerable adult, their legal guardians will be party to discussions and arrangements. The synagogue will only offer an SA if it deems that such an agreement will be sufficient in maintaining the safety of the Beit Aharon community.

While interim safety arrangements will be put in place when the shule leadership is made aware of the presence of a POC, and pastoral care will also be made available to the POC as needed, relevant parties will work as quickly as possible to organise and sign an enduring SA with the POC. Suspected breaches of an SA will be investigated by Beit Aharon leadership or their chosen representative, and there will be zero tolerance of any confirmed breaches.

Interim measures include removing a POC from any possible leadership role, informing them of situations/programs that they must avoid (such as children's programs), and organizing for on-site monitoring that they are complying with Beit Aharon's child safety policy. All measures will be instituted in a fashion that maintains the POC's privacy as much as possible. These same measures, as well as other arrangements deemed necessary by the synagogue, will be formalized as part of the SA.

- Beit Aharon acknowledges the fine work of the Uniting Church of Australia, whose National Person of Concern Policy forms the basis for and content of Beit Aharon's POC policy.