

Beit Aharon Child Protection Policy 2017

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.

2. 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.

3. 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 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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 counselling to address behaviour
- withdrawal of any awards and recognitions
- any other form of discipline that Beit Aharon considers reasonable and appropriate

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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. 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.

13. Beit Aharon provides child education services. When engaging new employees/volunteers/contractors to work with children, 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. Any candidate with prior convictions relating to violent or sexually related offending, will not be engaged or employed by Beit Aharon.

14. All current employees/volunteers/contractors engaged by Beit Aharon to provide child education services and/or work with children on an ongoing basis will meet annually to review the Child Protection Policy.

15. 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.

16. 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, and a copy of these communications should be retained by the employees/volunteers/contractors for the duration of their engagement by the Shule.

17. 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.
18. Physical contact 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).
19. 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.
20. If a child needs to leave the program to go to the toilet, they will always be sent with another child.
21. 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).
22. 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.
23. 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 where 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 where criminal offences are suspected, the Victoria Police will be contacted immediately.
24. Any incident reported, whether by a Beit Aharon employee or attendee, will be documented at the earliest possible time. 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.
25. 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.
26. The Child Protection Policy will be displayed on the Beit Aharon website, noticeboard and emailed yearly to all members of the community.
27. The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed by the board annually to ensure that it is compliant with all relevant child/vulnerable person legislation.

Beit Aharon thanks Shira Hadasha and Temple Beth Israel, who made their own child protection policies available 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.