Code of Conduct

July 2026

ECMS is committed to supporting positive outcomes for children through safe, inclusive and high-quality early childhood education and care. We recognise that the way we work, interact and make decisions impacts children and families, shapes trust within our communities, and contributes to a safe, respectful and inclusive workplace culture.

This Code of Conduct

- Provides a framework for expected behaviour and decision-making
- Outlines the standards of conduct expected in all ECMS workplaces and activities
- Sits alongside our policies and procedures
- Supports our commitment to safety, inclusion and quality practice
- Requires day-to-day actions and decisions to meet professional, ethical, legal and organisational standards
- Applies to anyone within an ECMS workplace, including employees, Board members, contractors, consultants, volunteers, students and others acting on behalf of ECMS
- Is not an exhaustive guide to every circumstance or decision.

1. Your role and responsibilities

1.1. Understand, embrace and follow this *Code of Conduct* at all times
1.2. Act consistently with ECMS policies, procedures and legal obligations
1.3. Complete all mandatory training, including child safety, cultural safety, safeguarding, privacy and workplace conduct training, and apply learnings to your daily practice and decision-making
1.4. Reflect expected behaviours in all interactions with children, families, colleagues and community members
1.5. Act as a positive role model and demonstrate behaviour consistent with this Code of Conduct, ECMS values and expectations
1.6. Maintain professional boundaries and prevent situations that could place a child, family member, colleague or other person at risk of harm or create the perception of inappropriate behaviour

1.7. Promptly report concerns, misconduct, child safety risks or breaches of this Code
1.8. Actively challenge, interrupt or report behaviour that may place a child at risk of harm
1.9. Actively engage in continuous learning and quality improvement, and seek opportunities to review and improve practice to support positive outcomes for children and families

2. Expected conduct

2.1. Promote the safety, wellbeing, rights and dignity of children, families, staff and others
2.2. Comply with applicable legislation, regulations, standards and ECMS policies and procedures. This includes upholding professional conduct in interactions with children, safety in physical spaces (e.g. excursions, water play, toileting, transportation, play areas) and digital environments (e.g. online learning platforms, use of images, communication technology)
2.3. Act with honesty and integrity
2.4. Treat others with respect, courtesy, professionalism and fairness
2.5. Communicate openly, constructively and without bias
2.6. Support children's voice, participation, agency and inclusion
2.7. Create and maintain safe, healthy, inclusive and culturally responsive environments
2.8. Respect diversity and inclusion and not discriminate against anyone because of personal preference or characteristics such as race, gender, disability, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, marital status, family status or political belief.
2.9. Respect differences of opinion and use appropriate processes to resolve conflict, concerns and grievances
2.10. Identify, declare and appropriately manage conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest occurs when personal, financial, family, social, professional or other interests could influence, or reasonably be perceived to influence, the impartial performance of your duties or decision-making. Employees must promptly disclose conflicts and cooperate with any measures implemented to manage or resolve them
2.11. Represent ECMS professionally and positively in public forums, including on online platforms and social media
2.12. Protect privacy and maintain confidentiality in accordance with legal and organisational requirements
2.13. Comply with reasonable and lawful instructions and directions

2.14. Contribute to continuous improvement and a culture of safety, inclusion, accountability and learning.

3. Child Safe Conduct

ECMS is committed to a child-safe culture where children are valued, respected, included, empowered and protected from harm.

All persons covered by this Code share responsibility for promoting children's rights, safety, wellbeing and participation.

You must:

3.1. Promote and uphold the rights, safety, wellbeing and participation of all children
3.2. Listen to children, take their views seriously and respond appropriately to concerns about their safety and wellbeing
3.3. Promptly report concerns, allegations, disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, neglect, harm or exploitation in accordance with legislative requirements and ECMS policies
3.4. Understand and comply with mandatory reporting, Reportable Conduct Scheme and child protection obligations
3.5. Identify, assess and actively manage risks to children's safety and wellbeing in physical and online environments, including when using digital technologies, photographs or video, transport, or engaging in off-site or higher-risk physical activities
3.6. Supervise and assess environments where children may be at higher risk of harm - such as during excursions, water play, toileting, rest time or when using digital devices - and immediately address any unsafe or unsupervised situations
3.7. Treat children and families with dignity, respect and fairness
3.8. Promote children's independence, agency, participation and decision-making appropriate to their age and development. This includes displaying respectful behaviour before engaging in physical activities such as personal care and physical affection
3.9. Support children's rights to express their views and participate in decisions affecting them. This includes listening and responding with care and empathy, especially when they, verbally or non-verbally, communicate they do not feel safe or well
3.10. Maintain professional boundaries and exercise sound professional judgement in all interactions
3.11. Promote cultural safety and inclusion for all children, particularly:
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

- children with disability
- children of all genders and gender identities
- children who have experienced trauma, adversity or vulnerability
- children and families of diverse religious, spiritual and cultural backgrounds

3.12. Promote respectful relationships and gender equality
3.13. Ensure volunteers, students and visitors are appropriately supervised and supported when interacting with children
3.14. Use only authorised ECMS systems, platforms and processes when communicating or sharing information about children

You must not:

3.15. Engage in any unlawful conduct with or towards a child
3.16. Physically, sexually, emotionally or psychologically abuse, harm, neglect or exploit a child. This includes:
- humiliating, shaming, threatening or belittling a child
- using inappropriate language, tone or behaviour
- Isolating, ignoring or excluding a child as punishment
- rough handling or inappropriate physical force or restraint (except where needed to prevent immediate harm)
- physical punishment
- grooming behaviours, such as giving gifts, special attention or secrets to build an inappropriate relationship
- making sexual comments, jokes or gestures
- exposing children to inappropriate materials
- any form of sexual contact or behaviour involving a child

3.17. Ignore, minimise or fail to respond appropriately to concerns relating to a child's safety, wellbeing or rights
3.18. Develop overly familiar, exclusive or inappropriate relationships with children
3.19. Show favouritism or treat children unequally without a legitimate reason
3.20. Be alone with a child where there is no educational, care or operational reason and appropriate safeguards are not in place
3.21. Arrange personal contact or communication, including online contact, with children or families outside professional responsibilities. Examples include:
- paid or unpaid babysitting
- providing personal contact details
- connecting via personal social media accounts
- communicating through personal messaging platforms
- attending private family celebrations

3.22. Use personal devices to photograph, film, store or transmit images or information about children
3.23. Post, share or comment on images or content relating to children or families on personal social media or messaging apps
3.24. Share personal or sensitive information about a child, including images, unless authorised by law, policy or role requirements
3.25. Work with children while affected by alcohol, illegal drugs or other substances that impair judgement or safe performance of duties
3.26. Discourage a child's independence by unnecessarily performing tasks the child can reasonably undertake themselves.

4. Unacceptable conduct

ECMS does not tolerate conduct that breaches legislation, Child Safe Standards, professional codes, ECMS policies or this Code.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

4.1. Bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation or racism
4.2. Violent, aggressive, abusive, unsafe, intimidating or threatening conduct
4.3. Offensive, demeaning, humiliating or derogatory language or behaviour
4.4. Retaliation against a person who raises a concern, complaint, allegation or participates in an investigation
4.5. Allowing another person to engage with children in unsafe, unsupervised or inappropriate ways
4.6. Theft, fraud, dishonest or misuse of organisational resources
4.7. Possessing, using or being impaired by alcohol, prohibited drugs or illegal substances while undertaking duties
4.8. Failure to report suspected child abuse, misconduct or breaches of this Code
4.9. Failure to comply with legal, regulatory or policy obligations
4.10. Any conduct that may damage the safety, reputation or integrity of ECMS

5. Reporting Concerns

All concerns, complaints, grievances and breaches of this Code must be reported as soon as reasonably practicable.

Concerns should ordinarily be raised with:

- Your manager
- A senior manager
- The People team
- The Risk and Compliance team

If you are unsure if the matter is reportable, seek advice immediately.

No person will be disadvantaged for making a genuine report or raising a concern in good faith.

Failure to report certain child safety matters may constitute a criminal offence under Victorian legislation including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences.

6. Breaches of the Code of Conduct

Breaches of this Code will be assessed and managed in accordance with applicable legislation, ECMS policies and procedural requirements.

Depending on the nature and seriousness of the breach, outcomes may include:

- Education or coaching
- Performance management
- Disciplinary action
- Termination of employment or engagement
- Referral to regulatory authorities
- Referral to Victoria Police or other external agencies

Where allegations involve reportable conduct, ECMS will comply with Reportable Conduct Scheme requirements and relevant regulatory obligations.

Associated ECMS Policies (on Cornerstone)

- Performance Policy
- Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Confidential Information Policy
- Privacy Policy

- Reportable Conduct Policy
- Interactions with Children Policy
- Incident Reporting Policy
- Child Safe Policy
- Child Safe Culture Policy
- Child Safety Commitment Statement