



Code of Conduct: Child Safety Melbourne Debating Academy

Effective as of 29 January 2024



Introduction

The Melbourne Debating Academy is unwavering in its commitment to ensuring the safety, well-being, and empowerment of all children participating in its programs. This concise Child Safety Code of Conduct outlines the expected behaviours and responsibilities of participants, adults, and Staff to foster a secure and nurturing environment.

Participants Must:

1. **Respect Others:** Treat everyone with dignity, kindness, and respect, creating an inclusive and supportive atmosphere.
2. **Report Concerns:** Promptly report any safety concerns to a staff member or the Academy.
3. **Follow Instructions:** Adhere to instructions provided by Staff for their safety and the safety of others during activities and events.
4. **Engage Respectfully in Debates:** Foster constructive dialogue, avoiding offensive language or content that may make others uncomfortable.

Staff and Adults Must:

1. **Prioritise Child Safety:** Ensure the safety and well-being of children at all times by taking all reasonable steps necessary.
2. **Model Appropriate Behaviour:** Set a positive example by displaying respectful and inclusive behaviour to all.
3. **Report Suspicions:** Report any child abuse, exploitation and/or misconduct promptly to Academy staff, the MDA Office, and/or designated authorities.
4. **Follow Child Safety Code of Conduct:** Adhere to the MDA Code of Conduct: Child Safety, ensuring compliance with standards and regulations.
5. **Maintain Respectful Relationships:** Avoid developing any 'special' relationships with children that may be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming'.
6. **Take Reasonable Steps to Protect Children:** Take all necessary steps to prevent a child from being put in a position where they can be abused, exploited or put in foreseeable danger.



7. **Listen to Children's Concerns:** Pay attention to genuine concerns or complaints from children.
8. **Respect Privacy:** Avoid unnecessary disclosure of information and comply with all reporting obligations.
9. **Minimise Opportunities for Vulnerability:** Take steps to minimise circumstances where children could be left in a vulnerable position or alone with an adult.
10. **Avoid Unnecessary Physical Contact:** Refrain from being unnecessarily physical with children, especially in a manner that is intimate.
11. **Respect Boundaries:** Do not do personal things for a child that they can and/ or should do themselves, such as help them change or use the bathroom.
12. **Use Appropriate Language:** Do not use inappropriate language in the presence of a child or at a school.
13. **Conduct Suitable Discussions:** Refrain from engaging in discussions unsuitable for a child to hear in the presence of a child or at a school.
14. **Non-Discrimination:** Do not discriminate against any child for any reason.
15. **Avoid Expressing Personal Views:** Refrain from expressing personal views on politics, culture, race, gender, or sexuality in the presence of a child.
16. **No Disparagement:** Do not disparage a child in any way.
17. **Boundaries in Contact:** Do not have any contact with a child or their family outside the bounds of an MDA program, activity or event.



Staff Must:

1. **Knowledge of Policies:** Be fully informed about and agree with the MDA Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct before engaging with children in any capacity.
2. **Commitment to Child Safety:** Actively promote the safety and inclusion of children, upholding the principles outlined in the Academy's policy array.
3. **Compliance with Working with Children Check:** Possess and maintain a valid Working with Children Check.
4. **Mandatory Reporting:** Promptly report any allegations or suspicions of child abuse, exploitation and/ or misconduct to the MDA Office and/ or relevant authorities.

Risk Management:

1. **Thorough Risk Assessment:** Conduct comprehensive risk assessments for all activities, events, and operations to eliminate or minimise identified risks.
2. **Collaboration with Stakeholders:** Engage with schools and clients to gain insights into potential risks and develop targeted mitigation strategies and measures.
3. **Responsive Approach:** In case of incidents or complaints, conduct a thorough review of risk assessments and protocols to continuously improve risk management strategies and processes.

Content Management:

1. **Inclusive Motion Selection:** Select age-appropriate motions designed to foster inclusivity.
2. **Inclusive Material:** Ensure all resources disseminated to children are age-appropriate and cater to participants of all backgrounds and attributes.
3. **Consideration for Vulnerable Backgrounds:** Be sensitive to the potential impact on students from vulnerable backgrounds, ensuring equal participation and engagement.



Reporting Obligations:

1. **Prompt Reporting:** Academy staff must promptly report any allegations or suspicions of child abuse, exploitation and/ or misconduct to the MDA Office or a designated authority.
2. **Immediate Danger:** Staff that believe a child is in immediate danger should call 000 before consulting with the Academy.

Handling of Reports:

1. **Confidentiality:** Handle reports confidentially, considering the potential impact on the child or young adult involved.
2. **Disclosure as Required by Law:** Redact personal information to protect involved parties and make disclosures as required by law.

Complaints Handling:

1. **Fair and Transparent Procedure:** Commit to a fair and transparent process for handling complaints against Staff, protecting the rights of employees and the safety of involved children.
2. **Reporting Mechanism:** Encourage individuals with complaints against Staff to report through established channels for a fair assessment.
3. **Timely Resolution:** Dedicate to resolving complaints promptly and providing regular updates to involved parties.

Privacy:

1. **Data Protection:** Adhere to privacy obligations, by securing the personal information of Staff, clients, and participants.
2. **Third-Party Data Sharing:** Conduct data sharing with third parties in line with legal responsibilities and ethical considerations.



Conclusion

The Melbourne Debating Academy affirms its unwavering commitment to the safety, well-being, and empowerment of every child engaged in our programs, events, and activities. This Child Safety Code of Conduct serves as a steadfast guide, outlining the expected behaviours and responsibilities of participants, adults, and Staff. This document should be read alongside and understood in conjunction with the Academy's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and the Academy's Child Safety Policy. By fostering an environment built on respect, inclusivity, and vigilance, we strive to ensure a secure and nurturing space for all. The Academy is dedicated to continuously improving our practices, prioritising transparency, and promptly addressing any concerns. Together, we stand united in creating an environment where every child can thrive, express themselves, and engage in the transformative power of debate, free from harm or compromise.

Effective Date

This Code of Conduct shall take effect as of Monday 29 January 2024.

Sebastian Nugara

Founder, Managing Director | Melbourne Debating Academy