



**Tomorrow Today Foundation  
Procedure Documentation**

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| <b>Policy:</b>      | Child-Focused Complaints Policy and Procedure   | <b>Last updated:</b>     | NEW       |
| <b>Category:</b>    | Human Resources   | <b>Status:</b>           | Approved  |
| <b>Purpose:</b>     | To provide a process for children to raise safety concerns or complaints about Tomorrow Today.  | <b>Approved by:</b>      | Board     |
|                     |   | <b>Endorsement Date:</b> | 15.7.2022 |
| <b>Definitions:</b> | <p>A <b>concern</b> refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.</p> <p>A <b>complaint</b> is an expression of dissatisfaction to Tomorrow Today, related to one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our services or dealings with individuals</li> <li>• Allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, a volunteer or another individual associated with the organisation</li> <li>• Disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child</li> <li>• The conduct of a child at the organisation</li> <li>• The inadequate handling of a prior concern</li> <li>• General concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity</li> </ul> | <b>Review Date:</b>      | July 2024 |

**CHILD-FOCUSED COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

**Background**

Tomorrow Today is committed to creating a child-safe organisation. We encourage and welcome the reporting of concerns, and seek to respond to complaints promptly, thoroughly and fairly, and take immediate action to protect children at risk.

**Objective**

This policy aims to provide a robust process to receive, record, manage solve and report on complaints made by children or their families/carers on their behalf, about Tomorrow Today. This policy defines:

- Roles and responsibilities of Tomorrow Today personnel
- Approaches to dealing with different types of complaints
- Obligations to act, report and record

- Timeframes
- Communication, referral and support for
  - Staff and volunteers
  - Children and young people, and their families

### Scope

This policy applies to:

- Children, their families and carers who participate in activities conducted by Tomorrow Today
- All staff members, contractors and volunteers

In this procedure, 'workplace' includes working on site or off-site.

### Who can report a Complaint?

- Parent or carer
- Child
- Staff member or volunteer
- Others in the community

### Complaints raised by adult survivors

Tomorrow Today acknowledges complaints, safety concerns and disclosure of abuse may also be raised by adults. Adults may be victim-survivors of abuse suffered when they were a child and will receive a sensitive, respectful and supportive response from our organisation.

### What can be Reported as a Complaint?

Any concerns or complaints, including:

- Tomorrow Today's services or dealings with individuals
- allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, a volunteer or another individual associated with Tomorrow Today
- disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child
- the conduct of another child participating in Tomorrow Today's programs
- the inadequate handling of a prior concern
- general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

### How a Complaint can be received:

Children will often raise concerns with the person they trust most in the organisation. All staff and volunteers should see themselves as channels for complaints from children. Complaints may be a face-to-face verbal report, letter, email, telephone call, meeting

### Areas of Responsibility

- All Tomorrow Today staff: Can receive disclosures, complaints and safety concerns. Staff must inform the Education Benalla Program (EBP) Manager for follow up.
- Volunteers: Must refer any disclosure, complaints and safety concern raised to a Tomorrow Today staff member.
- Education Benalla Program Staff: Can triage the initial complaint using the Complaint Record Form.

- Education Benalla Program Manager will document complaints made via electronic methods such as telephone, email, website and social media. The EBP Manager will alert the Executive Officer (EO) to all complaints.
- Executive Officer: In discussion with the EBP Manager, will decide whether a complaint is required to be officially reported to external authorities.
- Board Members: Are to ensure the EO maintains the Child-Friendly Complaints Policy and Procedure

## COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

Unless the complaint is resolved at first point of contact, details of the complaint should be recorded along with other relevant information. The following chart outlines the process Tomorrow Today will use to receive, report and resolve complaints raised by children :

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| <b>Initial Response</b> | On receipt of a safety concern or complaint from a child or young person, any immediate risks must be assessed to ensure safety of all children (not just the alleged victim) and any other affected people. Depending on the nature and seriousness of the complaint or safety concern it may be necessary to:   |                       |
|                         | <b>Action</b>   | <b>Who</b>            |
|                         | <b>Call 000 for urgent Victoria Police assistance if you have concerns that are life threatening or posing an immediate risk to the health and safety of anyone</b>   | Everyone              |
|                         | Inform the child's parents and carers about the complaint or safety concern, unless the disclosure is related to abuse within the family  | EBP Manager           |
|                         | Keep children in the organisation safe, including while the complaint is investigated   | All Staff             |
|                         | Consider if evidence needs to be immediately secured (for example, emails, downloads) to preserve any future investigation (criminal, child protection or organisation) from being compromised  | EBP Manager/EO        |
| <b>Risk Assessment</b>  | After the initial response, a risk assessment must be carried out to evaluate if a report/incident should be formally considered a complaint requiring investigation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any immediate risk to the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person or other person.</li> <li>• Can be managed by Tomorrow Today, or must be referred to an external authority/organisation</li> <li>• Requires additional support for the child or young person affected by the complaint (or other children involved or impacted)</li> <li>• Requires any support for Tomorrow Today staff or volunteers</li> </ul> | All Staff/EBP Manager |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires any information to be immediately secured/protected/kept confidential</li> <li>• Involves more than one issue, do they need to be separately addressed</li> </ul> <p><b>Note: If any of the answers on the incident are responded to as 'yes' in the risk assessment, a <u>Child Complaint Record Form</u> must be completed.</b></p>  |                                      |
| <p><b>If a complaint involves staff or volunteers</b></p>                  | <p>When a complaint is raised against a staff member that is serious enough to warrant an investigation, the employee should generally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be told about the details of the complaint</li> <li>• have an appropriate amount of time to consider the complaint</li> <li>• be able to ask that an appropriate support person is present if they are interviewed by EO/EBP Manager/Police?</li> <li>• be invited to respond, either verbally or in writing, to the complaint and any adverse information that is credible, relevant and significant</li> <li>• have an investigator who is impartial.</li> </ul> <p>The <b>Checklist for Responding to Serious Child-Related Conduct of Staff or Volunteers</b> (published by the Commission for Children and Young People) will inform this process.</p> <p>Potential risks to children participating in Tomorrow Today programs may arise if a staff member or volunteer is the subject of an allegation. The Executive Officer will refer the staff and/or volunteer to the Child Safe Code of Conduct and decide whether any of the following actions should be followed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• standing down the person subject to allegation during an investigation</li> <li>• altering their duties including not permitting them to engage with children</li> <li>• not permitting them to have unsupervised contact with children</li> <li>• removing their access to any sensitive IT systems, files or facilities</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> If a report or complaint is made against the Executive Officer, the Chair of Tomorrow Today will take responsibility for carriage of the processes outlined in this document.</p> | <p>Executive Officer/Chair</p>       |
| <p><b>If a complaint involves a child who is a program participant</b></p> | <p>When a complaint is raised against a child that is in a program participant that is serious enough to warrant an investigation, that child should generally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be told about the details of the complaint</li> </ul>   | <p>Executive Officer/EBP Manager</p> |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have an appropriate amount of time to consider the complaint</li> <li>• be able to ask that an appropriate support person is present if they are interviewed by EO/EBP Manager/Police?</li> <li>• be invited to respond, either verbally or in writing, to the complaint and any adverse information that is credible, relevant and significant</li> <li>• have an investigator who is impartial.</li> </ul> <p>Potential risks to children participating in Tomorrow Today programs may arise if another child is the subject of an allegation. The Executive Officer/EBP Manager will decide whether the child can continue participating in program activity while the complaint is being investigated.</p>   |                              |
| <p><b>Recording a Complaint or Concern</b></p> | <p>Using the <b>Child Complaint Record Form</b>, details of the report are to be captured by the organisation.</p> <p>The Record form must include details and a rationale on how the affected child or young person and their parent or carer will be involved/communicated/supported at key stages of a complaint. All staff, volunteers and Board members are expected to co-operate with Victoria Police or any other external agency if they investigate a complaint made by a child.</p> <p>Timely feedback is given to children and young people, families, staff and volunteers who raise concerns or complaints. This includes reporting back on incidents, concerns or complaints.</p> <p><i>Useful Guides on Recording a Complaint</i> provided by the Commission for Children and Young People:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tips for Interviewing Children and Young People</li> <li>• Tips for Recording key Complaints Data</li> <li>• Tips for Responding to Trauma during a Child-complaint Process</li> </ul> | <p>EBP Staff/EBP Manager</p> |
| <p><b>Record Keeping</b></p>                   | <p>In line with requirements of the Commission for Children and Young People, and Public Record Office of Victoria guidelines, full and accurate records should be kept on any reports of complaint or safety concerns raised.</p> <p>Records must be kept even if an investigation does not uphold a complaint. Documents and other types of records must be kept, providing a full account of how a report arose, what response was taken and what happened.</p> <p>Personal information that identifies a child or another individual associated with a complaint should only be disclosed by the Tomorrow Today as permitted in accordance with the Privacy Act</p>   | <p>All</p>                   |

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| <b>Reporting Outcomes</b> | <p>Tomorrow Today will provide the child and their family with an explanation about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what was done to respond to the complaint including any investigation</li> <li>• the decision or finding, including the main evidence that was obtained or unable to be obtained, and reasons why this decision was made</li> <li>• action taken, or that will be taken, to address the complaint, including by whom and when</li> <li>• reviewing and updating policies and procedures, where necessary</li> </ul> | <p>Executive Officer</p>                |
| <b>Ongoing Support</b>    | <p>After an investigation, continued support may need to be provided to complainants and/or Tomorrow Today staff and volunteers. Every opportunity will be provided by the organisation to provide reasonable support people affected by a complaint made by a child.</p>   | <p>EBP Manager / Executive Officer.</p> |

**Related Documents to this Policy/Procedure:**

- Incident Report
- Risk Assessment
- Child Complaint Record Form
- Checklist for Responding to Serious Child-Related Conduct of Staff or Volunteers
- Tips for Interviewing Children and Young People
- Tips for Recording key Complaints Data
- Tips for Responding to Trauma during a Child-complaint Process

**Other Related Documents:**

Child Safe Policy and Procedure  
 Child Safety Code of Practice  
 Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure  
 Diversity and Inclusion Policy  
 Privacy Policy  
 Reporting a Child at Risk Form

**Reference**

The Commission for Children and Young People, *A guide for creating a Child Safe Organisation*, 2022

**Relevant Legislation**

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005) (Vic)  
 Children Youth and Families Act (2005) (Vic)  
 Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)  
 Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)  
 Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)