Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Version 2.0

Last updated: December 2024

Principles

VCE Summer Tutoring is a program delivered primarily for the benefit of high school students, almost all of whom are under 18. For this reason, child safety is a core priority and an integral part of the program — it is part of everything we do, not an add-on.

VCE Summer Tutoring Inc. recognises that a safe environment is a prerequisite to delivering an effective, educational and enjoyable program. We therefore must provide a safe environment for children and young people. This policy outlines how we do this. It is designed to comply with, and go beyond, the Victorian Government's Child Safe Standards.

> Throughout this policy, some sections (like this one) are in bordered boxes.
>
> The boxes are addressed to students. They contain key messages, and summarise our policy in a simplified form. They are part of the policy.

In this document, we use the terms "young person" and "young people" to refer to any under-18 participant in the program, and any student (even if they are over 18). This reflects the fact that individuals in our primary cohort are in a transition phase: although almost all are minors now, most will soon become adults, and our program is designed to support that in an age and developmentally-appropriate way.

Our commitment

VCE Summer Tutoring is committed to creating a safe and empowering environment for young people.

We will not tolerate any form of abuse or harm against young people.

We proactively design and develop our program to ensure that it is safe, and when abuse or harm is detected, we will intervene thoroughly, promptly and fairly in accordance with our

procedures.

We empower young people to make reports of abuse, harm or discomfit, which we will take seriously and investigate thoroughly.

In our decision making, safety for young people is our paramount consideration.

Scope

This policy acts to protect all students on the program. Everyone who is part of the program, including all tutors, is responsible for making students safe.

This policy applies to all program participants, whether paid or volunteer, whether or not they directly work with children. This includes but is not limited to:

- Program Managers;
- Tutors;
- Employees;
- Contractors;
- Workshop leaders;
- the program's tutor teams; and
- the committee of VCE Summer Tutoring Inc.

Definitions

In this policy, we mean by:

- **Committee**—the Committee of VCE Summer Tutoring Inc.
- **Program Manager**—the people appointed to run the VCE Summer Tutoring program (normally there are four)
- **tutor teams**—one of the program support teams
- **tutor**—any volunteer for the program
- **young person**—a student or a program participant under the age of 18

Responsibilities

Everyone in the program is responsible for the safety of young people. Some people have extra responsibilities, but you should feel free to speak to anyone on the program, whether that be a member of the Welfare Team, your Group Activity Leader, a tutor, a Program Manager, or someone else you trust. You don't need anyone's permission to report something or to talk to your parents.

You're allowed to call the emergency services on 000 if you feel you (or someone else) is at immediate risk of abuse or harm.

All tutors and Program Managers must:

- Exercise their responsibility to contribute to the safety of young people, which includes:
    - Identifying and mitigating risks and hazards, or drawing them to the attention of their supervisor or Program Manager
    - Participating in debriefings
    - Being proactive about safety of young people
    - Taking concerns raised by young people seriously, and acting within their training to mitigate those concerns (which may involve referring, or assisting the young person in referring, those concerns to the Welfare Team or the Program Managers)
- Provide a safe environment for young people at all times
- Follow the procedures in this policy for raising concerns about harm or risks to children, including calling emergency services on 000 if they believe a young person is at immediate risk of abuse
- Read and comply with this Policy, the Tutor Code of Conduct, and other program policies
- Participate in training and induction as required
- Obtain and maintain the checks required by this policy
- Report any concerns they have to a Program Manager
- Report any breaches of this policy
- Socialise this policy within the tutor community
- Empower young people to have agency with respect to their own safety

The Heads of tutor teams must:

- Model safety of young people to their team members
- Run regular debriefings for their teams which include discussion of to safety issues

The Welfare Team must:

- Circulate throughout the program to proactively identify issues and engender trust
- Ensure that incidents or suspected risks are promptly reported to the Head of Welfare and, if necessary, the Program Managers
- Liaise with group leaders to identify any areas of concern

The Program Managers must:

- Be champions of this policy
- Maintain the WWCC register
- Maintain the Training Register
- Maintain the Child Safety Incident Register
- Maintain a written record of all feedback received, and triage any feedback relating to safety issues for escalation
- Conduct a debriefing after any incident according to the Incident Debrief Policy

The Program Managers and the Committee of VCE Summer Tutoring must:

- Promote and model safety of young people, particularly in tutor training
- Undertake risk assessments of each event undertaken during the program, and use those risk assessments to develop controls that minimise or eliminate the risk
- Regularly review this policy under a continual improvement model to ensure that it is fit for purpose, complies with the law, and incorporates an up-to-date and evidence-based approach to safety

Tutors are required to maintain certain behaviours on program, including avoiding physical contact and one-on-one environments with students. More information about the requirements for tutor behaviour is available in the Tutor Code of Conduct.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

VCE Summer Tutoring is committed to a program that is culturally safe for young people who are from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. This means we respect Indigenous cultures and acknowledge their strengths. We do things in our program to reflect that respect and acknowledgement. If you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, it's up to you whether you want to tell us.

Our journey to developing a culturally safe program includes:

- Ensuring our financial support program includes bursaries appropriate to or targeted at Indigenous students
- Including Indigenous content in subject delivery, where consistent with VCE study designs and pedagogical best practices
- Training tutors, particularly Group Activity Leaders, about cultural safety and giving them a toolbox of techniques to encourage young people to express their cultural identity
- Including an Acknowledgement of Country at the beginning of events

Racism is not tolerated from participants in VCE Summer Tutoring. The Student Code of Conduct and Tutor Code of Conduct each contain a direct prohibition on racism, and a series of strategies to detect and eliminate it.

As part of enrolment, students can nominate if they are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. This question is optional.

Where possible, we will engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and institutes, particularly on university campuses, to improve the program's cultural safety.

How our program is structured

Our program is structured to embed safety of young people throughout our leadership, culture and operations.

We have arranged our program to make it easy for you to get help with any safety concerns you have. You can talk to anyone on the program and know that they have the training to either help you, or help you talk to someone who can help you. The Welfare Team is around all the time, or just after each day's group meeting is a good time to talk one-on-one to your Group Activity Leader. However, you can talk to any tutor you trust.

Contact points

The program is designed to have a range of contact points between students and tutors,

described below. This design is driven by pedagogical, social and operational considerations, but it is well-adapted to promoting safety of young people.

Students have the following regular contact points:

- Daily — Group meeting led by Group Activity Leader: Group meetings run daily in small (8–10 student) groups. The same leader leads the group, allowing them to get to know each student individually, develop a rapport, and check-in with each student. Group Activity Leaders are a primary contact point for students to raise issues
- Daily — Subject tutors: Although subject tutors are not directly positioned as key safety contacts, the large number of tutors and contact hours means their students may come to trust them, and therefore they are given training on management and referral of safety issues
- Periodically — Welfare Team: The Welfare Team are on the program every day, and circulate through common spaces talking to students, and keeping an eye out for students who may be struggling. They are specifically promoted as a safe, non-judgemental source of support
- Leadership — the Program Managers are positioned as approachable people who take concerns seriously and coordinate a response. Where possible they will circulate at large events and through the program's spaces

All tutors receive training on how to promote the safety and wellbeing of young people, but a particular emphasis is placed on these contact points promoting safety, both proactively and reactively. Specialist Role Coordinators, particularly the head of the Welfare Team, and the Group Activity Leader Coordinator, check in with their teams to ensure they are complying with this policy.

Welfare team and Child Safety Officer

The Welfare Team has a significant role in promoting a safe environment for young people.

The Welfare Team is structured as follows:

- Welfare Team Coordinator
- Welfare Team members (3–10)

All Welfare Team members are responsible for circulating throughout the program, proactively engaging with students, responding sensitively and appropriately to concerns and disclosures by students, and being approachable, friendly faces.

Up to two Child Safety Officers are appointed for the program from among the Program Managers, Welfare Specialist Role Coordinators and Committee. Their name and contact details, including their program email child.safety@vcesummertutoring.au, are shared in tutor training, by email before the program, on the first day of program, and are available by enquiry to our general email program@vcesummertutoring.au. The Welfare Team is supported by the Program Managers and Child Safety Officer.

The Welfare Team Coordinator has special responsibilities to conduct a daily debrief of the Welfare Team, develop a Welfare roster, liaising with the Program Managers, and offering advice and support to other team members.

Reporting Structures

Everyone at VCE Summer Tutoring is responsible for reporting child safety concerns and child abuse and all tutors must know how to make a report.

For any matters requiring urgent or immediate assistance, including concerns for the welfare of a child or young person, call 000 to report the matter to police. For any matters of immediate risk relating to the treatment of a child or young person in the family context, follow the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection reporting procedure at https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/making-report-child-protection.

If a participant or other person has concerns about child safety or the behaviour of anyone involved in VCE Summer Tutoring activities, we encourage them to approach anyone on the following reporting structure. It is appropriate to skip any of these reporting steps—for example, you can report directly to the Child Safety Officer about any concerns.
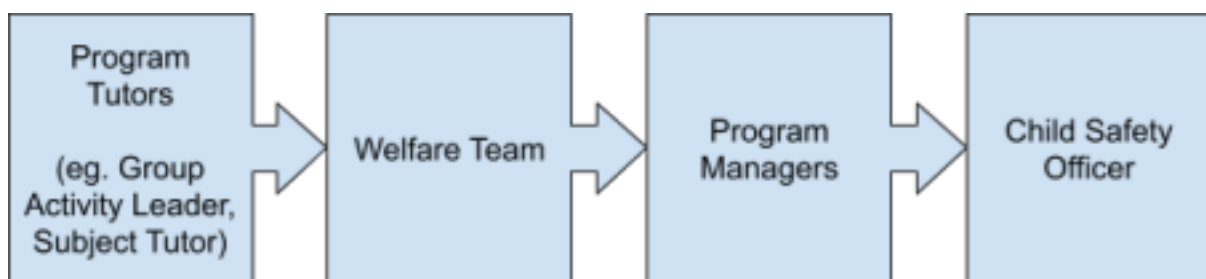
The Child Safety Officer is responsible for coordinating incidents relating to child safety, including liaising with program participants, parents and guardians, and external services if necessary.

Participation of young people and their

families

When you give us feedback, we will listen to what you say, and it will help us decide what changes we make to this program, and future VCE Summer Tutoring programs (even if we don't completely follow your suggestions). You can send us feedback informally, by talking to tutors or the Program Managers; by completing our surveys; or formally by writing an email to us.

If you have a complaint, or something that needs attention quickly, see the section "Complaints, grievances and disclosure" below.

Feedback helps us improve the quality of our program, identify and intervene early where issues are developing, allocate our resources effectively, and explore ways our program is and isn't effective.

Feedback may come from many sources: students, their parents, tutors, partner organisations, and members of the community.

Students are an important source of feedback, particularly in the context of safety of young people. We will empower students to give feedback by:

- Clearly communicating feedback is valued, in student welcome packs and as students are welcomed to the program
- "Closing the loop" by acknowledging each piece of feedback, and communicating back any changes made as a result of feedback
- Requiring Group Activity Leaders to set aside some time during group meetings to gather feedback
- Ensuring, during training, that tutors know student feedback is to be taken seriously and how to communicate it to the Program Managers

We collect feedback by:

- Email to the Program Managers
- Informally through discussions during the program
- Through reports made to tutors
- Program surveys

When the Program Managers receive feedback, they will summarise it in writing. Where appropriate, we take action to implement any changes that are judged appropriate in light

of the feedback. All feedback is collected in a feedback register, which is reviewed following the program as part of planning for next year's program.

Parent, carer and family participation

VCE Summer Tutoring recognises the importance in engaging families, and communities, in how our program is designed and delivered, and in how decision-making affects individual students. We also recognise that many of our students are close to adulthood and in a period of transition, where their relationship to and autonomy within their family and community is undergoing rapid evolution.

We send each student and their family a welcome pack, including a "letter to your family". This letter sets out our commitment to the safety of young people, our commitment to an equitable and inclusive environment appropriate to a diverse cohort, information about this and related policies, as well as practical information on how parents, guardians and carers can provide us with feedback or make complaints.

Equity, diversity and anti-racism

VCE Summer Tutoring believes in celebrating the diversity of our student—and tutor—cohort. We hope to be a place where you belong, and a place where you can achieve your full potential.

We won't tolerate discrimination based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender identity, intersex status, sexual orientation or other such attributes. We have a graduated series of interventions to deal with that sort of conduct, and ultimately people who persist can be asked to leave the program.

If a student, tutor or anyone else does something that makes you feel discriminated against, you can talk to your Group Activity Leader, a member of the Welfare Team, anyone else on the program, or follow the Easy Guide to Making a Complaint.

VCE Summer Tutoring is designed to be an inclusive and welcome space that any VCE student can feel is comfortable, welcomed, and like they are part of a community committed to learning. The overarching goal of the program is to address inequities by addressing educational disadvantage.

Our commitment to diversity, inclusion and equity is divided into three interrelated sectors: how we describe our commitment, the actions we take to embed that commitment in the program, and how we evaluate the effectiveness of those actions.

We make our commitment clear by:

- Including a clear statement on our website and relevant promotional materials
- Talking about our commitment in the welcome pack sent to students
- Talking about inclusion and diversity at the program introduction

We implement our commitment through:

- This policy, and other relevant policies including the Student and Tutor Codes of Conduct
- Providing bursaries for students facing financial disadvantage
- A student selection process that is designed to identify students who will get the most benefit from the program, including those who may present in non-traditional ways
- A tutor selection process that produces a tutor cohort that reflects the diversity of our student cohort
- Including information on our approach to inclusion in compulsory training
- A Welfare Team with representatives from traditionally-underrepresented groups

We evaluate our commitment and improve our approach by:

- A post-program evaluation of the program demographics
- A post-program survey, of students and tutors, that explores aspects of diversity, inclusion and equity
- Liaising with any relevant higher education organisations
- Liaising with our community partners to develop a community of practice

Our program does not tolerate discrimination based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender identity, intersex status, sexual orientation or other such attributes. Racism, in particular, strikes at the cultural safety of the program, and we will act swiftly to address any racist incidents.

As well as proactive measures to detect discriminatory and racist conduct, we encourage

complaints. In our Complaints Policy, we produce two guides: an Easy Guide to Making a Complaint (For Students) and a Guide to Making a Complaint (Tutors), that are audience-focussed and describe our complaints process.

Where a tutor or another person involved in the delivery of the program is alleged to have engaged in discriminatory or racist conduct, we will follow the disciplinary procedure defined in the Tutor Code of Conduct. The policy is designed around a protective principle, designed to address the conduct and redress any harm.

Where a student is alleged to have engaged in discriminatory or racist conduct, we will follow the procedure defined in the Student Code of Conduct. This policy embodies two principles: a protective principle, designed to address the conduct and redress harm; and an educative principle, designed to target the motivations behind unacceptable behaviours.

Where serious or persistent conduct occurs, participants may be excluded from further participation in the program.

Volunteer recruitment

The safety and wellbeing of young people is a threshold issue for our recruitment: we will not recruit staff or volunteers, no matter how well-qualified, if they cannot contribute to the safety of young people at VCE Summer Tutoring.

Our recruitment process does this by:

- Including a commitment to child safety in all position descriptions
- Behavioural interview questions to verify that applications understand, and are committed to, the safety of young people
- Including the safety of young people as a selection criterion for every role
- Requiring prospective volunteers to make a commitment to promoting an environment safe for young people as part of accepting any offer
- Informing prospective tutors of our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy both proactively as part of recruitment, and upon acceptance of an offer
- Requiring Working With Children Checks for all volunteers

Once recruited, all volunteers are provided training on this and related policies (see below).

Working With Children Checks

All adult volunteers, staff and members of the committee are required to have a current

Working With Children Check (WWCC). VCE Summer Tutoring accepts a current Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration as equivalent to a WWCC.

We maintain a database of all WWCC details recording the card number, verification status, and the card expiry date. Tutors are asked to add VCE Summer Tutoring to their WWCC registration with Services Victoria, so that we receive information about check renewal and negative notices.

WWCC records are verified on a yearly basis as part of the tutor interview process, and additionally in the week before the program. No tutor is permitted to participate in the program until their WWCC details have been verified and recorded in our database.

Tutors must tell us if they receive a negative notice (interim or otherwise), or their VIT registration is suspended. A tutor's participation in the program is immediately suspended until their WWCC or VIT registration is reinstated.

Complaints, grievances and disclosure

If you're concerned about your own, or someone else's, immediate safety, call emergency services on 000.

If you have a complaint about VCE Summer Tutoring, we'll take that complaint seriously and we will respond to it. You can make a complaint in writing or by speaking to us, and you can make a complaint anonymously if you prefer. You should make your complaint to the Program Managers or the Welfare Team. (If you make a complaint to a tutor, they will help you send the complaint to the right person.)

If you're not comfortable making a complaint to someone on the program, you can make a complaint to the VCE Summer Tutoring Committee via email at committee@vcesummertutoring.au.

If you "make a disclosure", that is, tell us about someone who's harming you, then: if it's someone on the program, we will intervene to stop that harm and (if appropriate) report that to the authorities. If you tell us about someone else in your life, we will give you resources to follow up that complaint with appropriate authorities.

If you want to keep your complaint confidential, we will try to respect that. If we think there's a serious ongoing threat, we might have to disclose what you've told us to appropriate authorities. The law also requires us to make reports to authorities in some circumstances.

Any report of abuse or concerns about the safety of young people will be taken seriously. This is true whether they are made by a student, a tutor, or someone else.

Reports of abuse or complaints can be made in person to the Welfare Team or the Program Managers. Where such reports are made to other tutors on the program, tutors are trained to assist the student in referring the report to the Program Manager. Reports can be made anonymously through our website. Any reports made orally will be summarised in writing by the person receiving the complaint.

Where a Program Manager is the subject of a complaint, we implement an alternate reporting line to the VCE Summer Tutoring Inc Committee.

We will follow our Complaints Policy when we receive a report, complaint, or something we think might raise a concern. This policy embodies the principles of thorough investigation, transparent response to the complainant, swift intervention, and record-keeping for evaluation and follow-up.

All participants on the program are empowered to call emergency services on 000 in the case of an immediate threat of harm or to life or health.

Our general principle is that we will endeavour to respect a complainant's request that their report or complaint be kept confidential. However, we may disclose a report if:

- full or partial disclosure is necessary to mitigate an ongoing or potential future harm,
- the matter is sufficiently serious that it must be brought to the attention of appropriate authorities, or
- the law requires us to do so.

Tutors are trained to exercise judgement to avoid making promises of confidentiality that they can't keep.

Grievances between tutors (that don't raise safety concerns) are handled through our Grievances Policy.

Volunteer training

All volunteers are required to receive training as a condition of their participation in VCE Summer Tutoring. As well as role-specific information, this training includes:

- Information about the safety of young people and our commitment to achieving it

- The rights of young people
- Information about this and related policies
- Information about the Tutor Code of Conduct
- How to identify safety issues that are in their skillset to deal with, and when an issue should be referred onwards
- How to respond to a disclosure
- Record-keeping requirements
- Appropriate behaviours towards young people during and after the program, and how to deal with students on social media
- How to report a safety issue, risk or potential hazard
- Where to get more information

All tutors are required to complete this training as a condition of participation, regardless of level of skill or experience.

In future years, we will ensure that training delivered to returning tutors includes a specific emphasis on changes to this and related policies.

Where possible we obtain specialist training for roles that have an elevated level of responsibility.

Training register

We maintain a training register for all participants in the program. This register records the tutor's name, each training course completed and the date of its completion, and the date the course/qualification loses currency.

Physical and virtual safety

Day Program

The program takes place at a venue in the Melbourne metropolitan area, normally at a location where there are a number of rooms, buildings and outdoor spaces, and that is open to public access throughout the program.

Tutors are required to avoid one-on-one environments with students, and use an openly accessible space nearby to others to speak with students individually as needed. For example, one-no-one tutoring must occur in public spaces within view of other tutors, or in a

classroom with an open door in a space supervised by other program participants. Students are permitted to leave any activity or space to attend the Welfare Space at any time throughout the program.

We implement a number of additional strategies to create a safe environment that reduces risk and impedes abuse.

- The student pack includes a map, transport information, and safety information
- The program starts with a campus tour to familiarise students with the physical space and wayfinding
- All students and tutors are provided with distinct lanyards for identification, and wearing them is compulsory (except during certain physical activities)
- A single space is designated as the program nerve centre, and students are encouraged to return to that space during free periods and lunchtime
- Where possible, we book rooms in a compact space
- All students are allocated to a "day group" (8–10 students) with a tutor group leader and a daily meeting in a set location
- Student attendance is taken by each subject tutor for each lesson, and daily at group meetings. Attendance is recorded in a centralised system available to the Program Managers and the Operations Team. Absences are followed up in accordance with the Student Absence Policy
- The Operations Team conducts room checks each hour to ensure all lessons are in their expected location and that tutors are in attendance
- All tutors are required to sign-in daily
- Students are required to sign-out if leaving early, as detailed in our Student Absence Policy
- We provide quiet rooms, usually staffed by members of the Welfare Team
- We identify venues with liquor licences near the program venue and inform them of the program's operating dates

More information about the requirements for tutor behaviour is available in the Tutor Code of Conduct.

Online services

VCE Summer Tutoring uses two online environments that are designed to be accessible to students:

- Our website (https://vcesummertutoring.au/)

- The Student Portal

Our website is a primary information point, and includes important information for students, including this policy. It has no capacity for user-generated content.

The Student Portal is a system that provides students with logistical and timetabling information. Each student is given an individualised sign-in code. Tutors can add material to the Student Portal (e.g. class notes or slides) and are trained in what is appropriate to upload. There is no facility for students to send messages to each other. The system minimises the amount of personal information presented (in case a sign-in code is compromised), and sign-in codes can be regenerated or locked out if necessary.

The Student Portal presents students with a copy of the timetable, including where they should go next. This is linked to a centralised system so can be updated in real time if necessary.

Incident management

Incidents, including safety of young people incidents, are handled according to the Incident Management Policy. This includes a post-incident debriefing process.

Following the program, all incidents are reviewed to improve this and other policies.

Child Safety Incident Register

As part of the post-incident debriefing process, all incidents that are in the ambit of this policy are recorded on the Child Safety Incident Register. This register records, in summary form, for each incident:

- The date
- A general description of the incident
- A list of parties involved, and of who contributed to the incident response
- A summary of actions taken
- A summary of reports made outside of VCE Summer Tutoring
- A general appreciation of what went well in the incident
- A general appreciation of what went poorly and requires review or development

The purpose of the Register is not to replace or duplicate the investigation process. Rather, it is to summarise key lessons, responses, and the nature of each incident, so it can be used as a tool in program planning, and to identify trends.

The Register is kept confidential so that it can contain a frank accounting of each incident.

Documentation and review

This policy is made available:

- On our website
- At all of our training events
- In hard-copy with the Operations and Welfare teams during the program
- By email to all tutors upon acceptance of their offer
- On the Tutor Portal and the Student Portal

Other relevant policies

Other policies of particular relevant to the safety of young people are:

- Tutor Code of Conduct
- Student Code of Conduct
- Incident Management Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Grievances Policy

Periodic review of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

We review this policy each year. If you have a feedback or comment on it and send it to us, we'll consider whether we can change the policy to accommodate your thoughts.

This policy, like all policies, is listed on our Policy Register and is reviewed annually, following the program's annual cycle.

Each year the Program Managers are responsible for coordinating review of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Each year early in the planning cycle for the next year's program, the Program Managers will:

- Review any incidents, hazards or near misses identified in the previous program, and lessons learnt
- Review feedback and complaints received
- Consult with relevant stakeholders, including the previous program's Program Managers, tutors, parents, and the University of Melbourne to seek feedback

- Review any relevant changes to legislation, advice from the Commission for Children and Young People, and best practices from peer organisation
- Prepare a revised draft and Summary of Changes and circulate that to stakeholders
- Submit the revised policy to the Committee for consideration and approval

The Committee is ultimately responsible for approving the revised policy.

Subsequent to the policy's approval, the Program Managers will update training material, and make the Summary of Changes available to returning tutors.

The policy should be reviewed out-of-cycle if:

- A serious incident occurs where a deficiency in this policy was a substantial contributing factor
- A significant change in legislation occurs

Policy information

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Version history

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1.0	Dec 2023	Initial version
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