

Child Safe Standards

WHAT DO THEY MEAN?

From 1 January 2017, the Child Safe Standards (the Standards) will apply to all sporting organisations that operate and provide sporting services to children within Victoria.

What Are The Standards?

1. Strategies to embed an organisational **culture of child safety**, including through effective leadership arrangements
2. A **child safe policy** or statement of commitment to child safety
3. A **code of conduct** that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
4. Screening, supervision, training and other **human resources practices** that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
5. Processes for **responding to and reporting** suspected child abuse
6. Strategies to **identify and reduce or remove risks** of child abuse
7. Strategies to promote the **participation and empowerment of children**

Each of the Standards must be understood and applied in the context of:

- The cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- The cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background
- The safety of children with a disability

Standard 1:

Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety,
including through effective leadership arrangements

This Means:

Leading from the top down and embedding a culture that makes child safety everyone's business by:

- Protecting the interests of the child, not the organisation
- Making child safety a top priority in the organisation
- Taking a zero tolerance approach to child abuse and to racial, religious or cultural discrimination
- Establishing values, behavioural expectations and recruitment practices that are consistent with a child centred, child safe culture

Examples:

- Ensure your strategic direction, vision and mission includes child safety as a key goal
- Have child safety representatives or champions who are appropriately trained and supported
- Include child safety as a regular communication item with your staff
- Undertake awareness training for all board, staff and volunteers. This may be face to face or via an online service such as the [Play By The Rules – Child Protection online module](#)

Standard 2:

A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety

This Means:

Creating a foundation for a child safe environment by:

- Documenting how to meet your duty of care responsibilities to children
- Affirming a commitment to child safety and the best interests of children
- Making a commitment to child safety clear to people in your organisation, children and families and the community

Examples:

- Develop a new (or review your existing) child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety
- Communicate the statement or policy publicly and widely. This may include website, newsletters and social media.
- Ensure board members, staff and volunteers are aware of the organisation's child safe policy and its key provisions. For example include child safety material in staff induction information and welcome packs.

Standard 3:

A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children

This Means:

Setting clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children by:

- Providing written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children
- Detailing acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in situations as they relate to your organisation. For example physical contact, personal care, online communication, staff to child ratios and camps.
- Educating staff, volunteers, parents and children about the required standards of behaviour and what will happen if a person does not comply

Examples:

- Develop a new (or review your existing) code of conduct to ensure it outlines clear standards for working with children in a range of situations and environments
- Build ownership and commitment to the code of conduct by providing opportunities for staff, volunteers, families and children to contribute to the code of conduct.
- Ensure all personnel (paid and volunteer) are aware of the code of conduct and ask them to sign it

Standard 4:

Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel

This Means:

Effectively screening and training people in your organisation to reduce the risk of child abuse by:

- Engaging only the most suitable people (whether in a paid or voluntary capacity) to work with children
- Having robust pre-employment screening processes and background checking
- Creating clear job descriptions and duty statements
- Understanding the nature and signs of child abuse
- Providing high quality supervision and professional development.

Examples:

- Build child safe selection criteria into job descriptions, recruitment advertisements and interviews
- Embed screening methods such as Police, Referee and Working with Children Checks into your recruitment strategy. You cannot rely on one method solely as they all address different criteria.
- Ensure probation periods are established for new staff and volunteers
- Provide ongoing information and training for staff and volunteers as part of your organisation's approach to professional development

Standard 5:**Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse****This Means:**

Putting in place clear procedures for responding to and reporting child safety concerns or child abuse

- Procedures for raising concerns and complaints are clear and can be understood by children
- Children know who to talk to if they are worried, and are encouraged to report unsafe behaviours
- People within the organisation are aware of their duty of care and legal responsibilities, and know what to do to respond appropriately
- Concerns and complaints are acted upon appropriately.

Examples:

- Develop (or review) a process for reporting suspected child abuse that is clear and robust. Sports may find some of this information in current Member Protection Policies & Procedures.
- Ensure children and families are aware of the process (communicate it widely) and know how to utilise it
- Provide training for staff to identify and respond to suspected child abuse

NOTE: Victorian law requires mandatory reporting by any adult who has a reasonable belief that an instance of child sexual abuse has occurred.

Information on how to report child abuse can be found here:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/child-protection>

Standard 6:**Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse****This Means:**

Identifying potential for harm and proactively planning to prevent, reduce or remove the risk of child abuse

- Having a clear understanding of the vulnerabilities of the organisation (and the specific activities provided) and the potential risks this may pose to children
- Being proactive to reduce the likelihood of risks emerging or escalating
- Adopting a risk management approach and developing a risk management plan.

Examples:

- Undertake a risk assessment to identify potential risks your organisation may face and how to address them
- Ensure staff and volunteers are trained to identify and respond to suspected child abuse
- Regularly schedule discussion about child safety and risk minimisation in staff and team meetings

Standard 7:

Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

This Means:

Supporting children and young people to understand their rights, contribute to child safety planning and to raise concerns by:

- Valuing and respecting children's opinions
- Encouraging children's participation in decision making
- Establishing an environment of trust and inclusion that enables children to ask questions and speak up if they are worried or feeling unsafe.

Examples:

- Provide children with child-appropriate and accessible information about what child abuse, their rights and how they can raise any concerns
- Provide opportunities for children to provide suggestions and thoughts on what child safety means to them through a range of methods. This could include email, suggestion boxes, feedback sessions
- Ensure staff and volunteers receive training on how to engage and empower children on this issue

Additional Resources:

The examples provided in this document should not limit your organisations approach to child protection. Further examples of strategies your organisation could implement can be found in the following resources:

[An overview of the Victorian child safe standards](#)

(State Government of Victoria, Department of Health & Human Service)

[A guide for creating a child safe organisation 2.0](#)

(Commission for Children and Young People)

Remember:

Child safety is not an add-on or one off exercise. It is a legal requirement that your organisation will need to be compliant with as of 1 January 2017.

Having member protection policies and procedures in place is not enough. It's about creating a culture and environment within sport that is supportive and protective of children.

Further Information

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DISCLAIMER:

This information provides general guidance regarding the Child Safe Standards. It should not be considered as a substitute for legal advice.

This resource is supported by the Victorian Government.

This document was developed utilising and adapting content from:

State Government of Victoria, Department of Health & Human Services (2015) An overview of the Victorian child safe standards

Commission for Children and Young People (2015), A guide for creating a child safe organisation 2.0