

What the Child Safe Standards mean for your children

Information for parents and carers

Child Safe Standards

All children have the right to feel safe and to be safe all of the time. An organisation or agency that provides a child safe environment is one that has a range of strategies and policies in place to ensure children¹ are protected from harm and abuse.

To help keep children safe, the Victorian Government has introduced mandatory minimum Child Safe Standards (the Standards) for organisations that provide services or facilities for children.

This will assist organisations to:

- build a culture of child safety and identify and make child safety everyone's business
- apply a child safety lens to existing and new policies and practice
- set clear expectations for staff in relation to child safety
- recruit child-safe staff and volunteers
- enable staff and volunteers to feel empowered to act in the best interests of children when they have safety concerns
- prevent child abuse, encourage reporting and improve responses to any allegations of child abuse
- identify and mitigate risks to child safety
- benefit the organisation as it gains valuable information about how children experience its organisation.

You can check which types of organisations are in scope of the Standards by visiting the Department of Health and Human Services Child Safe Standards webpage at: <http://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/scope-organisations-child-safe-standards>.

The Commission for Children and Young People and relevant authorities such as the Department of Health and Human Services, play important complementary roles in overseeing and promoting compliance with the Standards.

What do organisations have to do?

To comply with the Standards, an organisation must have:

1. strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety through effective leadership arrangements
2. a child safe policy (this must be publicly available)
3. a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children (this must be publicly available)
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 (this must be publicly available)
6. strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
7. strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

Organisations must also ensure they have a particular focus on promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and the safety of children with a disability.

What can you do?

To be confident your child is welcome and safe when attending an activity or service and to help you know what you should see in place and in action, refer to the tip sheet What to look for in a child safe organisation available at: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/tipsheet-childsafe-org-5922.pdf>

You can ask to see an organisation's evidence of compliance with the Standards. Organisations that provide services to children should be able to demonstrate how they have implemented the Standards.

Speak to someone in a leadership role if you believe an organisation could take a stronger approach to child safety. Also talk to and listen to your child about their experiences of feeling safe in the organisation.

For further information, email childsafeargs@dhhs.vic.gov.au

How can I raise a concern or complaint?

You can raise a concern or make a complaint by contacting:

Commission for Children and Young People

Phone: (03) 8601 5281

Email: childsafestandards@ccyp.vic.gov.au

Department of Health and Human Services

Refer to: <https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/making-complaint>

Victorian Ombudsman

Phone: (03) 9613 6222

Email: ombudvic@ombudsman.vic.gov.au

To receive this publication in an accessible format (for example, if you have a disability) phone (03) 9096 0000 using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email childsafeargs@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

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Where the term 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Available at <http://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards>

Job number: 1706027_Child Safe Standards Information Sheet

¹The term 'children' refers to children and young people.