

Child Safe Standards

SUPPORTING YOUR MEMBERS

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. For State Sport Associations (SSAs) and Regional Sports Assemblies (RSAs), this also means identifying how you can support your members to ensure they are meeting the Standards and developing a Child Safe Culture at their club.

SSAs and RSAs are strongly encouraged to take reasonable steps to assist and support members through the implementation process.

Focus on your own organisation first

Many SSAs and RSAs will have policies and procedures in place that may address areas of the Child Safe Standards, however you cannot rely on this alone. A review and update of your own practices will assist you in understanding the requirements of the Child Safe Standards so that you can assist your members more effectively.

The following steps are recommended to assist with this and can also be applied to grassroots clubs, leagues and associations:

1. Develop a **working group or sub-committee** to lead your organisation's focus on developing a child safe culture
2. Undertake a **child safety review** to identify:
 - What you already have in place
 - What you are doing well
 - Where you need to improve
 - Do you need anyone else to help?
3. Understand your **level of risk** in relation to the services and activities you provide to your members
4. Identify what **further information**, advice and support you need
5. Develop and implement an **action plan** to ensure your organisation meets the Standards

Communicate to members:

You don't need to wait until you complete the steps outlined above before communicating with you members. Vicsport encourages you to contact your membership through as many means possible including:

- Newsletters & Magazines
- Website
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)
- Personal meetings
- Presentations and conferences

During these communications, you should clearly outline:

- What the standards are
- Why we have them
- What your organisation is doing to address them
- How you will assist your members

Vicsport has a template presentation that can be adapted for your sport. Contact Vicsport to discuss if this is appropriate.

STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

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 within 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:

- Include a commitment to child safety in your strategic direction, vision and mission statement
- Discuss child safety and your organisation's approach to the Child Safe Standards at your AGM, Conferences and other events
- Have child safety representatives or champions who are appropriately trained and supported within your organisation
- Include child safety as a regular communication item with your staff and board, along with a standing item at meetings
- 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](#)
- Have a dedicated section on your website outlining your organisation's approach to child safety and the support available to members

You can support your members by:

- Providing clear, sport relevant examples of what you have done
- Providing a contact person/people to assist with their enquiries and activities

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.

You can support your members by:

- Providing an outline of the policy development process you have undertaken
- Providing access to a sport specific policy template or the [Vicsport Club Policy Template](#)
- Providing a contact person/people to assist with their enquiries and activities

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
- Embedding child safe messages into any current codes of conduct
- 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
- Require agreement with the code of conduct as part of the membership or registration process

You can support your members by:

- Providing an outline of the process to develop a code of conduct
- Providing access to a sport specific code of conduct or the [Vicsport Club Policy Template](#) that they can adopt
- Providing a contact person/people to assist with their enquiries and activities
- 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. This may be done at:
 - Team meetings
 - Induction nights
 - Registration days (or as part of an online registration process)

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 as required. 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

You can support your members by:

- Providing template role descriptions for key club personnel. The [Club Help website](#) has some great templates to assist with this.
- Provide access to online training for staff and volunteers. The [Play By The Rules website](#) can assist with this
- Distribute a list of easy to ask questions to utilise in interviews and “meet and greet” sessions such as:
 - Why do you want to be involved in our sport?
 - Have you worked with children before?
 - Have you had a situation where you have had to comfort a distressed child? How did you manage this? What was the outcome?

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 and know how to utilise it
- Provide training for staff to identify and respond to suspected child abuse

You can support your members by:

- Distribute updated Member Protection Policies
- Develop and distribute easy to follow information about who to contact if there are concerns
- Provide access to easy to use reporting documents
- Provide access to online training for staff and volunteers. The [Play By The Rules website](#) can assist with this
- Have a central point of contact within your organisation to assist with enquiries and complaints. This may be your current MPIO or a designated Child Safe Officer.

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
- Embed child safety in your organisations risk matrix to ensure it is an ongoing action
- Regularly schedule discussion about child safety and risk minimisation in staff and team meetings
- Ensure staff and volunteers are trained to identify and respond to suspected child abuse

You can support your members by:

- Providing a risk matrix template and process
- Highlighting how your organisation is meeting risks
- Address risk management as a broad concept at upcoming conferences – embed Child Safety in the message

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

You can support your members by:

- Developing a "junior advisory group" to provide input and feedback to strengthen your sport
- Provide child appropriate posters for display at club-rooms and facilities (i.e. [Vicsport Child Safe Posters](#))

Other strategies you may consider:

The following strategies may also be considered for implementation within your organisation or to assist your members:

- Embed a child safe module in coaching and officiating training
- Promote a “policy of the month” via your newsletters, social media and communication channels
- Develop and promote case studies of what is happening within your sport
- Discuss child safe scenarios at team and staff meetings
- Utilise upcoming conferences and training day to present to your members about the Child Safe Standards
- Congratulate clubs and leagues who are taking steps to address the Child Safe Standards via presentations, emails and your website

Additional Resources:

The examples provided in this document should not limit your organisations approach to child protection. The following resources may also be of assistance to your organisation and members:

[Vicsport](#)

[Play by the Rules](#)

[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 the Child Safe Standards 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*