

Victoria's new Child Safe Standards

What's new?

Overview of the new Child Safe Standards

The Child Safe Standards (the Standards) commenced in Victoria in January 2016. After five years, we have seen how the Standards improve safety for children and young people.

Changes are being made to make our Standards even stronger.

Organisations* covered by the Standards will need to comply with new Standards by **1 July 2022**. Until then, the current Standards apply.

The new Standards set out minimum requirements and outline the actions organisations must take to keep children and young people safe. They provide more clarity for organisations and are more consistent with Standards in the rest of Australia.

The things organisations already do to keep children and young people safe will help them be compliant with the new Standards. In some areas, organisations will need to change or develop their current child safety policy, practices and organisational culture to meet the new Standards.

This guide will be helpful to organisations as they get to know the new Standards and start to review their child safety policies, procedures and practices to identify new actions they need to take to comply with the new Standards. The guide *What's changing? Compare current and new Child Safe Standards* and the Commission's *Frequently Asked Questions* may also be helpful.

Further information and guidance will be provided over the coming months to help organisations, and you can subscribe [here](#) to receive emails when new information and guidance is released by the Commission.

The table below provides a summary of new requirements in the new Standards.

* All references to 'relevant entities' have been replaced in this document with 'organisation/s' for reasons of accessibility. A relevant entity is defined in section 3(1) of the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* and captures entities that are subject to the Child Safe Standards.



Child Safe Standard 1 – Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued

In complying with Child Safe Standard 1, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 1.1 A child's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights is encouraged and actively supported.
- 1.2 Strategies are embedded within the organisation which equip all members to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and young people.
- 1.3 Measures are adopted by the organisation to ensure racism within the organisation is identified, confronted and not tolerated. Any instances of racism are addressed with appropriate consequences.
- 1.4 The organisation actively supports and facilitates participation and inclusion within it by Aboriginal children, young people and their families.
- 1.5 All of the organisation's policies, procedures, systems and processes together create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal children, young people and their families.

The new Child Safe Standard 1 requires organisations to take new steps to create a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal children and young people. Organisations must meet this requirement regardless of whether or not they know that there are Aboriginal children and young people currently using their services or facilities.

This new Child Safe Standard 1 means that most organisations will need to improve their current approach to creating a safe environment for Aboriginal children and young people and their families. Implementing this Standard will require ongoing effort, not just a once-off change.

This Standard links to new Standard 5 which requires that equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected in organisations.

The Commission is developing new dedicated resources to assist organisations to comply with the new Child Safe Standard 1.

Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) has developed [resources](#) to support organisations working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and communities to create child safe environments.

The Commission's [Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation](#) also has some relevant guidance in the 'Child safety through respect for diversity and cultural difference' section.

New Child Safe Standards (commencing 1 July 2022)

What's new or changing?

Useful resources

Child Safe Standard 2 – Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

In complying with Child Safe Standard 2, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 2.1 The organisation makes a public commitment to child safety.
- 2.2 A child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the organisation from the top down and bottom up.
- 2.3 Governance arrangements facilitate implementation of the child safety and wellbeing policy at all levels.
- 2.4 Code of Conduct provides guidelines for staff and volunteers on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities.
- 2.5 Risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children and young people.
- 2.6 Staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping.

Many aspects of the new Child Safe Standard 2 are consistent with what organisations are currently required to do under existing Standards 1, 2 and 3.

The new Child Safe Standard 2 has a greater emphasis on information sharing, record keeping and governance arrangements to create a child safe culture at all levels in an organisation. The management of risks to children is required to be embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.

The Commission's [Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation](#) has some relevant guidance in the sections on current Standards 1, 2 and 3.

The New South Wales Office of the Children's Guardian's [Codes of Conduct: a guide to developing child safe Codes of Conduct](#) provides extensive advice on developing a child safe Code of Conduct.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's e-learning module on National Principle 1 provides useful advice and can be accessed via the [Child Safe Organisations e-learning portal](#).

Child Safe Standard 3 – Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

In complying with Child Safe Standard 3, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 3.1 Children and young people are informed about all of their rights, including to safety, information and participation.
- 3.2 The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated.
- 3.3 Where relevant to the setting or context, children and young people are offered access to sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant related information in an age appropriate way.
- 3.4 Staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children and young people to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns.
- 3.5 Organisations have strategies in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and young people.
- 3.6 Organisations provide opportunities for children and young people to participate and are responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening confidence and engagement.

The Child Safe Standards have always required organisations to have strategies in place to empower children and young people and promote their participation. These obligations remain.

Additional requirements for organisations under the new Child Safe Standard 3 include:

- informing children and young people about their rights
- recognising the importance of friendships and encouraging support from peers, to help children and young people feel safe and connected
- offering children and young people sexual abuse prevention programs where relevant
- equipping staff and volunteers to identify the signs of harm to children.

The Commission's [Empowerment and participation: a guide for organisations working with children and young people](#) provides practical, accessible guidance for organisations about empowerment and participation and how to put it into practice.

Many children's rights are established under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The United Nations has published a [simplified version](#).

The Department of Education and Training's [guidance for schools](#) has useful information about the signs of different abuse types.

The Commission's [Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation](#) also has some relevant guidance in the section on current Standard 7.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's e-learning module on National Principle 2 provides useful advice and can be accessed via the [Child Safe Organisations e-learning portal](#).

New Child Safe Standards (commencing 1 July 2022)

What's new or changing?

Useful resources

Child Safe Standard 4 – Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing

In complying with Child Safe Standard 4, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 4.1 Families participate in decisions affecting their child.
- 4.2 The organisation engages and openly communicates with families and the community about its child safe approach and relevant information is accessible.
- 4.3 Families and communities have a say in the development and review of the organisation's policies and practices.
- 4.4 Families, carers and the community are informed about the organisation's operations and governance.

Many organisations already inform and involve families and communities as part of complying with the current Child Safe Standards.

The new Child Safe Standard 4 creates specific obligations on organisations to involve families and communities in promoting child safety.

New obligations mean organisations must ensure they:

- seek the input of families and communities in decisions impacting children and young people
- involve families and communities in the development and review of their child safe policies and practices
- communicate effectively with families and communities about how to raise child safety concerns and how the organisation operates
- take into account the diversity of families and act to reduce barriers to inclusion.

Involving families and communities is already recommended as good practice in the [Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation](#).

The Australian Human Rights Commission's e-learning module on National Principle 3 provides useful advice and can be accessed via the [Child Safe Organisations e-learning portal](#).

Child Safe Standard 5 – Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice

In complying with Child Safe Standard 5, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 5.1 The organisation, including staff and volunteers, understands children and young people's diverse circumstances, and provides support and responds to those who are vulnerable.
- 5.2 Children and young people have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.
- 5.3 The organisation pays particular attention to the needs of children and young people with disability, children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.
- 5.4 The organisation pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal children and young people and provides/promotes a culturally safe environment for them.

The Child Safe Standards have always required organisations to recognise and respond to diversity and understand that some children are more vulnerable to abuse than others. To date this has been expressed through three principles relating to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and the safety of children with disability.

These obligations continue, but the new Child Safe Standard 5 makes some additional obligations explicit, requiring organisations to:

- understand children and young people's diverse backgrounds, circumstances and needs
- make any necessary adjustments and provide equal protection to all children and young people
- consider the needs of children and young people who are unable to live at home as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.

Given the new Standard's focus on understanding children's diverse circumstances, organisations will also need to give attention to the needs of non-binary and gender diverse children.

This Standard links to new Standard 1, which requires organisations to establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.

The Commission's [Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation](#) provides some useful guidance on supporting the needs of diverse groups of young people, especially Aboriginal children, culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and children with disability.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's e-learning module on National Principle 4 provides useful advice and can be accessed via the [Child Safe Organisations e-learning portal](#).

Child Safe Standard 6 – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice

In complying with Child Safe Standard 6, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 6.1 Recruitment, including advertising, referee checks and staff and volunteer preemployment screening, emphasise child safety and wellbeing.
- 6.2 Relevant staff and volunteers have current working with children checks or equivalent background checks.
- 6.3 All staff and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their responsibilities to children and young people, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.
- 6.4 Ongoing supervision and people management is focused on child safety and wellbeing.

The current Child Safe Standards already require organisations to have child safety policies and procedures for recruitment and selection processes, screening, supervision, training, development and performance monitoring of staff and volunteers. They are also required to make staff and volunteers aware of the organisation's reporting procedures for child safety issues.

Under the new Child Safe Standard 6, organisations will have new obligations to inform staff and volunteers about:

- the organisation's record keeping processes in relation to child safety and wellbeing
- information sharing and reporting obligations.

The Commission's [Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation](#) has extensive guidance on recruitment and selection processes, screening, supervision, training, development and performance monitoring of staff and volunteers that support child safety.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's e-learning module on National Principle 5 provides useful advice and can be accessed via the [Child Safe Organisations e-learning portal](#).

Child Safe Standard 7 – Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused

In complying with Child Safe Standard 7, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 7.1 The organisation has an accessible, child focused complaint handling policy which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of leadership, staff and volunteers, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report.
- 7.2 Effective complaint handling processes are understood by children and young people, families, staff and volunteers, and are culturally safe.
- 7.3 Complaints are taken seriously, and responded to promptly and thoroughly.
- 7.4 The organisation has policies and procedures in place that address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and co-operates with law enforcement.
- 7.5 Reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

The current Child Safe Standards require organisations to have effective processes that support children and young people to raise complaints and ensure that the organisation can appropriately respond to and report suspected child abuse.

The new Child Safe Standard 7 emphasises the importance of complaints processes being child focused and understood by children and young people and their families, in addition to staff and volunteers.

The new Child Safe Standard 7 also makes explicit the obligations for organisations to:

- take complaints seriously, and respond to them promptly and thoroughly
- co-operate with law enforcement
- meet reporting, privacy and employment law obligations.

The Commission's [Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation](#) provides relevant advice on reporting policies and procedures. The Commission's website contains guidance on the [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#) for organisations that are subject to this scheme.

The National Office for Child Safety has published resources on creating child-focused and accessible [complaints processes](#).

The Australian Human Rights Commission's e-learning module on National Principle 6 provides useful advice and can be accessed via the [Child Safe Organisations e-learning portal](#).

Child Safe Standard 8 – Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training

In complying with Child Safe Standard 8, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 8.1 Staff and volunteers are trained and supported to effectively implement the organisation's child safety and wellbeing policy.
- 8.2 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and young people.
- 8.3 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm.
- 8.4 Staff and volunteers receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people.

The current Child Safe Standards already require organisations to provide information and training to staff and volunteers so that they can create child safe environments and respond to allegations of abuse.

The new Child Safe Standard 8 spells out obligations for organisations to train and support staff and volunteers, and provide ongoing education and training to:

- implement the organisation's child safety and wellbeing policy
- recognise indicators of harm (including harm caused by other children and young people)
- respond effectively to child safety issues and concerns and support colleagues who disclose harm.

This Standard links to new Standards 1 and 5, with all three Standards placing obligations on organisations to provide training and information for staff and volunteers on building safe environments for children and young people.

The Commission's [Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation](#) contains some information on the knowledge, skills and awareness staff and volunteers need to keep children and young people safe. The Commission's website contains guidance on the [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#) for organisations that are subject to this scheme.

The Department of Education and Training's [guidance for schools](#) has useful information about the signs of abuse.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's e-learning module on National Principle 7 provides useful advice and can be accessed via the [Child Safe Organisations e-learning portal](#).

Child Safe Standard 9 – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed

In complying with Child Safe Standard 9, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 9.1 Staff and volunteers identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.
- 9.2 The online environment is used in accordance with the organisation's Code of Conduct and child safety and wellbeing policy and practices.
- 9.3 Risk management plans consider risks posed by organisational settings, activities, and the physical environment.
- 9.4 Organisations that contract facilities and services from third parties have procurement policies that ensure the safety of children and young people.

The current Child Safe Standards already require organisations to be mindful of the risks associated with both physical and online environments and to adopt measures to remove risks of child abuse.

The new Child Safe Standard 9 contains specific obligations for organisations to:

- consider online environments in addition to physical environments
- identify and mitigate risks in these environments without compromising a child or young person's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities
- promote child safety and wellbeing as well as minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed
- have procurement policies that ensure the safety of children and young people if the organisation contracts facilities and services from third parties.

The Commission's [Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation](#) provides advice on identifying and mitigating risks of abuse.

The Commission's [Keeping Children and Young People Safe Online during the COVID-19 pandemic](#) provides useful tips and links.

The [eSafety Commissioner](#) provides extensive practical advice on keeping children safe online.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's [Checklist for online safety](#) and e-learning module on National Principle 8 provide useful advice and can be accessed via the [Child Safe Organisations e-learning portal](#).

Child Safe Standard 10 – Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved

In complying with Child Safe Standard 10, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 10.1 The organisation regularly reviews, evaluates and improves child safe practices.
- 10.2 Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.
- 10.3 The organisation reports on the findings of relevant reviews to staff and volunteers, community and families and children and young people.

Review and continuous improvement are already part of the current Child Safe Standards.

The new Child Safe Standard 10 contains new obligations for organisations to:

- analyse complaints, concerns and safety incidents to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement
- report on the findings of relevant reviews of child safe practices to staff and volunteers, community and families and children and young people.

The Commission's [Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation](#) provides a self-assessment tool (available as a [Word file](#)) to help organisations review their child safety framework against the current Child Safe Standards. A new tool will be published to support reviews against the new Child Safe Standards.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's e-learning module on National Principle 9 provides useful advice and can be accessed via the [Child Safe Organisations e-learning portal](#).

Child Safe Standard 11 – Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

In complying with Child Safe Standard 11, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 11.1 Policies and procedures address all Child Safe Standards.
- 11.2 Policies and procedures are documented and easy to understand.
- 11.3 Best practice models and stakeholder consultation informs the development of policies and procedures.
- 11.4 Leaders champion and model compliance with policies and procedures.
- 11.5 Staff and volunteers understand and implement policies and procedures.

Preparing comprehensive policies and procedures to support implementation of child safe practices is already required by the current Child Safe Standards.

The new Child Safe Standard 11 contains new obligations for organisations to:

- make policies and procedures easy to understand
- use stakeholder consultation and best practice models to inform the development of policies and procedures
- ensure organisational leaders champion and model compliance with policies and procedures.

The Commission's [Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation](#) provides sample policies and useful guidance in the section on current Standard 2.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's e-learning module on National Principle 10 provides useful advice and can be accessed via the [Child Safe Organisations e-learning portal](#).