



Short guide to the  
**Child Safe Standards**



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# Background

All children have the right to feel safe and be safe, but safety does not just happen.

In recent years we have had the benefit of learning from many survivors and multiple inquiries, including the Victorian Parliament's *Betrayal of Trust* inquiry<sup>1</sup> and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse<sup>2</sup> (the Royal Commission). These have shown the devastating extent of harm done to children when organisations do not have the right culture, systems, processes and understanding to prevent abuse.

A child safe organisation takes deliberate steps to safeguard children from physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse and neglect. It puts children's safety and wellbeing first and embeds a commitment to child safety in every aspect of the organisation.

Victoria's mandatory Child Safe Standards (the Standards) have been in effect since 2016.

Following the Royal Commission, the Victorian Government reviewed the Standards.<sup>3</sup> The review found strong support for the Standards and recommended a number of changes to better align the Standards with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and to strengthen administration of the Standards.

In line with these recommendations, updated Standards were released by the Victorian Government in 2021. They consist of 11 updated Standards that applied from 1 July 2022.

In implementing the Standards, organisations have the opportunity to reflect on their efforts to date and continue to build their capacity to keep children free from harm and abuse.



- 1 Family and Community Development Committee, Victorian Parliament, [Betrayal of Trust: inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other non-government organisations](#), Victoria 2013, 2: p 262.
- 2 Commonwealth of Australia, [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#), 2017.
- 3 Department of Health and Human Services, [Review of the Victorian Child Safe Standards](#), 2019.



# How to use this guide

This guide briefly outlines each of the Standards, identifying the expected outcomes, minimum requirements and compliance indicators that will assist organisations to comply with each Standard. More detailed guidance on how organisations can comply with the Standards is included in the Commission for Children and Young People's [A guide for creating a Child Safe Organisation](#).

Each of the Standards is expressed as a statement of an expected **outcome** that organisations must achieve. For example, Standard 3 requires that 'children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously'.

Each Standard includes **minimum requirements** that organisations must meet. The new Standards provide greater guidance to assist organisations to meet the intended outcome, while still allowing flexibility.

For each Standard, the Commission for Children and Young People (the Commission) has provided a list of documents and actions that will show that your organisation is meeting these minimum requirements. We call these **compliance indicators**. The compliance indicators were developed in response to feedback that organisations are seeking more advice about what regulators look for when assessing compliance. The compliance indicators generally correspond to one or more of the minimum requirements, which are shown in brackets after the indicator.

Organisations will generally comply with the Standards if they produce the listed documents and complete the actions set out in the **compliance indicators** in each chapter. However, your organisation will need to make sure that the approach taken achieves the **outcome** and the **minimum requirements**, as set out in each Standard.

This guide is general in nature because the Standards apply to such a wide and varied range of organisations. The nature or characteristics of your organisation may mean you need to do something different to what is proposed in this guide. If so, you

may have to explain how your approach complies with the **outcomes** and the **minimum requirements** of the Standards.

There are six co-regulators for the Standards in Victoria including the Commission, and you can find out your regulator on the Commission's [website](#). Some organisations that deliver multiple types of services for children may have more than one regulator. Some regulators have issued specific guidance for the sectors and organisations they regulate. Where a co-regulator's guidance applies to your sector, and is different to this guide, your organisation should follow your co-regulator's guidance for your operations in that sector.

For more information on how to implement the Standards and prioritise children's safety, read [A guide for creating a Child Safe Organisation](#).



## Terminology

The term Aboriginal in this guide is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We use the term child or children to include both children and young people under the age of 18 years.

In this guide, an organisation is any business or group that works or volunteers with children.



# 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.

## Key points

- You must ensure that all children feel safe, and are safe, when participating in your organisation. This includes Aboriginal<sup>4</sup> children.
- Cultural safety for Aboriginal children has been defined as 'the child being provided with a safe, nurturing and positive environment where they are comfortable with being themselves, expressing their culture... their spiritual and belief systems, and they are supported by the carer... (who) respects their Aboriginality and therefore encourages their sense of self and identity'.<sup>5</sup>
- Achieving cultural safety involves understanding how an organisation is viewed and experienced by Aboriginal people and particularly by Aboriginal children.
- Aboriginal people each have a distinctive history and experiences, and it is important to recognise Aboriginal peoples' unique place as First Nations peoples.
- Identifying as Aboriginal is one part of a child's identity. Like everyone, Aboriginal people have different life experiences and characteristics. Organisations must provide supportive environments for Aboriginal children that recognise each person is unique, with their own characteristics, strengths and challenges.
- Culture and identity are linked, and by supporting Aboriginal children to feel strong in their identity, you also help them enjoy their cultural rights.

<sup>4</sup> The term 'Aboriginal' in this guide is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

<sup>5</sup> SNAICC, [Cultural safety](#), 2021.

## Standard 1

- Being able to express their cultural identity makes Aboriginal children stronger and safer.<sup>6</sup> This is important for many reasons. In the context of preventing child abuse, it is important because when Aboriginal children do not feel safe to be themselves and express their culture, the risk they will be abused by others increases and they may be less willing to report abuse.<sup>7</sup>
- Cultural rights are the rights of each child, either individually or as part of a group of people, to develop and express their background, customs, social behaviour, language, religion or spirituality, beliefs and way of living.
- Aboriginal people have distinct cultural rights to enjoy their identity and culture; maintain the use of their language; maintain their kinship ties; and maintain their relationship with the land, waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs.<sup>8</sup>
- It is your responsibility to make your organisation inclusive, and this requires education, reflection and positive action.
- Learning about Aboriginal cultures should be part of a continuous journey. It will be important to build awareness and understanding among leaders, staff and volunteers, children and other members of the organisation's community. Think about the different support they might need depending on their role and responsibilities in the organisation.
- Making a child's family feel welcome and included in an organisation contributes to their safety.<sup>9</sup> Family is the cornerstone of Aboriginal culture, spirituality and identity. Family is often more broadly defined within Aboriginal cultures than some other cultures.<sup>10</sup>
- Racism is harmful for children and impacts their wellbeing and safety. It can be a form of child abuse. If children and their families experience racism while interacting with your organisation, they also may not feel confident to raise other concerns or complaints. Taking complaints about racism seriously and responding to them thoroughly shows that racism will not be tolerated in your organisation.
- Broad statements of support or acknowledgment of Aboriginal culture are important, but these alone will not generate safety for children. Your organisation's approach to creating cultural safety needs to be embedded throughout the organisation. This means all the organisation's policies, procedures, systems and processes to consider and meet the needs of Aboriginal children and their families.

6 State of Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, [Wungurilwil Gagapduir Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement](#), 2018, p 35.

7 P Anderson et al., *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and child sexual abuse in institutional settings*, [Report for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#), [pdf 1MB], 2017, pp 30–33.

8 Adapted from [Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 \(Vic\)](#).

9 State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services, [Balit Murrup: Aboriginal social emotional wellbeing framework 2017–2027](#), 2017.

10 SNAICC, [Connection to family](#).



### Compliance indicators

What will the Commission look for when assessing this Standard?

This Standard places new obligations on organisations to ensure cultural safety for Aboriginal children.

Establishing a culturally safe environment takes time, dedication and meaningful engagement. Organisations need to commit long term and take meaningful action each year to keep progressing their compliance with Standard 1.

The Commission understands that organisations will be at different stages in achieving compliance with this new Standard. **Foundation steps** are provided to help organisations who are yet to make a significant effort to establish a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal children. These **foundation steps** help organisations identify the work they must do to comply with the Standard and build a plan of action.

If your organisation feels it is already well progressed in establishing a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal children, then focusing on the **foundation steps** may not be necessary. **Further steps** are provided so your organisation can build on the work already done to continue the journey towards becoming a culturally safe organisation.

The Commission will first look for compliance with the **foundation steps**. The **foundation steps** outline the changes required to policies, procedures and public commitments, but recognise that change in organisations takes time. The plan of action should outline the organisation's path to reaching full compliance with the Standard. **Further steps** help organisations understand what full compliance with this Standard may look like.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The nature or characteristics of your organisation may mean you need to do something different to what is proposed in this guide. If so, you may have to explain how your approach complies with the outcomes and the minimum requirements of the Standards. Some sectors and organisations have co-regulators that have issued specific guidance. Where a co-regulator's guidance on the Standards applies to your organisation, and is different to this guide, your organisation should follow that co-regulator's guidance for your operations in that sector.

## Foundation steps

### DOCUMENTS

- A public commitment to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children is available and displayed for public access. (1.1, 1.4, 1.5 and links to 5.4)
- Policies and procedures relating to child safety and wellbeing, including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, describe the organisation's commitment to respecting and valuing Aboriginal children. This includes that:
  - staff and volunteers must encourage and support children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights
  - staff and volunteers must actively support and facilitate participation and inclusion within the organisation by Aboriginal children and their families
  - racism will not be tolerated within the organisation and how the organisation will respond, including potential consequences
  - the organisation's leadership has a responsibility to help everyone involved with the organisation<sup>12</sup> to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children. (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5)
- The Code of Conduct and position descriptions outline expectations of staff and volunteer behaviour including:
  - zero tolerance of racism and expectations that staff and volunteers will act on incidents of racism
  - that children will be supported to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights. (1.1, 1.3)
- A plan of action sets out the steps the organisation will take by 1 July 2023 to establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children are respected and valued. (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5)

<sup>12</sup> See the definition for who makes up the organisation's community in [A guide for creating a Child Safe Organisation](#).



## Foundation steps

### ACTIONS

- Instances of racism are consistently identified and addressed. (1.3)
- The organisation identifies steps already taken to:
  - support, guide or train staff and volunteers and leaders to understand, respect and value Aboriginal culture and to understand the importance of this to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children (1.2 and links to 8.4)
  - actively support and facilitate participation and inclusion of Aboriginal children and their families (1.4)
  - recognise and celebrate Aboriginal peoples, their achievements, communities and cultures (1.2)
  - ensure racism within the organisation is identified and appropriately addressed (1.3)
  - create a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal children within the organisation. (1.5 and links to 5.4)
- Identify actions the organisation needs to take to fully implement Standard 1, considering steps already taken and any gaps identified. A plan of action should identify the person or team responsible for taking action, the resources available and the timeframe. (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5)

## Further steps

### DOCUMENTS

- Policies and procedures, including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, describe the organisation's expectations and provide detailed guidance about actions staff, volunteers and leaders must take to establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children are respected and valued. (1.5)

### ACTIONS

- The organisation creates an inclusive and welcoming physical and online environment for Aboriginal children and their families by acknowledging and respecting Aboriginal peoples, communities, cultures and values. (1.2)
- All children receive information from the organisation about cultural rights and the organisation takes active steps to encourage Aboriginal children to express their culture. When children express their culture, staff and volunteers in the organisation give them support. (1.1, 1.4 and links to 3.1)
- The organisation takes steps to empower children in the organisation and provide them with opportunities to participate in a way that is culturally safe for Aboriginal children. (1.4 and links to 3.6)
- The organisation provides culturally safe opportunities for Aboriginal families to participate in the organisation. (1.4)
- The organisation provides members of the organisation's community with:
  - information on cultural rights, the strengths of Aboriginal cultures and the importance of culture to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children
  - information on the connection between cultural safety and the prevention of child abuse and harm for Aboriginal children
  - opportunities to learn and express appreciation of Aboriginal cultures and histories. (1.1, 1.2)
- Strategies that encourage the organisation's community to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal cultures are developed, implemented and embedded into the organisation. (1.2)
- Strategies to prevent racism are implemented and incidents of racism are not tolerated. (1.3)



## 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 A 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.

### Key points

- Your organisation must make a public commitment to child safety. This signals to the whole community that your organisation prioritises the safety of children and will not tolerate child abuse or harm.
- A child safe culture means an organisation has shared attitudes, values, policies and practices that prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children.
- Having a child safe culture requires your organisation to build child safety into the everyday thinking and actions of leaders, staff, volunteers, members and children in the organisation.
- Your organisation's community looks to leaders to embody the values of the organisation. This means that leaders' behaviour is key to a child safe culture. Leaders must champion child safe practices and lead by example, modelling the behaviour expected of staff and volunteers and not tolerating behaviours harmful to children.
- A Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy outlines how your organisation prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and what steps it will take to do this. It sets out the organisation's expectations about child safe practices for staff, volunteers and the organisation's community. Read more about this in [Creating a Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#).

## Standard 2

- Governance refers to an organisation's leadership, oversight and accountability processes. Governance includes an organisation's rules about who has the authority to make decisions, how decisions should be made and monitored, and how people are to be held to account.<sup>13</sup>
- While governance arrangements vary across organisations, they must support both top down and bottom up implementation of your organisation's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy to support the development of a child safe culture. This means that leaders set a clear direction for the organisation on child safety and wellbeing, informed by input from the organisation's community. The organisation's governance arrangements should also facilitate transparency and hold leaders to account for achievement of the set direction.
- A Code of Conduct should list acceptable and unacceptable behaviours with children. It spells out professional boundaries, ethical behaviour, expected standards of behaviour and acceptable and unacceptable relationships. Read more about this in [Developing a Code of Conduct](#).
- Governance arrangements in the organisation should support senior leaders to monitor whether risk assessment and management in the organisation is properly focused on identifying, preventing and reducing risks of child abuse and harm. Standard 9 in [A guide for creating a Child Safe Organisation](#) provides more information on identifying and managing risk.
- Sharing relevant information is critical to managing child safety. Your organisation's culture, systems and processes should support effective information sharing at all levels about the risks to children. Staff and volunteers need to be clear on their obligations.
- A good record keeping system is central to transparency and accountability, and to the overall integrity of your organisation. It is important to create, keep and store accurate records to effectively respond to a complaint of child abuse or harm.
- Confidentiality and privacy of the people involved should always be considered when sharing information and keeping secure records.

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<sup>13</sup> Adapted from Governance Institute of Australia, [What is governance?](#)



## Compliance indicators

### What will the Commission look for when assessing this Standard?

Organisations will generally comply if they produce these documents and undertake these actions in a way that supports the organisation to achieve this Standard.<sup>14</sup>

#### DOCUMENTS

- A public commitment to child safety is available and displayed for public access. (2.1)
- The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy sets out the organisation's expectations and practices in relation to each of the Standards. (2.3)
- A Code of Conduct sets out expectations regarding behaviour of staff and volunteers with children and in promoting and maintaining child safety and wellbeing. (2.4)

#### ACTIONS

- Leaders, staff, volunteers, members and children in the organisation champion and model a child safe culture. They express support for keeping children safe, take action when they have concerns about children's safety and prioritise the safety of children as part of everyday practice. (2.2)
- Leaders set clear expectations around child safety and ensure the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is implemented by staff and volunteers. (2.3)
- Leaders promote a culture of reporting. (2.2, 2.3)
- Governance arrangements mean senior leaders regularly review the organisation's performance in delivering child safety and wellbeing. (2.3 and links to 10.1)
- Governance arrangements mean senior leaders supervise whether risk assessment and management in the organisation is properly focused on identifying, preventing and reducing risks of child abuse and harm. (2.5 and links to 9.1, 9.3)
- Staff and volunteers understand their information sharing and record keeping obligations. (2.6)
- The Code of Conduct is communicated to all staff and volunteers and leaders hold them to account to comply with it. (2.4)

<sup>14</sup> The nature or characteristics of your organisation may mean you need to do something different to what is proposed in this guide. If so, you may have to explain how your approach complies with the outcomes and the minimum requirements of the Standards. Some sectors and organisations have co-regulators that have issued specific guidance. Where a co-regulator's guidance on the Standards applies to your organisation, and is different to this guide, your organisation should follow that co-regulator's guidance for your operations in that sector.



## 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.

### Key points

- Children are more likely to raise concerns or complaints in an organisation that empowers and listens to them.
- Policies and practices that are shaped by children's views can better prevent harm to children.
- Empowerment means building up children and strengthening their confidence in themselves and in an organisation. It involves equipping children with the skills and knowledge to make informed decisions and enabling them to increase control of their lives.<sup>15</sup>
- Just like adults, all children have rights. Rights are basic entitlements that belong to each person, regardless of any differences.
- Empowering children about their rights means all people in an organisation, including leaders, staff and volunteers:
  - uphold and respect children's rights at all times
  - take a proactive role in educating them about their rights
  - support them to exercise their rights.

<sup>15</sup> Commission for Children and Young People, [Empowerment and participation: a guide for organisations working with children and young people](#), 2021.

### Standard 3

- Children have a right to participate in the decisions that affect them. Participation is about giving children opportunities to have their say and inform decision-making. This requires organisations to listen, hear and make appropriate changes based on what children say.
- Children benefit from strong friendships. They may see their friends as their main source of support, information and advice, and go to them for help. Children should be allowed to meet and enjoy time together and your organisation should support their social connections and friendships, and challenge bullying or isolating behaviour.
- Sexual abuse prevention programs are age-appropriate programs and education delivered to children. These programs build their knowledge and skills to understand inappropriate behaviour by adults or other children, help protect themselves from potentially abusive situations, and know how to seek help in the event of abuse or attempted abuse. You should consider if it is appropriate for your organisation to provide these programs or other information that helps children understand sexual abuse and how to get help.
- People at all levels in your organisation have a role to play in child safety, empowerment and respecting children's rights. Staff and volunteers need to be aware of and know how to respond to the signs of child abuse and harm, and how to empower and encourage participation of children. Staff and volunteers may need support or training to do this.
- Children are not always used to being asked about their experiences or what they want. Your organisation needs to support them to feel comfortable speaking up and provide opportunities to do so. Participation activities should be age-appropriate, inclusive and accessible, tailored to individual needs and abilities. More information on how to do this is available in [Empowerment and participation: a guide for organisations working with children and young people](#).

## Compliance indicators

What will the Commission look for when assessing this Standard?

Organisations will generally comply if they produce these documents and undertake these actions in a way that supports the organisation to achieve this Standard.<sup>16</sup>

### DOCUMENTS

- Age-appropriate and easy to understand documents, in print or online, are easily accessible and support children to:
  - understand their rights, including to safety, information and participation
  - know how adults in the organisation should behave
  - understand the organisation's complaints process and how to raise safety concerns for themselves, their friends or peers
  - know about support services aimed at children. (3.1)
- The organisation's policies and procedures:
  - promote children's empowerment and participation
  - embed support for the rights of children. (3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6)

<sup>16</sup> The nature or characteristics of your organisation may mean you need to do something different to what is proposed in this guide. If so, you may have to explain how your approach complies with the outcomes and the minimum requirements of the Standards. Some sectors and organisations have co-regulators that have issued specific guidance. Where a co-regulator's guidance on the Standards applies to your organisation, and is different to this guide, your organisation should follow that co-regulator's guidance for your operations in that sector.



### ACTIONS

- Staff and volunteers in the organisation engage with children to help them to:
  - understand their rights, including to safety, information and participation
  - know how adults in the organisation should behave
  - understand the organisation's complaints process and how to raise safety concerns for themselves, their friends or peers
  - know about support services aimed at children. (3.1, 3.4)
- Practices in the organisation that disempower children are identified and action is taken to change them. (3.5, 3.6)
- Staff and volunteers are provided with information to help them understand, recognise and act on signs of child abuse or harm. (3.4)
- Where relevant, the organisation provides access to sexual abuse prevention programs and other relevant information to children in an age-appropriate and accessible manner. (3.3)
- The organisation creates opportunities for children to express their views and participate in decisions that impact them. What is heard and learnt from children influences how the organisation works. (3.5, 3.6)
- Staff and volunteers are supported to develop knowledge and skills to help children participate, express their views and raise their concerns. (3.4)
- The organisation supports children to develop social connections and friendships with their peers, build skills in children to support their peers and challenge bullying or isolating behaviour between children. (3.2)



## 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.

### Key points

- Families may be made up of a wide variety of relationships, including those who are related by blood, marriage, adoption, kinship structures or other extended family structures. Families may include people who share in the daily tasks of living or share a very close, personal relationship.
- Communities are a group of people who share common interests, experiences, social background, nationality, culture, beliefs or identity.<sup>17</sup> Organisations, families and children may have communities that they closely associate with or frequently engage with. Just like families, communities are diverse.
- Parents, carers and families should feel welcome in your organisation.<sup>18</sup> Building and maintaining an inclusive culture, which is respectful of different kinds of families, supports children to feel safe and to be safe.
- Empowering families and communities to play a part in your organisation's child safety and wellbeing journey is beneficial for children. It means that:
  - parents, carers and the community will learn what helps make organisations child safe and how they can help keep children safe
  - organisations can better support individual children with the benefit of insights from families, who know their children best
  - parents, carers and the community will feel empowered and know what to do if they are concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child
  - your organisation's child safe approach will continue to improve.

<sup>17</sup> Adapted from Cambridge Dictionary definition.

<sup>18</sup> There may be times when it is not appropriate to engage with some family members, for example, if there are restrictions on their contact with a child or, in certain situations, if the child is involved with Child Protection. In these instances, the focus should be on involving the wider family and community or, if appropriate, asking the child who they would like to be involved.

## Standard 4

- Having families participate in decisions means they are asked for their opinion before a decision is made, and this opinion is considered as part of the decision-making process. Your organisation should give families the chance to have a say about decisions that may impact the safety and wellbeing of their child.
- Families, carers and the community should be informed about the operations and governance of your organisation so they can meaningfully participate. Families need to understand what your organisation does and how it is structured. They need to know how to contact the right people in the organisation if they have a child safety or wellbeing concern.

## Compliance indicators

What will the Commission look for when assessing this Standard?

**Organisations will generally comply if they produce these documents and undertake these actions in a way that supports the organisation to achieve this Standard.<sup>19</sup>**

### DOCUMENTS

- The organisation's policies reflect the importance of family and community involvement and describe ways this involvement can occur. (4.3)
- Complaint handling policies include procedures for keeping families informed and provide guidance on how to do this while complying with obligations regarding confidentiality and privacy. (4.2 and links to 7.2)

<sup>19</sup> The nature or characteristics of your organisation may mean you need to do something different to what is proposed in this guide. If so, you may have to explain how your approach complies with the outcomes and the minimum requirements of the Standards. Some sectors and organisations have co-regulators that have issued specific guidance. Where a co-regulator's guidance on the Standards applies to your organisation, and is different to this guide, your organisation should follow that co-regulator's guidance for your operations in that sector.

### ACTIONS

- The organisation supports families and communities to take an active role in promoting and maintaining child safety and wellbeing by communicating about their role in child safety and wellbeing within the organisation. (4.4 and overall outcome)
- The organisation is open and transparent with families and communities by:
  - providing accessible information about the organisation’s child safety and wellbeing policies and practices (4.2 and 4.4)
  - providing information about the organisation’s governance and operations, how complaints are handled and how the organisation manages disciplinary actions and child safety risks. (4.4)
- Families have an opportunity to participate in decisions made by the organisation that impact the safety and wellbeing of their child. Communication with families supports the full diversity of families to participate. (4.1)
- Opportunities are created for families and community members to provide feedback on the organisation’s policies, procedures and practices including the organisation’s approach to child safety and wellbeing. (4.3)
- The organisation takes the feedback and involvement of families and communities seriously and takes their views into account. (4.3 and links to 7.3)





## 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.

### Key points

- Children have unique abilities, characteristics, skills and life experiences. Differences in backgrounds, personality and beliefs shape how a child experiences the world and what they need.
- Organisations and communities are stronger when diversity is valued and respected because children can access opportunities to fulfil their potential.
- Negative experiences like exclusion and discrimination can be harmful, increase the risk of harm and abuse to a child and decrease the likelihood of a child speaking up if they have a concern.
- Equity is a state of fairness in which all children can participate freely and equally in all areas of life, regardless of their background, characteristics or beliefs. In child safe organisations, this means that a child's safety is not dependent on their circumstances including their social or economic position, their cultural background or their abilities.
- A child safe organisation recognises and respects diversity and understands that some children are more vulnerable to abuse than others. It has policies and practices that ensure children have access to the relationships, skills, knowledge and resources they need to be as safe as their peers.
- Providing information, including information about available supports and complaints processes, that is accessible, culturally safe and easy to understand involves understanding how children's communication needs differ based on their individual capabilities and stage of development.
- A child's access to your organisation's complaints process should not be restricted because of their background, characteristics or life experience. It is important that all children are able to make a complaint or raise a concern.

## Standard 5

- Organisations need to understand the diverse circumstances of children, as well as their right to fair treatment. This includes paying attention to the needs of:
  - Children with disability – a child safe organisation empowers children with disability. It does not stereotype or make assumptions about a child’s abilities, but rather recognises that each child is different and experiences disability and the world differently.
  - Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds – a child safe organisation takes steps to understand language and cultural needs and takes diverse family structures and norms into account.
  - Those unable to live at home – there are many reasons why children may not be able to live at home. Their living arrangements can be varied, including formally or informally living with relatives or friends (kinship care), foster care or residential care. You may not be aware of a child’s living arrangements, but it is important to make your organisation safe and welcoming for all children regardless of their circumstances.
  - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, gender diverse and non-binary children and young people – children and young people can experience and express their sex, sexuality and gender in different ways. For LGBTIQ children and young people to feel safe and to be safe in your organisation, you should actively demonstrate that you welcome and value them and make it clear that you will take steps to protect them from abuse and harm.
  - Aboriginal children – Organisations must uphold the right of children to enjoy and feel connected to their culture and community, be safe from harm arising from racism, and have access to culturally safe services and organisations. There is more detailed information on establishing a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal children in [A guide for creating a Child Safe Organisation](#).

## Compliance indicators

What will the Commission look for when assessing this Standard?

Organisations will generally comply if they produce these documents and undertake these actions in a way that supports the organisation to achieve this Standard.<sup>20</sup>

### DOCUMENTS

- Materials for children, including information about complaints processes and supports, are accessible, age-appropriate and available in a range of languages and formats as needed. Written documents alone are not relied on, particularly for children who are blind or vision impaired, or children who cannot read. (5.2)
- The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy describes:
  - the organisation’s commitment to equity and inclusion (5.1)
  - how the organisation will recognise and respect the diverse needs of all children (5.1)
  - how the organisation provides avenues for children or their families to identify their individual needs (5.1)
  - how the organisation will provide children with access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand (5.2)
  - how the organisation will support equity and make reasonable changes to support participation by all children and respond to all children’s needs (5.1, 5.3, 5.4)
  - how the organisation upholds equity for all children and prevents child abuse and harm resulting from discrimination based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion, sex, intersex status, gender identity or sexual orientation. (5.1, 5.3, 5.4)

<sup>20</sup> The nature or characteristics of your organisation may mean you need to do something different to what is proposed in this guide. If so, you may have to explain how your approach complies with the outcomes and the minimum requirements of the Standards. Some sectors and organisations have co-regulators that have issued specific guidance. Where a co-regulator’s guidance on the Standards applies to your organisation, and is different to this guide, your organisation should follow that co-regulator’s guidance for your operations in that sector.

### ACTIONS

- The organisation takes steps to understand the diverse circumstances and needs of children who engage, or may engage, with it. (5.1, 5.3)
- Staff and volunteers:
  - are provided with information and guidance about children’s diverse circumstances, how to identify factors that can increase a child’s vulnerability to harm, and how to promote equity and safety for all children
  - take action to support and respond to children who are experiencing vulnerability, including making inquiries and responding where there are signs of increased vulnerability
  - take action to uphold equity for all children, promote children’s safety and prevent child abuse and harm. (5.1, 5.3, 5.4)
- Leaders set clear expectations around achieving equity and respect for diversity. (5.1 and links to 2.2)
- The organisation ensures all children are reasonably supported to participate. (5.1)



## 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 pre-employment 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.

### Key points

- Good recruitment practices and robust screening processes play a vital role in preventing harm to children.
- Recruitment starts with organisations being clear about the role and responsibilities of each staff and volunteer position and the type of contact they will have with children. This helps organisations identify the qualifications, experience and attributes applicants must have.
- Job advertisements should clearly state the organisation's commitment to child safety and wellbeing.
- The Working with Children Check aims to prevent people from working or volunteering with children if an assessment of their records indicates they may pose an unjustifiable risk to children. Some people are required by law to hold a valid check. Organisations may also choose to require people to hold a valid check as part of their screening process, even if not required by law.
- A Working with Children Check is a useful tool for keeping children safe in your organisation. However, it does not assess a person's suitability to work with or care for children in a particular role. Try to get a sense of the values of an applicant to help assess their suitability.
- Failing to properly check references can compromise child safety. Checking references allows you to confirm the applicant's information and explore any concerns you might have about their responses in an interview.
- Staff and volunteers must be appropriately inducted into their roles and the organisation, so they understand their responsibilities to children and how to create a safe environment for them. This must include providing an overview of your organisation's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct.

## Standard 6

- Inductions must also include information about your organisation's complaint handling policy, reporting, record keeping and information sharing obligations. Staff and volunteers should receive clear information on what to do if they have a child safety or wellbeing concern.
- Supervision of staff and volunteers promotes child safety and wellbeing, with clear performance standards and regular meetings between managers and individual staff and volunteers to discuss issues and raise concerns. Regular supervision enables managers to give feedback and address any unsafe or concerning conduct by staff and volunteers before harm to children occurs.

### Compliance indicators

What will the Commission look for when assessing this Standard?

Organisations will generally comply if they produce these documents and undertake these actions in a way that supports the organisation to achieve this Standard.<sup>21</sup>

#### DOCUMENTS

- Employment advertising includes the organisation's commitment to child safety and wellbeing. (6.1)
- Position descriptions set clear expectations about the role's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety and wellbeing. (6.1)
- Organisational recruitment, human resources and volunteering policies describe:
  - recruitment practices that support the organisation to appoint people who are suitable to work with children (6.1)
  - pre-employment screening practices including interviewing, referee checks, Working with Children Check and other registration or background checking (6.2)
  - requirements for an induction about the organisation's child safety practices (6.3)
  - how supervision and people management practices will support ongoing assessment of a person's suitability to work with children. (6.4)
- Induction documents for staff and volunteers include:
  - the Code of Conduct
  - the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
  - information about the organisation's child safety practices and complaints process as well as reporting, record keeping and information sharing obligations. (6.3 and links to 8.1)

<sup>21</sup> The nature or characteristics of your organisation may mean you need to do something different to what is proposed in this guide. If so, you may have to explain how your approach complies with the outcomes and the minimum requirements of the Standards. Some sectors and organisations have co-regulators that have issued specific guidance. Where a co-regulator's guidance on the Standards applies to your organisation, and is different to this guide, your organisation should follow that co-regulator's guidance for your operations in that sector.



### ACTIONS

- The child safety and wellbeing requirements of each role are assessed before recruitment of new staff and volunteers. These include:
  - qualifications, experience and attributes required
  - duties and responsibilities with children
  - measures required to manage any child abuse or harm risks including screening, training and supervision requirements. (6.1)
- Information and guidance are provided to recruiting staff on how to prioritise child safety in the recruitment process, including how to identify and manage any child safety concerns raised through the application, interview and screening process. (6.1)
- Recruitment processes include:
  - a range of values-based interview questions to establish suitability to work with children
  - pre-employment screening practices including referee checks, Working with Children Check and other registration or background checking
  - verification that required qualifications, registrations and Working with Children Check are valid and up-to-date
  - keeping records of the recruitment process. (6.1)
- Supervision and people management includes regular reviews to check whether staff are following Codes of Conduct and other child safe policies. (6.4)
- Guidance is provided for people managers on steps to take when managing staff or volunteers whose behaviour raises child safety concerns. (6.4)
- Qualifications, Working with Children Check and other registration or ongoing screening checks are regularly reviewed for changes and that they are still valid. Action is taken to manage the risks to children when a person's qualifications, Working with Children Check or other registration or ongoing screening check are no longer valid. (6.2)
- Staff and volunteers receive an induction adjusted to each role's requirements, duties, risks and responsibilities in relation to child safety and wellbeing. The induction covers the organisation's child safety practices and complaints process as well as reporting, record keeping and information sharing obligations. (6.3)



## 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.

### Key points

- A child-focused complaint handling process requires organisations to have a positive complaints culture. This means your organisation encourages and welcomes the reporting of concerns, responds to complaints promptly, thoroughly and fairly, and takes immediate action to protect children at risk.
- Your organisation's complaint handling policy should outline the process for adults as well as children to make a complaint or raise a child safety concern. The complaint process may be different for adults and children.
- The complaint handling policy should cover alleged abuse and harm of children by adults and by other children.
- The complaint handling policy should outline the different types of complaints or concerning behaviour that should be reported and give clear guidance on what must be reported, including mandatory reporting obligations. It should be clear who reports can be made to.
- Your organisation's complaint handling policy and processes must be easily accessible to staff and volunteers, children and their families. You may choose to develop a stand-alone policy or process that is written for, and accessible to, children. This could be a simple flowchart or poster that provides clear information for children about what they can do if they have a complaint or concern. You may also choose to create separate information for families.

## Standard 7

- Children raising complaints and safety concerns or disclosing abuse should be treated with sensitivity and provided with support. Guidance should be available to staff and volunteers so they know how to do this.
- Taking action to prioritise children's safety should be the organisation's focus once a complaint or safety concern has been raised. It is important to assess any immediate risks so that these can guide the next steps your organisation takes.
- Your complaint handling policy must address the process for reporting disclosures, complaints and safety concerns both internally within your organisation, and to external authorities.
- Your complaint handling policy should support your organisation to conduct investigations of complaints and should include ongoing risk management, fair and transparent processes and guidance about how to manage conflicts of interest.
- Your organisation must cooperate with Victoria Police, Child Protection, the Commission and other authorities that have a role in responding to complaints and concerns so that children's safety is prioritised. They may need to investigate and will benefit from your organisation's support and assistance to identify and contact witnesses and gather or retain evidence.
- An important part of resolving a complaint or safety concern is having a clear outcome. This means your organisation makes a decision about what to do after having properly considered the issue and the evidence, tells relevant people about this decision and then takes appropriate action.
- Confidentiality is important for complaints processes. People can have concerns about confidentiality and privacy when they want to make a complaint. They may wish to remain anonymous, or may not want information shared with authorities such as police. Sometimes confidentiality cannot be maintained, either for the protection of children or so that the subject of a complaint can be treated fairly. Your complaint handling policy should explain how confidentiality should be managed when a complaint is made.
- Personal information that identifies a child or another individual associated with a complaint should only be disclosed by the organisation as permitted under the relevant laws.
- Your organisation's complaint handling policy and processes must align with any employment law obligations that apply to your staff and volunteers. You should ensure that any investigation into an employee's conduct is procedurally fair.

## Compliance indicators

### What will the Commission look for when assessing this Standard?

Organisations will generally comply if they produce these documents and undertake these actions in a way that supports the organisation to achieve this Standard.<sup>22</sup>

#### DOCUMENTS

- The complaint handling policy is easy to understand, culturally safe, accessible and child-focused. The complaint handling policy:
  - includes information on how adults and children can make a complaint and how the organisation will respond to and investigate complaints in a prompt and thorough way (7.1, 7.2, 7.3)
  - creates a complaints process that is accessible to the full diversity of children, staff, volunteers, families and communities (7.1)
  - covers alleged abuse and harm of children by adults and by other children (7.1, 7.4)
  - covers breaches of the organisation’s Code of Conduct (7.1)
  - sets out what support and assistance will be provided for those making a complaint (7.1)
  - outlines how risks to children will be managed when a complaint is raised and an investigation is underway (links to Standard 9)
- covers record keeping obligations (7.2 and links to 2.6)
- supports privacy and employment law obligations to be met. (7.5)
- Documents, in print or online, describe the complaints process for staff, volunteers, children, families and communities. (7.1, 7.2)
- Policies and procedures include information about when complaints should be reported to authorities, including Victoria Police, Child Protection and the Commission for Children and Young People. (7.5)
- Disciplinary policies support the organisation to take action when a complaint is raised. (7.1)

<sup>22</sup> The nature or characteristics of your organisation may mean you need to do something different to what is proposed in this guide. If so, you may have to explain how your approach complies with the outcomes and the minimum requirements of the Standards. Some sectors and organisations have co-regulators that have issued specific guidance. Where a co-regulator’s guidance on the Standards applies to your organisation, and is different to this guide, your organisation should follow that co-regulator’s guidance for your operations in that sector.

### ACTIONS

- The organisation makes information about how to make a complaint available and accessible to everyone involved with the organisation. (7.2, 7.4)
- The organisation provides staff and volunteers with support and information on what and how to report, including to authorities outside the organisation. (7.1, 7.3, 7.4)
- Complaints are taken seriously, meaning the organisation consistently:
  - identifies and manages any risks to children
  - responds to complaints promptly and thoroughly
  - prioritises the safety of children and also meets privacy and employment law obligations
  - supports everyone involved in the complaints process
  - reports complaints of alleged abuse or harm of children and concerns about child safety to the authorities and cooperates with law enforcement. (7.1, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5 and links to Standard 9)
- Records are kept of complaints made to the organisation, including concerns raised about the safety of children and disclosures about alleged abuse or harm of children, and actions taken to respond. (7.3 and links to 2.6)
- Children, families and communities are consulted when designing and reviewing complaint handling policies and procedures. (7.2 and links to 4.3)
- The organisation reviews complaint handling policies and procedures at regular intervals. (7.1 and links to 10.1)



## 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.

### Key points

- When an organisation's staff and volunteers are properly informed, trained and supported, they are more likely to uphold the organisation's child safe values and more likely to report concerns to their manager or child safety person.
- Having a Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy alone does not protect children from abuse and harm. Organisations need to equip their staff and volunteers with the knowledge and skills to keep children safe. This means providing ongoing education and training to staff and volunteers so they can apply it when performing their roles.
- A child safe organisation supports its staff and volunteers to identify signs where a child may be experiencing abuse or harm. Sometimes a child may tell someone if they are being harmed, but at other times staff and volunteers will need to look out for changes in behaviour, emotions or physical appearance.
- A child safe organisation also provides training and information to its staff and volunteers so they can respond effectively to child wellbeing and safety issues, including supporting children and responding to any disclosures they make.
- Receiving disclosures of harm to a child can be both distressing and stressful. This means it is useful for staff and volunteers to know who they can get guidance and support from, and how to support their colleagues.
- Staff and volunteers need guidance on taking active steps to make sure that Aboriginal people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds feel that their culture and identity is respected, that racism is not tolerated, that they feel safe to be themselves.
- Training and information for staff and volunteers on child safety issues, including indicators of harm, may be confronting, especially for survivors of child abuse. A trauma-informed approach involves understanding the effects of trauma and stress on a person and being sensitive to the nature of information being provided and how it is provided. This seeks to safeguard individuals from further harm.



## Compliance indicators

What will the Commission look for when assessing this Standard?

Organisations will generally comply if they produce these documents and undertake these actions in a way that supports the organisation to achieve this Standard.<sup>23</sup>

### DOCUMENTS

- A training action plan for staff and volunteers includes training on:
  - the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (8.1)
  - identifying indicators of child abuse and harm (8.2)
  - how to support a person making a disclosure about harm to a child (8.3)
  - how to respond to issues of child safety including internal and external reporting requirements, notifying families and carers and managing risks to children (8.3)
  - how to support cultural safety. (8.4)
- Guidance materials (such as policies, procedures, guidelines, information sheets and posters) for staff and volunteers provide guidance about:
  - identifying indicators of child abuse and harm, including where caused by other children (8.2)
  - how to respond to issues of child safety including internal and external reporting requirements, notifying families and carers and managing risks to children (8.3)
  - how to support a person disclosing harm to a child (8.3)
  - how to create culturally safe environments in the organisation. (8.4)
- A training register records completion of training by staff and volunteers. (8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4)

<sup>23</sup> The nature or characteristics of your organisation may mean you need to do something different to what is proposed in this guide. If so, you may have to explain how your approach complies with the outcomes and the minimum requirements of the Standards. Some sectors and organisations have co-regulators that have issued specific guidance. Where a co-regulator's guidance on the Standards applies to your organisation, and is different to this guide, your organisation should follow that co-regulator's guidance for your operations in that sector.

### ACTIONS

- Leaders communicate to staff and volunteers that child safety training is mandatory. (8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4)
- Training is provided to staff and volunteers on the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy on induction and at regular intervals. (8.1)
- Training is provided to staff and volunteers that supports their ability to:
  - identify signs of child abuse and harm (8.2)
  - respond to issues of child safety including internal and external reporting requirements, notifying families and carers and managing risks to children (8.3)
  - support a person disclosing child harm (8.2, 8.3)
  - create culturally safe environments in the organisation. (8.4)
- Training and guidance on child safety is:
  - appropriate to the organisation's engagement with children and the needs of children in the organisation
  - trauma-informed
  - offered on a regular basis to enable staff and volunteers to keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date
  - regularly reviewed and updated to remain effective. (8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4)
- Supervision and management of staff and volunteers includes identifying child safety training needs. (8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4)



## 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 setting, 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.

### Key points

- Identifying and managing risk in organisations is a fundamental step in keeping children safe from harm. By adopting a risk management approach, an organisation can actively reduce the likelihood of children suffering harm or abuse.
- For the purpose of the Child Safe Standards, 'risk' means the chance for harm or abuse of a child to occur in connection with an organisation. This includes risks to children from the organisation or people involved with it, risks that arise due to the activities undertaken by the organisation and those that arise in its physical and online environments.
- All organisations must analyse and understand the potential risks to the children they engage with. It is important to think about risks created by the organisational structure and culture, activities and the physical and online environments, as well as addressing new risks as they arise.
- When identifying and managing risk, it is important to balance the need to manage the risk of harm and abuse against the benefits to children of a particular activity or approach.
- Online technologies are constantly changing, and children are often ahead of parents, carers and organisational staff in adapting to these changes. Behaviour online needs to be covered in your organisation's Code of Conduct, and child safety and wellbeing policies and practices need to also address the online environment.
- Arrangements or contracts with third parties can also present child safety risks. They may bring unknown people, or people not subject to the same level of child safety screening, into contact with children involved with the organisation.
- Organisations must consider, identify and manage any risks presented by third parties to the children involved with the organisation.
- [Risk assessment and management templates](#) have been developed to help organisations complete their child safety risk assessments and management plan.

## Compliance indicators

What will the Commission look for when assessing this Standard?

Organisations will generally comply if they produce these documents and undertake these actions in a way that supports the organisation to achieve this Standard.<sup>24</sup>

### DOCUMENTS

- A risk assessment identifies risks of child abuse and harm in both physical and online environments connected with the organisation. (9.1, 9.3)
- Risk management plans list the actions the organisation will take to prevent or reduce each identified risk of child abuse and harm. (9.3)
- The Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy identifies how the organisation will keep children safe in physical and online environments, with specific reference to higher-risk activities. (9.2, 9.3)
- Procurement policies about engaging third-party contractors set out processes to protect children from risks of child abuse and harm, such as requiring compliance with the organisation's Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. (9.4)

<sup>24</sup> The nature or characteristics of your organisation may mean you need to do something different to what is proposed in this guide. If so, you may have to explain how your approach complies with the outcomes and the minimum requirements of the Standards. Some sectors and organisations have co-regulators that have issued specific guidance. Where a co-regulator's guidance on the Standards applies to your organisation, and is different to this guide, your organisation should follow that co-regulator's guidance for your operations in that sector.

## ACTIONS

- Risk assessment and management plans are informed by and responsive to the views and concerns of staff, volunteers and children. Plans show that the organisation has balanced the need to manage the risk of harm and abuse against children's rights to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities. (9.1, 9.3)
- Staff and volunteers are provided with risk management plans so they are aware of risks of child abuse and harm and know what action they need to take to prevent and reduce them. (9.1)
- Action is taken by staff and volunteers in the organisation to prevent and reduce risks of child abuse and harm when identified. (9.1)
- Risk assessments and management plans are regularly reviewed to keep them up-to-date and include lessons from complaints, concerns and safety incidents. (9.1, 9.2)
- The organisation's leadership and governance arrangements ensure risk assessment and management are focused on identifying, preventing and reducing risks of child abuse and harm. (links to 2.5)
- When negotiating contracts with third parties, contracts include terms that allow the organisation to take action if the third party does not meet expected child safety and wellbeing standards. (9.4)
- When third-party contractors are engaged, action is taken by the organisation to assess whether, and the extent to which, the engagement of third-party contractors poses risks of child abuse and harm. (9.4)
- Depending on the level of risk posed by third-party contractors, the organisation should take actions to prevent or reduce risks of child abuse or harm. Appropriate actions may include:
  - requiring third-party contractors to comply with the organisation's policies and procedures
  - monitoring compliance by third-party contractors with the Child Safe Standards and/or the organisation's policies and procedures
  - working with third-party contractors to identify, prevent and reduce risks of child abuse and harm
  - where an organisation is unable to adequately manage risks of child abuse and harm posed by third-party contractors, consider terminating the contract or take other appropriate action to protect children. (9.4)
- If appropriate, staff, volunteers, parents, carers and children are provided with information about online safety and risks in the online environment, such as online grooming, cyber bullying and sexting. Support is given to reporting negative experiences or concerns. (9.2)



## 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.

### Key points

- Being a child safe organisation cannot be achieved as a one-off exercise but requires ongoing effort. Child safe organisations have an open and transparent culture, learn from their mistakes and put the interests of children first.
- Regular reviews should check that your policies, procedures and practices are adequate, up-to-date and effective, and that they are being fully implemented and followed by everyone.
- An annual review is good practice to maintain up-to-date and effective policies and procedures. In a fast-changing environment, more frequent review may be needed.
- Looking at complaints, concerns and safety incidents is critical to a review, provides information on the effectiveness of your organisation's child safe systems and practices, and can help identify areas where changes are needed to prevent further abuse or harm.
- Your analysis of complaints, concerns and safety incidents should consider:
  - the underlying causes or issues behind each matter
  - any indications of gaps or failures in your policies, procedures or practices
  - patterns in behaviours, practices, incidents or near misses
  - any indications that people in your organisation may not understand how to follow your child safe policies
  - what needs to change to address the issues identified.
- When reporting on review findings you should consider how you:
  - share findings in a timely way so they remain current and meaningful
  - communicate findings in age-appropriate ways and ensure they are easy to access and understand
  - share learnings from reviews and outline any plans to change or update child safe practices or systems and when changes will happen, and/or further reviews
  - remember to protect people's privacy and maintain confidentiality as required by law or where you have committed to do so
  - consider how publicly reporting on a review may impact on parties involved in any incidents referenced – especially consider the need to warn any victim-survivors that the report will be published.



## Compliance indicators

What will the Commission look for when assessing this Standard?

Organisations will generally comply if they produce these documents and undertake these actions in a way that supports the organisation to achieve this Standard.<sup>25</sup>

### DOCUMENTS

- All policies and procedures have a regular review period indicated in the document. (10.1)
- Reports document any child safety and wellbeing reviews and findings. (10.3)

### ACTIONS

- Records are kept of complaints, concerns, allegations and actions taken to respond. (10.1, 10.2, 10.3)
- Complaints, concerns, safety incidents or significant breaches of policy (such as the Code of Conduct) are examined to understand what caused the problem and whether there are any flaws in the organisation's policies, procedures and practices that contributed to the problem. Where flaws or failings are identified, improvements are made to prevent the problem from happening again. (10.1, 10.2)
- The organisation regularly reviews policies, procedures and child safe practices, and makes improvements considering:
  - analysis of complaints, concerns, safety incidents and significant breaches of policy
  - feedback sought from staff, volunteers, children, families and communities
  - whether the organisation has fully implemented each of the Child Safe Standards. (10.1, 10.2 and links to Standard 3 and 4.3)
- Reports about the findings and actions taken in response to reviews of the organisation's child safe practices are shared with staff, volunteers, children, families and communities. (10.3)

<sup>25</sup> The nature or characteristics of your organisation may mean you need to do something different to what is proposed in this guide. If so, you may have to explain how your approach complies with the outcomes and the minimum requirements of the Standards. Some sectors and organisations have co-regulators that have issued specific guidance. Where a co-regulator's guidance on the Standards applies to your organisation, and is different to this guide, your organisation should follow that co-regulator's guidance for your operations in that sector.



# 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.

## Key points

- Documenting policies and procedures to implement all the Standards sends a message to everyone involved with the organisation that child safety is important. It is not enough to have preferred practices in mind or believe that everyone in the organisation is already doing the right thing. Rules and expectations need to be written down and formalised in policy so they can be shared and used to embed child safety consistently throughout your organisation.
- Policies and procedures will guide people within your organisation by describing how the organisation promotes wellbeing and prevents and responds to child safety issues. 'Policies' are the documented rules, expectations and positions of the organisation. 'Procedures' are the documented actions and processes that put the organisation's policies into operation.
- Some child safety issues can be complex to respond to, but you should aim to write your organisation's policies as simply as possible. Policies should be written with the audience in mind, taking care to use language that is accessible to everyone who needs to understand it.
- It is difficult to produce effective policies if they are developed in isolation – people who need to implement them and those affected by them should be consulted on their development. Organisations should give children, families and communities a say in the development of policies and procedures.
- Most child safety matters are not unique and have been considered before by other organisations, peak bodies, experts and academics. Tapping into insights provided by others' experience, and by available research and written guidance, can help your organisation produce the best results for children.

## Standard 11

- Championing and modelling compliance means leaders take a proactive, outspoken approach on the importance of child safety and wellbeing. Leaders 'walk the talk' in taking child safety matters seriously, responding promptly and thoroughly, and providing staff and volunteers with the time and resources needed to embed child safe practices throughout the organisation.
- Staff and volunteers in your organisation are a critical part of creating a child safe organisation and should be provided with the information and support necessary to put policies and procedures into practice.

## Compliance indicators

What will the Commission look for when assessing this Standard?

Organisations will generally comply if they produce these documents and undertake these actions in a way that supports the organisation to achieve this Standard.<sup>26</sup>

### DOCUMENTS

- A Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy sets out the organisation's expectations, practices and approach in relation to each of the Child Safe Standards. (11.1, 11.2 and links to 2.3)
- A Code of Conduct sets out the expectations for behaviour and responsibilities of staff and volunteers. (11.1, 11.2 and links to 2.4)
- Risk assessment and management plans address risks of child abuse and harm. (11.1, 11.2 and links to 9.1 and 9.3)
- The complaint handling policy and processes address how the organisation will respond and all internal and external reporting obligations. (11.1, 11.2 and links to Standard 7)
- Organisational recruitment, human resources and volunteering policies have a clear child safety focus. (11.1, 11.2 and links to Standard 6)
- If your organisation contracts facilities and/or services from third parties, procurement policies ensure the safety of children. (11.1, 11.2 and links to 9.4)

<sup>26</sup> The nature or characteristics of your organisation may mean you need to do something different to what is proposed in this guide. If so, you may have to explain how your approach complies with the outcomes and the minimum requirements of the Standards. Some sectors and organisations have co-regulators that have issued specific guidance. Where a co-regulator's guidance on the Standards applies to your organisation, and is different to this guide, your organisation should follow that co-regulator's guidance for your operations in that sector.

### ACTIONS

- Regular consultation on child safety with everyone involved in your organisation is undertaken. (11.3 and links to Standards 3 and 4)
- The organisation uses input from consultations and available information about creating child safety and wellbeing to help develop, review and update policies and procedures related to child safety. (11.3)
- The organisation's policies and procedures cover all the Child Safe Standards and address the risks to the safety of children that are specific to the organisation and its environment. (11.1)
- Policies and procedures are easy to understand and can be accessed easily. (11.2)

The Commission respectfully acknowledges and celebrates the Traditional Owners of the lands throughout Victoria and pays its respects to their Elders, children and young people of past, current and future generations.

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