

Child Safe Standards

DEVELOPMENT OFFICER TIPS – ENCOURAGING CHILD SAFETY IN CLUBS

The 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards (the Standards) apply to all sporting organisations that operate and provide sporting services to children within Victoria. This includes sporting clubs, leagues and associations.

As a State Sport Association (SSA) or Regional Sports Assembly (RSA), you are strongly encouraged to identify how you can support your members to take reasonable and practical steps to ensure they are meeting the Standards and developing a child safe culture at their club.

Three key steps to take with your clubs or associations are set out below. It may help to review the Standards before meeting with members. You can do this by downloading our resource – [About the Standards](#).

1. Focus on steps taken by your own organisation

Your organisation should have policies and procedures in place to address the Standards. This may have involved a review undertaken by senior staff to understand what the Standards require and developing an action plan for your organisation or your affiliated clubs and associations to meet the Standards.

In many cases, SSAs and National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) develop policies and codes of conduct for child safety with which their affiliate organisations are required to comply.

It is appropriate for your members to adopt a State or National child safe policy and/or code of conduct. However, they also need to ensure that the policy and/or code of conduct is read and understood by all of their members and is made publicly available. Your sport should not simply adopt a National or State policy and/or code of conduct without promoting and acting to uphold them.

You should also understand your organisation's approach to member protection and the role of Member Protection & Information (MPIO) officers. You might ask a senior manager how this is structured within your sport and check if there is a specific policy for your affiliate clubs or associations to have trained MPIO's and/or – even better - Child Safe Officers. While child safety is everyone's responsibility there might be a staff member dedicated to child safety whom you can speak to.

2. Understand the steps that clubs and associations should take to action child safety

The following steps are recommended for grassroots clubs, leagues and associations to take when initially tackling child safety:

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

6. Continue to **monitor and review** your organisations actions to improve and ensure ongoing compliance with the Standards is maintained.

3. Ask Questions of your clubs or associations

There are some questions that we suggest that you ask your clubs when liaising with them about child safety:

Q1. Are you aware of the 11 (eleven) mandatory Child Safe Standards that apply to your club/association?

Why you should ask this question: clubs and associations are legal entities in their own right and they have a duty to understand laws that apply to their organisation. You can help them understand what they need to do.

Suggested ways to respond (depending on how the club or association reacts to your question):

- *The Standards apply to all sporting organisations that operate and provide sporting services to children within Victoria, including your club/association.*
- *The aim of the Standards is to develop child safe cultures in organisations to protect the safety of children.*
- *WWCCs are important, but you also need to take steps to develop a child safe culture in your club or association.*

If appropriate, you should talk through each Standard with the club or association's representative you are meeting with.

Q2. Have you set up a working group or subcommittee to address child safety?

Why you should ask this question: child safety is everyone's responsibility. Organisations should ensure that multiple people are actively involved in the process to create a child safe culture. Preferably, this includes some of the most senior people in the club/organisation so that they can lead and promote child safety.

Suggested ways to respond (depending on how the club or association reacts to your question):

- *Setting up a working group or subcommittee is a useful way to review your child safe practices and develop an action plan. This should not be the responsibility of just one person, as it could lead to burnout. It is best led by leaders within your club/association and should be representative of your members and kids.*
- *If you haven't set up a working group, let's think about who it could include. Your President should be involved to ensure buy in from your committee. Think about members who work as teachers, doctors or nurses – they may have dealt with Standards already and have useful advice. In addition, a committee is a great way to engage parents and kids in the process as well as other stakeholders.*

Q3. Have you completed a child safety review?

Why you should ask this question: Vicsport strongly recommends that organisations complete a child safe review. Ideally, a working group or subcommittee will work on this as a team. You can download the [Child Safe Review Template](#) which assists organisations to assess what they are doing against the seven Standards and identify future actions and support required against the 11 Standards and identify future actions and support required.

Suggested way to respond (depending on how the club or association reacts to your question):

- *I understand this process can feel daunting. By doing a child safe review, you can identify what is needed to ensure your club/association meets the Standards. You might find that you are already doing a lot of the right things. You will also identify any needs you have for support, which we are here to help with.*
- *Doing a review can be motivating, as it highlights where good work is being done, but also areas in which you can improve. These reviews are handy to have as references for the club or committee.*

Q4. Do you understand your club or association's level of risk?

Why you should ask this question: the aim of the Standards is to protect the safety of children in sporting environments. This includes both the physical and online environment and the cultural safety of your club or association. Persons in positions of authority at your club or association should think carefully about situations that occur frequently - or infrequently - that could pose a risk to children (i.e. one-to-one coaching or situations where an adult is alone with children, or how children access your venue after being dropped off by parents). You may use your knowledge of the sport to suggest other risk management approaches or share ideas and strategies from other affiliate clubs or associations.

Suggested ways to respond (depending on how the club or association reacts to your question):

- *Think about behaviours that may expose children to risk of harm, such as aggressive behaviour or inappropriate touching. Are these behaviours prevalent in this club or association? Can you be doing more to mitigate these risks or behaviours?*
- *Another area to assess is situational risk – are there situations at the club (thinking about the way the sport operates) that pose a risk to children, such as one-to-one coaching or children being left alone waiting for parents to pick them up?*

Q5. Have you started implementing an action plan?

Why you should ask this question: having an action plan is a great way for an organisation to take steps to create a child safe environment. The benefits of an action plan include sharing the workload, ensuring necessary actions are not forgotten, setting deadlines for key tasks and provides direction for an organisation to improve. Vicsport has developed the Action Plan Template which any SSA or RSA is welcome to use and tailor to their needs.

Suggested ways to respond (depending on how the club or association reacts to your question):

- *I can assist you to review your club's approach and develop an action plan.*
- *If you haven't implemented an action plan, I would strongly recommend this as a way to share the workload and ensure you take steps to protect the safety of children.*
- *There are a range of templates available to assist you to develop an action plan which will assist and can be tailored to meet your club's needs.*

Q6. Do you require any further advice or support?

It may be useful to remind the club or association that ongoing external support is available. The primary contact for any grassroots organisation should be their affiliate SSA or RSA.

Suggested ways to respond:

- *We are here to help. If you have any further questions or require certain support, please let me know.*

Remember:

Child safety is not an add-on or one off exercise. It is a legal requirement that every organisation needs to be compliant with the Standards.

Having member protection policies and procedures in place is not enough anymore. We must now create an ongoing culture and environment within sport that is supportive and protective of children.

Further Information

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DISCLAIMER:

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

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This document was developed utilising and adapting content from:

*State Government of Victoria, Department of Health & Human Services (2015) An overview of the Victorian child safe standards
Commission for Children and Young People (2018), A guide for creating a child safe organisation.*

