

Betrayal of Trust Implementation

Child Safe Standards

Background

Child abuse is unacceptable and ensuring children's safety is a top priority for the Victorian Government.

Creating child safe organisations is a key component of the Victorian Government's response to the report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations (Betrayal of Trust Inquiry).¹

The Betrayal of Trust Inquiry found that while the majority of children are safe in organisations, there are inadequate and inconsistent approaches to child safety in child-related organisations across Victoria. The Inquiry provided 15 recommendations, which the government has committed to implementing, including the introduction of minimum standards for ensuring child safe organisations.

In response to the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry, the Victorian Government is proposing to introduce compulsory minimum standards that will apply to organisations that provide services for children to help ensure the safety of children. This work is focused on strengthening organisations' approaches to preventing and responding to child abuse.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is leading the implementation of the standards. On 20 October 2015, legislation to implement the standards was introduced into the Victorian Parliament.

Proposed standards

The proposed child safe standards are:

In complying with the child safe standards an applicable entity to which the standards apply must include the following principles as part of each standard:

- *promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children²*
- *promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds*
- *promoting the safety of children with a disability.*

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, an applicable entity to which the standards apply must have:

1. *strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements*
2. *a child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety*
3. *a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children*
4. *screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel*
5. *processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse*
6. *strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse*
7. *strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.*

¹ <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/fcdc/article/1788>

² the term 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Organisations in scope and implementation

It is proposed the standards will apply to organisations that provide services for children.

It is intended that the standards will start applying to organisations from 1 January 2016 in phases:

Category 1: Proposed 1 January 2016 commencement (Phase 1)

- Organisations regulated and/or funded by government providing services for children or that provide facilities specifically for children and which are supervised by the organisation:
- registered schools (government and non-government)
- approved education and care services (e.g. kindergartens, after hours care services)
- children's services (e.g. occasional care providers)
- an organisation which provides Early Childhood Intervention Services
- Maternal and Child Health Centres
- organisations registered or accredited to provide senior secondary education and training
- registered overseas student exchange organisations
- approved education and training organisations providing courses to students from overseas
- out-of-home care services
- child protection services
- family violence or sexual assault services
- housing services and homeless services
- youth services
- support services for parents and families
- public and denominational hospitals, public health services, private hospitals, multipurpose services, day procedure centres and registered community health services
- drug or alcohol treatment services
- designated mental health services and publicly funded mental health community support services
- government departments and agencies providing services to children (including youth justice and corrective services)
- local councils
- disability services providers.

Category 2: Proposed 1 January 2017 commencement (Phase 2)

- Organisations that have limited or no funding and/or regulatory arrangements with government that provide services for children or that provide facilities specifically for children and which are supervised by the organisation:
- religious bodies, including churches
- residential facilities of boarding schools and student hostels
- cultural, sport or recreation services for children
- counselling or other support services for children
- charities and not-for-profit organisations providing services to children

- coaching or tuition services for children
- entertainment or party services for children
- commercial or publicly funded transport services for children
- gym or play facilities for children
- photography services for children
- talent or beauty competitions in which children participate
- overnight camps for children
- professional babysitting services
- organisations which employ a child for whom a permit is required under the **Child Employment Act 2003**
- post-school education and training providers, including TAFE institutes and universities
- youth organisations (such as Scouts or Girl Guides)
- schools other than registered schools (such as swimming schools, dance schools)
- disability service providers other than those registered under the **Disability Act 2006** (such as TAC funded providers).

Support for organisations

Organisations will be supported to strengthen their capacity to prevent and respond to child abuse, and ongoing improvement will remain a focus of the standards. Education, awareness raising and helping organisations to create and maintain child safe environments will be the initial focus of the standards.

Many organisations have existing policies and procedures which aim to keep children safe. The child safe standards are intended to build on these measures to improve child safety in organisations and increase consistency across sectors.

There will be information sessions from October 2015 about the standards. Government will also work with key peak bodies to assist them to support organisations in their sector to meet the standards.

Capacity-building tools and templates are being developed to assist organisations to create and maintain child safe environments under the standards, including guidance materials, policy examples, online resources and templates. These materials will be released in the coming weeks and will be supported by training for phase 1 organisations.

Further information about materials and training opportunities to build the capacity of organisations to meet the standards will be released soon.

Compliance monitoring

Organisations in the first phase are already regulated or funded by government and compliance with the standards will be initially monitored through these existing arrangements. It is intended that any future oversight and compliance functions for the standards that may apply to all organisations in scope would not duplicate or replace existing regulatory or reporting mechanisms.

The introduction of the child safe standards will not alter any existing requirements to hold a Working with Children Check.

Further information

If you have any questions, you can email childsafestandards@dhhs.vic.gov.au or phone (03) 9096 0000.