

What to look for in a child safe organisation

All children have the right to feel safe and to be safe all of the time. An agency, activity or organisation providing a child safe environment is one that has in place a range of strategies to ensure children are protected from harm.

As a parent, you are frequently choosing activities, services or programs for your child. To be confident your child is welcome and safe when attending an activity or service, you need to think about a range of issues.

Victoria has mandatory minimum child safety standards that apply to most organisations working with children. All organisations working with children are strongly encouraged to ensure they have child safe strategies in place, even if the compulsory child safe standards do not apply to them.

You can check which type of organisations are covered by these standards at

<<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/in-scope-organisations-for-child-safe-standards>>

Phase 1: Organisations that provide services for children that are government funded and/or regulated will be required to work towards compliance from 1 January 2016.

Phase 2: Other organisations that provide services for children will be required to comply from 1 January 2017.

Registered schools have until 1 August 2016 to be compliant with the standards.

In complying with the compulsory child safe standards, an organisation to which the standards apply must also ensure they have a particular focus on promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal¹ children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and the safety of children with a disability

The information following helps describe what you should see in place and in action in a child safe organisation.

Sole traders – tutors, coaches, counsellors and other self-employed people working with children

A sole trader is an individual with no employees or volunteers and who is not incorporated.

Your child may have a maths tutor, a music teacher or counsellor that you pay directly or access on a volunteer basis. In these instances you can use the questions that follow to help your conversation with them and assist you to decide if they are a safe person and right for you and your child.



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Although sole traders are not compulsorily required to meet the Victorian child safe standards, parents still need to feel comfortable that the person is safe and suitable to work with children. You can:

- ask people you know and trust who they have used
- ask a potential sole trader for current references and make sure you check them
- check the person has a current and valid Working with Children Check
- supervise their contact with your child where this is reasonable
- talk with your child about how they feel when with the person
- raise any issues or concerns that you may have
- select an alternative person to work with your child if you, or your child, have any concerns.

A child safe organisation recognises that children are vulnerable and acts to protect them.

You can check if a self-employed person has a valid Working with Children Check

A Working with Children Check is vital but is only one part of being child safe. In Victoria, adults involved in *coaching or tuition services of any kind specifically for children, counselling or other support services for children, Commercial entertainment or party services for children unless they are merely incidental to or in support of other business activities and clubs, associations or movements of a cultural, recreational or sporting nature*, amongst many others, are required to have a Working with Children Check.

You can check that a person has an up-to-date Working with Children Check:

- request to see their Working with Children Check Card
- make sure that the photo on the card is of the right person
- record the card number and the person's last name (exactly as is on the card)
- go to the Working with Children website Check status' service <<https://online.justice.vic.gov.au/wwccu/checkstatus.doj>>
- enter the first 8 numbers on the person's Working with Children Check card and the person's last name.

The status (valid or invalid) and expiry date of a person's card or application will be shown. This service does not reveal any personal information about the applicant or cardholder.

Do not allow a person with an invalid card to work with your child.

Ask questions and speak up – Ask how the organisation meets child safe standard requirements – it's your right.

Talk to and listen to your child – How a child experiences the world is different to adults. It is only through the eyes of your child that you can gain a sense of how safe the organisation feels to them.



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What does a child safe organisation look and feel like?

<p>Child safe standard 1 Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, through effective leadership arrangements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Does the organisation promote itself as a child safe organisation? ■ Do staff and leaders demonstrate a commitment to child safety by their actions and behaviour? ■ Are staff and volunteers interested in and engaged with the children? ■ Do you and your child feel welcomed in the organisation? ■ Does the organisation raise awareness about child abuse and abuse prevention? ■ Does the organisation take a zero tolerance approach to discrimination and abuse? ■ Does the organisation recognise, respect and promote cultural identity as being fundamental to a child's safety and wellbeing, and provide training for their staff on this?
<p>Child safe standard 2 A Child Safety Policy or statement of commitment to child safety.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Do you know about and can you see the organisation's Child Safe Policy or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety – do staff seem to know about it? ■ Does the Child Safe Policy or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and the safety of children with a disability? ■ Are children, parents or carers invited to participate in the development and review of the policy?
<p>Child safe standard 3 A Code of Conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Is the organisation's Code of Conduct well known and understood and does it describe what behaviours are OK and what are not OK? ■ Is it clear how to raise a concern about breaches of the Code of Conduct or make a complaint?
<p>Child safe standard 4 Screening, supervision, training and other human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Does the organisation have policies on staff recruitment and management covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – recruitment processes, including skills and qualifications required – background checking and screening processes for all staff and volunteers – staff supervisions and management ■ Do relevant staff have a valid Working with Children Check? ■ Do all staff accept it is their role to protect children involved with their organisation? ■ Does the organisation provide training for its staff on child abuse recognition and prevention?



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<p>Child safe standard 5 Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Are there processes for reporting and acting on disclosures or concerns about child safety? ■ Is there a clear and accessible complaints procedure for use by children, parents and staff? ■ Are these policies provided to parents upon request?
<p>Child safe standard 6 Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Does the organisation have a Risk Management Plan? ■ Can parents participate in the planning process? ■ Is the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and the safety of children with a disability considered within this plan? ■ Are policies in place to minimise risk involved in one-to-one situations with a child? ■ Do equipment and activities appear appropriate for the activity and the age of the children?
<p>Child safe standard 7 Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Are children meaningfully consulted about decisions that affect them? ■ Are children listened to? ■ Are children informed of their rights and how to raise concerns in an age appropriate way? ■ Do staff readily interact with children in an age appropriate and respectful way?

