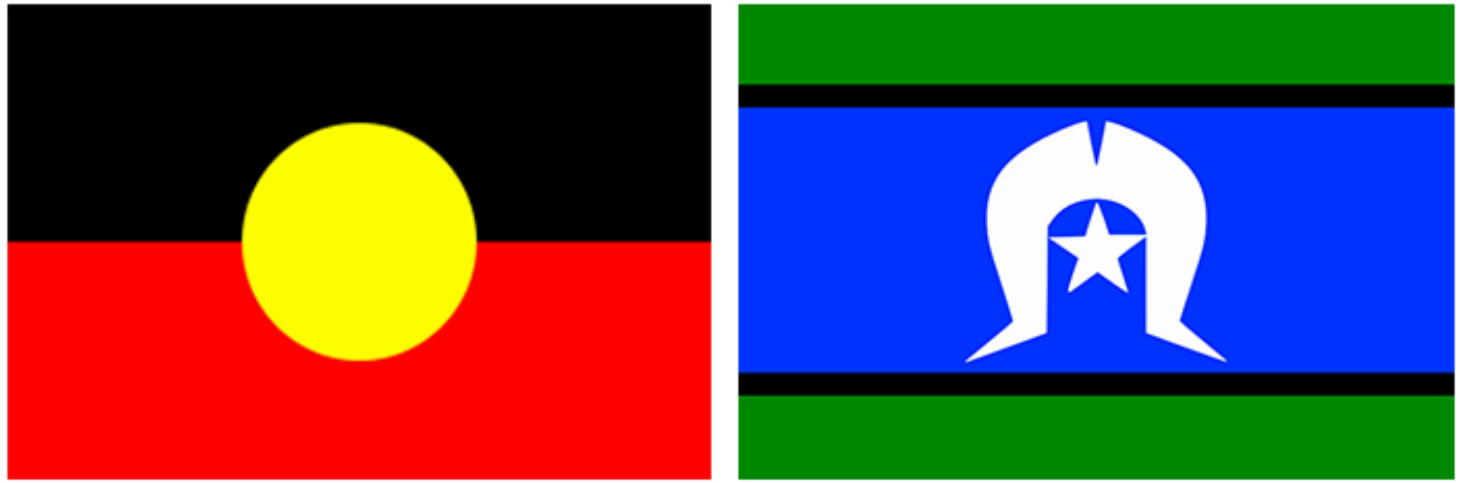
PROTECT

Victoria's Child Safe Standards

School volunteer training

Updated Term 3, 2024

Acknowledgment of Country



Support for you

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- You can talk to:
  - Our school leadership team

- Or access external services:
  - **Sexual Assault Crisis Line** is a counselling service for people who have experienced both past and recent sexual assault available 5pm to 9am/7 days. **Phone 1800 806 292**
  - **1800Respect** is a domestic, family and sexual violence counselling service. **Phone 1800 737 732**
  - **Lifeline** is support for anyone experiencing a personal crisis or thinking about suicide available 24 hours/7 days. **Phone 13 11 14**
  - **Blue Knot** supports adult survivors of childhood trauma and abuse 9am to 5pm/7 days. **Phone 1300 657 380**
  - **13 YARN** is a culturally safe crisis support line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people available 24 hours/7 days. **Phone 13YARN (13 92 76)**
  - **Qlife** offers peer support and referrals for LGBTIQA+ 3 to 12pm/7 days. **Phone 1800 184 527**
  - Your GP or another allied health professional

In this presentation

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Protecting children & young people from abuse is our responsibility

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- Why child safety is so important
- Victoria's Child Safe Standards

Signs of abuse

Volunteer responsibilities to keep students safe and our school's child safety policies and procedures

- Volunteers Policy
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse
- Information sharing and recordkeeping

Definitions

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Child safety

- protecting all children from child abuse
- managing the risk of child abuse
- providing support to a child at risk of child abuse
- responding to suspicions, incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse

Source: Ministerial Order 1359

Harm

- is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child resulting from child abuse by adults or from the conduct of other children
- includes physical, emotional, sexual and psychological harm
- can arise from a single act or event or a series of acts or events over time

Source: A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation

Child abuse

- any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence (including grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of
  - physical violence
  - serious emotional or psychological harm
- the serious neglect of a child

Source: Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005

Why child safety is so important

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- Our school is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children. We want children attending our school to be safe, happy and respected.
- The Child Safe Standards recognise that all children are vulnerable.
- The Child Safe Standards require schools to **take steps to prevent child abuse** and **build a culture of child safety**.
- Schools cannot assume that child abuse does not and cannot happen within their school or school community.

Victoria's Child Safe Standards

- **Child Safe Standard 1** – Establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
- **Child Safe Standard 2** – Ensure that child safety and wellbeing are embedded in school leadership, governance and culture.
- **Child Safe Standard 3** – Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
- **Child Safe Standard 4** – Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- **Child Safe Standard 5** – Equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected in policy and practice.
- **Child Safe Standard 6** – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- **Child Safe Standard 7** – Ensure that processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
- **Child Safe Standard 8** – Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
- **Child Safe Standard 9** – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- **Child Safe Standard 10** – Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
- **Child Safe Standard 11** – Policies and procedures that document how schools are safe for children, young people and students.
- **Ministerial Order 1359** provides the framework for child safety in schools.
- **Child Safe Standards action list**: a quick reference list of compliance requirements for schools.

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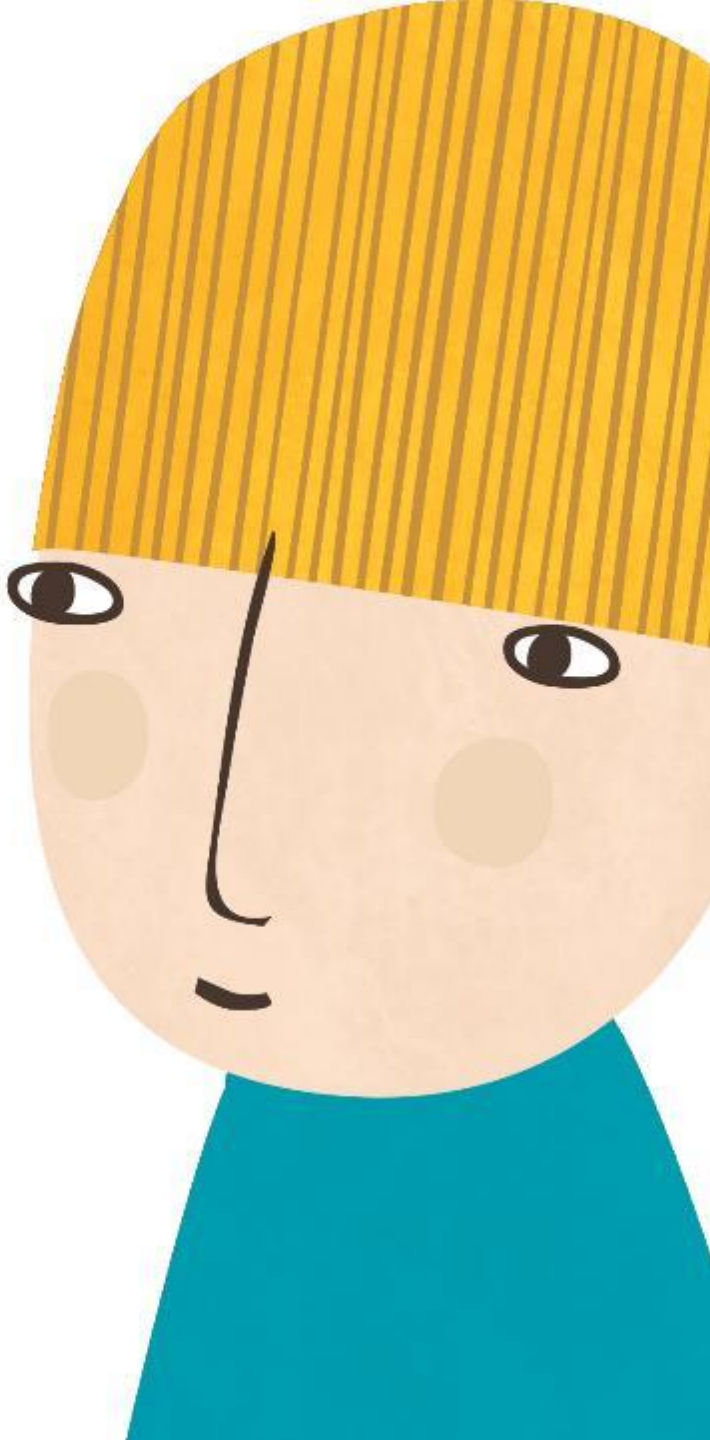
Volunteer responsibilities to keep students safe and our school's child safety policies and procedures



Volunteer responsibilities to keep students safe

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- Volunteers make a valuable contribution to our school community and have responsibilities to keep students safe in our school environments.
- Our school has developed policies and procedures to keep children safe and to make sure we respond to any concerns.
- Volunteers must be familiar with and follow our school's:
  - Volunteers Policy
  - Child Safety Code of Conduct
  - Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
  - Procedures for responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse

Volunteers Policy

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- Our school's **Volunteers Policy** sets out the procedures to make sure that volunteers are suitable to work with children and can make a positive contribution to our school community. The policy outlines:
- Suitability checks required for volunteers which usually include:
  - Working with Children (WWC) Clearance
  - Other suitability checks which may be needed based on the volunteer role, such as references, proof of identity, qualifications and work history involving children
- Our volunteer training and induction processes
- Management and supervision arrangements
- Volunteer obligations relating to privacy, information sharing and record keeping.

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

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Our school's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy:

- demonstrates our commitment to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe
- tells our community about our strategies and governance arrangements to keep children safe
- helps us create a shared commitment to keeping children safe
- supports everyone in our school community to know their responsibilities for keeping children safe
- is publicly available

Our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

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- All staff and **volunteers** will:
  - participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school
  - follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
  - act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct
  - identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
  - ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
  - implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

Our commitment to child safety and wellbeing

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- We are a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families
- We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environments
- Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety

Establishing culturally safe environments and responding to diverse needs

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- Our volunteers can support every student to have a positive experience in a safe environment
- This includes supporting Aboriginal cultural safety and understanding the diverse circumstances of children and students.
- Everyone can:
  - promote cultural safety in our school community by recognising the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety.
  - pay particular attention to the needs of students with disability, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students who are unable to live at home, international students, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQA+) students and Aboriginal students.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

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Our school's Child Safety Code of Conduct provides adults with a clear guide on the behaviour that is expected of them in our school environments, and:

- lists acceptable and unacceptable behaviours
- identifies professional boundaries and ethical behaviour
- applies to all school activities, including school camps, using digital technology and social media
- is publicly available

Who has to follow it?

Staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of our school community involved in child-connected work, including school council members

Acceptable and unacceptable behaviours

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Acceptable behaviours

- upholding our commitment to child safety and following our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- treating students and families in our school community with respect
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students
- ensuring, as far as practicable, that adults are not alone with a student
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected.

Unacceptable behaviours

- ignore or disregard concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- develop a relationship with a student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour
- display behaviours or engage with students in ways that are not justified by the educational or professional context
- ignore an adult's overly familiar or inappropriate behaviour towards a student
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels
- have contact with any student outside of school hours except when needed to deliver the school curriculum.

Responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse (1)

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- Volunteers **must not** ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse or harm

- You must report any concerns to a teacher or the school leadership team as quickly as possible

- Everyone has a role to ensure children are safe – if something doesn't feel right, you must speak up

Responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse (2)

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Volunteers should follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools when responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse:

1. Respond to the emergency

- If a child is at immediate risk of harm, you must ensure their safety.

2. Report to authorities/Refer to services

- As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you must report your concerns to the principal or school leadership (as per our school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy/Procedures).
- School leadership will work with you to make a report to the relevant authorities, based on whether the source of the suspected abuse is in the school, family or community.

3. Contact Parents/Carers

- The principal and school must determine who needs to be contacted.

4. Provide ongoing support

- The school must determine the support for children impacted by abuse.

For more information, see:

- Protecting Children – Reporting and Other Legal Obligations
- Report child abuse in schools | schools.vic.gov.au
- Our school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures

Signs of abuse to look out for (video)

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Video: Identifying signs of abuse

Common signs of abuse – children

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Physical

- Bruises, welts, cuts/grazes or burns
- Internal injuries and bone fractures
- Injury to the genital or rectal area (e.g. pain going to the toilet)
- Wearing clothes unsuitable for weather conditions to hide injuries
- STDs and/or frequent urinary tract infections
- Consistently dirty and unwashed
- Consistently hungry, tired and listless
- Unattended health problems and lack of routine medical care

PROTECT: Identify child abuse

Behavioural

- Disclosure and/or drawings or writing depicting violence/abuse
- Habitual absences
- Significant/unexplained developmental delay
- Regressive or unusual changes to behaviour
- Drug or alcohol misuse, suicide or self-harm
- Harm to others or animals
- Inconsistent or unlikely explanation for injury or inability to remember the cause
- Reluctance to go home and/or a wariness or fear of a parent/carer
- Unusual fear of physical contact with adults
- Developmentally inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- Withdrawal or excessive secrecy

Child sexual abuse – including grooming

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- Child sexual abuse is when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity.
- Grooming involves predatory behaviour by an adult to prepare a child under 16 for sexual abuse at a later time, either with the groomer or with another adult.
- Perpetrators of child sexual abuse (including grooming) are usually:
  - known to the child
  - trusted by their families, communities, schools or other institutions.
- Indicators of sexual abuse and grooming can be difficult to identify.
- Parents, carers and other significant adults (including within organisations) may also be groomed by someone intending to abuse a child.
- Any child can be victim of sexual abuse, however children who are vulnerable, isolated, or have a disability are much more likely to become victims and are disproportionately abused.

Common adult grooming behaviours

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Targeting perceived vulnerabilities and relationship building

- Giving a child/student gifts.
- Preferential treatment (e.g. favouritism, flattery, making a child/student feel 'special').
- Being overly friendly (e.g. offering food or drink, someone to talk to for support).
- Meeting 1:1 away from others.
- Offering to drive a child/student to or from school or another service.
- Attempts by one parent to alienate their child from the other parent.

Fake loving 'relationship' or friendship which is progressively sexualised

- Out-of-hours contact or visits home with the student or their family.
- Bringing sexual material into conversations.

Inappropriate:

- communication (e.g. social media befriending and messaging, calls, emails, texts)
- social/professional boundaries (e.g. sharing personal details and disclosures)
- touching (e.g. tickling, play wrestling)

Control, reinforcement and victimisation

- Undermining the victim's reputation so they won't be believed.
- Trying to get the child/student to do dangerous or illegal things and forcing them into sexual acts in return for not being hurt or exposed.
- Reluctance, fear or embarrassment by the child/student to be alone with an adult (parent/staff member/coach/carer).
- Overprotective or volatile relationship between the child and one of their parents or family members.

PROTECT: Identify child abuse, Child sexual exploitation and grooming

Identifying and managing child safety risks

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- Always follow our school's Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Be aware of the behavioural and physical indicators of child abuse
- Look out for any indicators of child abuse in children and young people you work with
- Immediately raise concerns about any suspicions of child abuse with a teacher or school leadership
- Alert a teacher or school leadership to any other potential risks you become aware of in our school environments

Information sharing obligations for volunteers

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- Any student information you become aware of because of your volunteer work must be managed sensitively and in accordance with our Schools' Privacy Policy and Volunteers Policy.
- You can share student information **with relevant school staff** to:
  - support the student's education, wellbeing and health
  - reduce the risk of harm to the student, other students, staff or visitors
- Volunteers must report any child safety concerns that they become aware of to a teacher or school leadership as soon as possible
- There are some circumstances where volunteers may also be obliged to disclose information to authorities outside of the school such as to Victoria Police

Record keeping

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- Our school follows the department's Records Management-School Records Policy

- While it's unlikely you will be responsible for any school records during your volunteer work, any school records that you are responsible for must be provided to the person nominated in our Volunteers Policy.

Key things to remember

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Child safety at our school is everyone's responsibility.

Volunteers have a responsibility to:

- always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our school's **Child Safety Code of Conduct**
- take students' views seriously, especially when they raise concerns or worries about their safety or the safety of a friend
- raise concerns about a child's safety or any inappropriate behaviours in the school community with a teacher or school leadership immediately
- recognise and respect the diversity of the children, young people, and families at our school

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Questions?

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