

# CHILD SAFE STANDARDS AND WORKPLACE LEARNING

## A Guide for Schools

The Victorian Government is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people.

As part of the Victorian Government's commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Betrayal of Trust report, which found that more must be done to prevent and respond to child abuse in our community, there is a new regulatory landscape surrounding child safety, underpinned by new Child Safe Standards.

The Child Safe Standards are compulsory minimum standards for organisations that provide services for children, including Victorian early childhood services and schools, to help ensure the safety of children.

*Ministerial Order 870 – Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools* operationalises the Child Safe Standards in registered Victorian schools.

Standard 6 requires the school governing authority to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate risk management strategies to ensure child safety in school environments. Ministerial Order 870 defines a child as “a child enrolled as a student at the school”.

The definition of ‘school environment’ in Ministerial Order 870 extends to any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours. This includes workplace learning environments where students undertake work experience, structured workplace learning, school community work (volunteering) and School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs).

Registered schools are therefore required to develop and implement risk management strategies prior to students undertaking workplace learning to ensure their safety will not be compromised and ensure that the school complies with the requirements of Ministerial Order 870.

### **WHAT IS A CHILD SAFETY RISK MANAGEMENT APPROACH?**

A child safety risk management approach is a formal and structured method to managing risks associated with child safety. The approach should outline how risk is managed, including the individual responsible for the process and a description of the process itself. The process includes risk identification and assessment, evaluation of current controls, implementation of treatments (as required) and a monitoring and review process to ensure the currency of the risk management approach.

## IMPLEMENTING THE SCHOOL'S CHILD SAFETY RISK MANAGEMENT APPROACH FOR WORKPLACE LEARNING ARRANGEMENTS

In developing a child safety risk management approach, schools should take the following steps in relation to students undertaking workplace learning:

1. Identify child safety risks in workplace learning environments.
  - a. What are the potential risks to students in workplace learning environments? (Refer to the table in this guide for some examples.)
  - b. Are there some workplace learning environments which might present higher risks to child safety than others?
2. Identify any existing risk mitigation measures or controls.
  - a. What strategies, practices or procedures are already in place to control the risk?
  - b. Have they been fully implemented?
  - c. Are staff, parents and students aware of them?
  - d. How effective are they?
3. Assess and rate the child safety risks given the existing controls in place, taking into account the likelihood of risk, and the likely consequence of the risk.
  - a. What are the consequences?
  - b. What is the likelihood of those consequences?
4. If the risk rating is more than the 'acceptable level', identify further risk management strategies through additional treatments or other prevention, detection or mitigation strategies and then re-assess the risk.
  - a. What is the 'acceptable level' of risk? For child safety, there should be little or no tolerance of risk.
  - b. What strategies, practices or procedures could be put in place to treat or manage the risk?

For further information about the specific requirements of Standard 6, questions that will assist in assessing a school's existing compliance and identifying areas for further work, an example risk assessment template and a risk rating matrix, please refer to the VRQA resource *Child safety risk management strategies* available at <https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/Documents/CSSRiskMnagmentStrat.docx>

## WHAT STRATEGIES COULD BE IMPLEMENTED TO CONTROL CHILD SAFETY RISKS IN WORKPLACE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS?

The Department provides a number of resources to support schools and employers entering into workplace learning arrangements to ensure that students' health, moral and material welfare, safety and wellbeing will not be compromised. These resources include Ministerial Orders, arrangement forms and guidelines which are available at:

- Work experience: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/work-experience/policy>
- Structured workplace learning: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/structured-workplace-learning/policy>

- School community work (NB: Resources developed for government schools only): <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-community-work/policy>
- School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-based-apprenticeships-and-traineeships/policy>

In relation to potential child safety risks in workplace learning environments, schools should consider including the following control measures in their risk management approach:

1. Provide information to employers about the Child Safe Standards and examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in dealing with students. The Department has developed a fact sheet for employers, which can be accessed at: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/work-experience/resources>
2. Make employers aware of the school's approach to child safety by providing them with a copy of the school's child safety policy or statement of commitment. If the employer is an in scope organisation for the Child Safe Standards, schools are encouraged to request a copy of the employer's child safety policy or statement of commitment. For a list of in scope organisations, see: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/being-a-child-safe-organisation/the-child-safe-standards/who-do-the-standards-apply-to/>
3. Implement and adhere to strategies to promote child empowerment and participation so that students participating in workplace learning have the skills and knowledge to recognise abuse or other risks to their safety, and the confidence to raise concerns, make complaints or let someone know they feel unsafe.

### **WHAT ACTIONS MUST SCHOOLS UNDERTAKE IN RESPONSE TO AN INCIDENT, DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE IN A WORKPLACE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT?**

School staff must report any reasonable suspicion that a student has been abused, or is at risk of being abused. This includes abuse that has, or is suspected to have, taken place within or outside of school grounds and hours.

Schools should follow the *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse* available at: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/report.aspx>

### **MORE INFORMATION**

- Department of Education and Training PROTECT portal: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/default.aspx>
- VRQA Child Safe Standards resources: <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes/Pages/resources.html>
- Commission for Children and Young People's *A Guide to Creating a Child Safe Organisation*: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/CSSGuideFinalV4-Web-New.pdf>

**WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL RISKS TO STUDENTS IN WORKPLACE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS?**

**Unintentional/accidental harm**

Poor physical environment leading to injury

Poor supervision

High-risk activity

Lack of risk mitigation strategies in place

**Psychological abuse**

Bullying

Threatening language

Intentional ignoring and isolating (either face-to-face, online or via other technology)

Shaming

**Neglect**

Lack of supervision

Not meeting the specific physical or cognitive needs of children

**Physical abuse**

Physical punishment

Pushing, shoving, tripping, grabbing

Biting, spitting, scratching, hitting, kicking

**Cultural abuse**

Lack of cultural respect

Racial or cultural vilification or discrimination

Lack of support to enable the child to be aware of and express their cultural identity

**Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse, assault and exploitation

Grooming

Inappropriate touching

Inappropriate conversations of a sexual nature (either face-to-face, online or via other technology)

Crossing professional boundaries

Source: Commission for Children and Young People's *A Guide to Creating a Child Safe Organisation*: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/CSSGuideFinalV4-Web-New.pdf>