

CHILD SAFE POLICY

Care and protection of children and young people who participate in VicSRC activities

POLICY CODE CH 1.0	VERSION 1.2.0 <small>Major version . minor version . draft</small>
STATUS Issued <small>Draft, Approved, Issued, In review</small>	ISSUE DATE 1 October 2021 <small>Date this exact version was released</small>
AUTHORISED BY Board <small>Who approves and reviews this policy</small>	AUTHORISED ON 15 February 2020 <small>Date the major version was approved</small>
NEXT REVIEW Jan – Mar 2022 <small>Quarter policy will next be reviewed</small>	LAST REVIEW 2 March 2021 <small>Date policy was last reviewed</small>

POLICY STATEMENT

VicSRC will not tolerate any abuse of children and young people.

In Victoria, [Child Safe standards](#) aim to protect children and young people from abuse in organisations, including physical violence, sexual offences, serious emotional or psychological abuse and/or neglect.

As part of these standards, all staff and volunteers commit to:

- Prevent the abuse of children and young people in our care, by identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks;
- Take all allegations and concerns about abuse very seriously and respond to them consistently, in line with our policies and procedures;
- Comply with all legal requirements, including reporting suspicions of abuse to police and/or child protection.

Scope

What this policy does or does not apply to, and who must follow this policy:

This policy applies to all VicSRC staff and volunteers. All staff and volunteers employed by VicSRC are responsible for the care and protection of children and young people who participate in our organisational activities and for reporting information about abuse.

Employees	Volunteers	Trustees	Student Executive Advisory Committee members	Contractors (including employees of contractors)	Suppliers	Consultants
✓	✓	✓	✓			

Definitions

What do we mean when we use these words?

Child means a person below the age of 18 years

Young person means a person between the ages of 12 and 25 years.

POLICY

What are the rules and overall guiding principles or standards the Board has set?

Children and young people's rights to safety and participation

We work to create programs, activities and environments that are safe, inclusive and welcoming for children and young people from all backgrounds, cultures and abilities. We actively work to hear and empower all children and young people involved with our organisation, through regular consultation and participation processes.

Valuing diversity

We celebrate diversity across our organisation. In particular, we promote the equal participation and cultural, emotional and physical safety of children and young people who are often marginalised. This includes but is not limited to children and young people who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, from refugee or migrant backgrounds, who are same sex attracted or gender diverse, and/or have a disability. We have named these specific groups of young people because there are specific requirements and particular dimensions to what safety looks like for these groups.

We do not tolerate any discriminatory practices. We seek to employ appropriate staff and volunteers with a range of cultural backgrounds, lived experiences and/or identities. We also aim to use inclusive language and images in our publications and communications, aiming to make them accessible to a wide audience.

Recruiting staff and volunteers


VicSRC screens and assesses all staff and volunteers against child safety standards, including rigorous background, identity and reference checks, Working with Children checks and national police record checks. Our commitment to Child Safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements.

Supporting staff and volunteers

VicSRC provides support and supervision so our staff and volunteers feel valued, respected and fairly treated. We provide guidance on child safety via our:

- Child Safe Code of Conduct,
- Child Safe Reporting Procedure.

All staff and volunteers are expected to adhere to these documents. We provide relevant training and supervision to staff and volunteers to help them understand their responsibilities and how to recognise and respond to signs of abuse or neglect and how to raise or report any concerns they have about children and young people, without fear of repercussions.



We also support and train staff to understand how to work meaningfully with people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and identities. This includes training in:

- Aboriginal cultural safety
- LGBTQI+ awareness
- Working with people from refugee and migrant backgrounds
- Disability awareness.

To further support high quality, equitable and ethical work with children and young people, all staff and volunteers are expected to follow the [Code of Ethical Practice for the Victorian Youth Sector](#).

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

All staff and volunteers are expected to follow VicSRC Child Safe Reporting Procedure. Nina Laitala is our organisation's designated Child Safety officer, with the specific responsibility for responding to any child safety concerns or complaints made by children or young people, staff, volunteers or parents. Nina can be contacted on 0411 679 050.

VicSRC will seek support from appropriate organisations and the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) in responding to a child safety situation involving Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with a disability, and LGBTQI+ children to ensure VicSRC's response is appropriate.

Our legal obligations

In Victoria, 'failure to disclose' and 'failure to protect' criminal offences exist to improve responses to child sexual abuse.

'Failure to disclose'

All adults (anyone over 18) in Victoria must report to police any reasonable belief that a sex offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16, unless they have a reasonable excuse, or another exemption applies. Failure to do so is a criminal offence punishable by up to 3 years imprisonment. For more information about the 'failure to disclose' offence, including the types of sex offences that must be reported, exemptions and what may be considered a reasonable excuse, please read this Department of Justice and Regulation [fact sheet](#).

'Failure to Protect'

It is also a criminal offence in Victoria for those who work or volunteer within organisations providing care, supervision or authority for children to fail to protect children from the risk of sex abuse by others associated with the organisation.

An offence will be committed when:

1. A person in authority knows that someone associated with their organisation poses a risk of committing a sexual offence against a child under the age of 16; and
2. They had the authority to reduce or remove the risk; and
3. They negligently failed to do so.

The maximum penalty is 5 years' imprisonment. For more information about the 'failure to protect' offence, please read this fact Department of Justice and Regulation [fact sheet](#). (The above information was taken from Youthlaw's [website](#). For further advice about these offences, please contact Youthlaw on (03) 9113 9500).

RELATED

What other VicSRC policies, procedures, guides and templates are associated with this policy or procedure? If something is not in this policy/procedure, it might be in one of them.

CH 1.1 - Child Safe Code of Conduct

CH 1.2 - Child Safe Reporting Procedure and Incident Report

REFERENCES

What resources were used to create this policy, for example, example or other organisations' policies, legislation, government advice?

[CCYP | Child safe principles](#)

[Department of Health and Human Services Victoria | Child Safe Standards \(dhhs.vic.gov.au\)](#)

[Youth Affairs Council Victoria | Code of Ethical Practice \(yacvic.org.au\)](#)

[Failure to disclose offence | Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria](#)

[Failure to Protect – Youthlaw](#)

Legislation

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005

Crimes Act 1958

Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015

Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012

Failure to disclose forms part of the Victorian Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014

