

Standard for child safety

Service standard

March 2025



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ABN 22 033 947 623

GPO Box 2751, Melbourne VIC 3001

1300 654 329

info@tac.vic.gov.au



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Overview

This Service Standard for Child Safety (Standard) provides information on what is expected of all external contractors engaged by the TAC in keeping children and young people safe.

This Standard is to be read in conjunction with all other TAC policies and procedures and is designed to complement any child safety policies, procedures or codes of conduct already in place by the external contractor.

Definitions

Child or young person: Refers to a person under the age of 18. This could be a TAC client, a person under the care of a TAC client, or members of the public in receipt of TAC-funded services or programs delivered by the TAC.

External contractor: Refers to any third-party contractor or supplier engaged by the TAC to provide goods and/or services, excluding employees, agents, officers or representatives of the TAC.

1. The TAC's commitment to child safety

The TAC has a [Statement of Commitment to Child Safety](#), available on the TAC website:

The TAC prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Children and young people of all backgrounds, identities and lived experiences have the right to be safe and feel safe in any environment.

The TAC is committed to a culture that does not tolerate child abuse, neglect or exploitation and will work actively towards preventing it.

The TAC's policies, practices, systems, and dedication to learning and development enables both the organisation and its representatives to fulfil this commitment.

The TAC will take all concerns relating to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people seriously, and respond promptly, sensitively and in line with all legislative obligations.

The TAC acknowledges the importance of listening to, and engaging the views of children, young people and their families and the significant value they bring to the organisation.



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2. Victorian Child Safe Standards

The [Victorian Child Safe Standards](#), introduced by the Victorian government, are compulsory minimum standards for organisations that work with children and young people to protect them from harm.

These aim to promote the safety of children, prevent child abuse and ensure organisations have effective processes in place to respond to and report all allegations of abuse.

All external contractors must check if they need to comply with the Victorian Child Safe Standards or equivalent standards in other States if operating interstate.

If external contractors are required to comply with the Victorian Child Safe Standards, they must have policies, procedures and measures in place to comply with the Victorian Child Safe Standards, child safeguarding regulations and other relevant legislation.

3. The TAC's requirements of external contractors

The TAC is committed to reducing the risks to all children and young people during TAC-funded service delivery. We require all external contractors to support this commitment and obligation to create a safe environment for children and young people, even if they are not required to comply with the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

External contractors are responsible for ensuring any subcontractors they engage also comply with this Standard.

In implementing the TAC's Standard for Child Safety, external contractors must:

- Be aware and comply with this Standard, the TAC's commitment to child safety and the application of the Child Safe Standards to their work.
- Ensure their staff always display appropriate behaviour towards children and young people. They are required to ensure children and young people's rights are respected, a safe environment is provided, and any child safety concerns raised are taken seriously. See Attachment 1 for further information on expected behaviours.
- Implement practices in their organisation that optimise the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and families, relative to their level of contact with and impact on children and young people. See attachment 2 for recommendations for organisations to implement.
- Notify the appropriate authorities of alleged or suspected child abuse in accordance with the law.
- Notify the TAC of any child safety concerns or complaints related to a person under the age of 18, arising during and/or as a result of the external contractor's TAC-related service provision.



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4. Identifying a child safety concern or complaint

A child safety concern is any potential issue that could negatively impact on the safety and wellbeing of children. This does not have to be related to a child's service provision, for example, safety concerns noted about a child while delivering services to their parent.

A child safety complaint can be about the TAC or an external contractor of the TAC, and can be related to one or more of the following:

- the organisation's services or dealings with individuals
- allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, a volunteer or another individual associated with the organisation
- disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child
- the conduct of a child at the organisation
- the inadequate handling of a prior concern
- general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

The complaint or concern can arise during and/or as a result of the external contractor's service provision.

The TAC takes a zero-tolerance approach to the abuse, neglect or exploitation of people including children and young people and will therefore treat all allegations seriously.

5. Responding to and reporting a concern

All external contractors have an ethical and social responsibility to report concerns and complaints to the TAC if they have information that suggests a child or young person may be at risk of significant harm.

We expect external contractors to be proactive in identifying and reporting child safety concerns that arise during or as a result of their service provision.

Inaction is considered a breach of this Standard and could be a breach of the [Failure to Disclose Law](#).

If an external contractor is concerned about a child's safety, or has received a complaint about their service involving a child, they must promptly complete all of the following:

- Act in the best interest of the child or young person and ensure that the child or young person is safe, to the best of their ability.
- Contact emergency services on 000 or Child Protection on 1300 655 795 (after hours 13 12 78) for advice if the child could be in immediate danger.
- Follow their own complaints and reporting processes.
- Seek to address any complaints directly with the service provider or TAC staff member if suitable.
- Comply with any legislative reporting requirements.

Once the above is complete, notify the TAC of the concern or complaint (if related to the TAC) by either:

- using the reporting processes via the [Contact Us page on the TAC website](#)
- contacting your TAC Contract Manager; or
- calling TAC customer service on 1300 654 329.

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If an external contractor is unsure of their TAC reporting obligations regarding a child safety concern, they are encouraged to contact their TAC Contract Manager to discuss.

We reserve the right to request further information on the matter from the external contractor or another party, in line with the [TAC Privacy Policy](#).

A serious matter relating to an external contractor may be subject to referral to an external organisation, such as Victoria Police.

6. Breaches of this Standard

External contractors must notify the TAC immediately if a breach of this Standard is suspected.

External contractors must provide relevant information or evidence relating to its compliance to this Standard as soon as practicable upon request by the TAC.

We may consider termination of a supplier agreement as a result of a breach of this Standard.

7. Further information

This Standard should be read in conjunction with the following Victorian legislation:

- [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Children Youth and Families Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Crimes Amendment \(Grooming\) Act 2014 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Worker Screening Act 2020 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Crimes Act 1958 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Crimes Amendment \(Protection of Children\) Act 2014 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Wrongs Amendment \(Organisational Child Abuse\) Act 2017 \(Vic\)](#)

More information on the Victorian Child Safe Standards and its regulators can be found at: vic.gov.au/about-child-safe-standards

More information about staff legal obligations can be found at:

vic.gov.au/child-protection-early-childhood-protect/understand-your-obligations-protect-children

This TAC Standard is subject to review and can be found on the TAC website at tac.vic.gov.au.

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Attachment 1: Expected behaviours

Always take active steps to prevent abuse or harm of a child or young person connected in any way to the TAC.

Expected behaviour	Examples
Demonstrate and maintain appropriate professional boundaries with children, young people and their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Declare any existing relationships with the TAC.• Ensure all communication is relevant to the role.• Be clear and upfront about the parameters of the role.• Avoid film and photography of children and young people unless absolutely necessary for the role.
Ensure any physical contact, if ever required, is relevant to the role, consensual and appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be transparent when engaging in physical contact.• Explain intention and seek consent from the child or young person and their family, prior to physical contact.• Replace hugs with a handshake or high-five.
Communicate with children, young people and their families safely, appropriately and professionally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Always use respectful and empowering language.• Encourage children and young people to participate in consultation processes and support them to provide feedback.• Use approved, appropriate, secure digital platforms.• Listen and appropriately respond to the concerns of children and young people, particularly when they are sharing concerns.
Promote empowerment, participation and cultural safety for children of all backgrounds and lived experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adapt language, behaviour or actions to meet the cultural needs of the child, young person or their family.• Include culturally appropriate practices in programs.• Celebrate cultural events and promoting diversity in activities.• Recognise that children can have multiple diverse needs which can increase their vulnerability.• Call-out and/or report any act of discrimination, racism or vilification.
Take any concerns about the safety of a child or young person seriously, and respond in line with policies, procedures, guidelines and the law.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respond sensitively, calmly and with empathy.• Prioritise immediate safety.• Report any concerns or incidents of behaviour that contradicts the behaviour outlined in this Standard.• Maintain confidentiality.

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Never abuse or harm, in any form (sexual, physical, emotional, neglect, harassment, racism, discrimination or bullying) a child or young person connected in any way to the TAC.

Prohibited behaviour	Examples
Use of inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory language when speaking with a child or young person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use racist language.• Tell racist, sexist or discriminatory jokes.• Initiate or engage in discussions that are personal or of a sexual nature.• Exclude a child or young person from engaging in decision making processes that will impact them when it is developmentally appropriate.
Misuse work or personal technology for inappropriate purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access child abuse material.• Sexually exploit or harass any person.• Take and/or disseminate explicit material of themselves, a child, young person or another person.• Expose a child or young person to inappropriate material.
Groom a child or young person or another person connected to them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behave provocatively or inappropriately with a child, young person and vulnerable adult.• Supply a child or young person with alcohol or drugs.• Seek to make contact and spend time with any child or young person outside the program or care times.• Buy gifts or provide financial support to a child or young person or accept gifts that are disproportionate to the role and/or not disclosed.• Offer lifts or other means of support that are outside of the role.• Do things of a personal nature with a child or young person that they can do for themselves, such as assistance with toileting or changing clothes.
Abuse or harm a child or young person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hold, kiss, cuddle or touch a child or young person in an inappropriate, unnecessary or culturally insensitive way.• Smack, hit or physically assault or the use any form of physical punishment to a child or young person.• Sexually abuse a child or young person including physically, verbally, non-verbally, in person or online.• Engage in behaviour that is intended to neglect, threaten, shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children or young people.
Harass or exploit a child or young person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage in an intimate or personal relationship.• Use a position or authority to coerce any person to engage in sexual intercourse or any sexual activity.• Exchange or withholding funds, services or support of any kind of exploitative behaviour.



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Prohibited behaviour

Ignore, cover up or further enable any form of abuse or harm to a child or young person that a person is aware of, or has reason to believe it has occurred.

Examples

- Dismiss, ignore or cover up a concern raised.
- Provide inadequate information and support to a child during an investigation.
- Fail to report concerns to the appropriate authorities.
- Breach confidentiality and privacy laws and obligations.



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Attachment 2: Guide for implementing child safety

The following are recommendations of how to implement child safe practices in an organisation.

External contractors should also seek their own advice on compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

Cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children, young people and their families (Child Safe Standard 1)

The TAC has a zero-tolerance policy towards racism and discrimination. We expect all external contractors to actively address and report incidents of racism and discrimination.

The TAC expects that external contractors promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families.

A culturally safe environment is socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families. It is underpinned by shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, and living and working together with dignity and truly listening.

Cultural safety empowers people and allows them to contribute and feel safe to be themselves.

External contractors should aim to fulfil this commitment through continuous learning, education and engagement with community.

Governance structure (Child Safe Standard 2)

A child safe culture should be championed and modelled in all areas and levels of the organisation, from the top down and bottom up.

Leaders should demonstrate a strong commitment to child safety, setting clear expectations and providing resources to support this priority. Policies and procedures should support child safety, setting expectations of behaviour and enabling a culture of safety.

Risk management strategies are integral to an effective governance structure, focusing on preventing, identifying, and mitigating risks to children and young people.

These strategies should be regularly reviewed and updated based on insights from data, trends, and incidents, allowing the organisation to proactively address potential threats to child safety.

Participation and empowerment of children (Child Safe Standard 3)

Where services are provided directly, external contractors should create an environment that supports children and young people to have a say in decisions that impact them, to use their voice to influence the organisation's decisions and to communicate any safety concerns they may have. This includes:

- communicating with children and young people about the services provided and empowering them to have a say in decisions that affect them in an age-appropriate way
- actively seeking feedback from children and young people on any TAC-related services
- inviting children and young people to provide feedback on the services they are provided
- providing all children and young people with information about their right to feel safe, and how to raise a concern.



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Participation of families (Child Safe Standard 4)

Informing families who are involved in their child's recovery journey on their rights and ability to raise concerns, is central to ensuring a child safe culture.

Organisations should ensure that families have access to appropriate information about how to make complaints about their services and/or any other services that they referred the child to.

They should actively seek feedback from families on the services they have received for their child.

Equity and diversity (Child Safe Standard 5)

External contractors should recognise the diverse circumstances of all children and young people and their families who may be accessing their services. They should be committed to providing services in a way that ensures children and young people feel safe, listened to and respected in every conversation and decision that affects their lives.

While recognising children and young people can come from multiple backgrounds and lived experiences, this includes the needs of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- children and young people with disability
- LGBTIQA+ children and young people, and
- children and young people from culturally, racially marginalised and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The right to protection is irrespective of age, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, disability, and family background.

The TAC has a zero-tolerance of racism and discrimination and expects external contractors to act on incidents of racism and discrimination in line with this Standard.

Staff recruitment and screening (Child Safe Standard 6)

Child safety practices should be applied throughout an organisation's recruitment and selection procedures to consider risk at each step and to contribute to a child safe culture.

Where suitable, child safety recruitment and selection practices should include:

- background checks and screening
- child safety related interview questions
- child safety related reference check questions.

Where required under law, organisations must commit to complying with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and all relevant child safety regulations and legislation including the [Worker Screening Act 2020 \(Vic\)](#).

The Worker Screening Act (including the Working with Children Check) aims to protect children from harm by ensuring that people who work with or care for them are suitable to do so, checked by a government body.

Child safe recruitment and selection practices, including the Working with Children Check, apply to specific roles. It is the responsibility of the organisation to ensure all required employees are appropriately screened and records are maintained.



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Complaint handling (Child Safe Standard 7)

External Contractors should have accessible, child-focused complaint and reporting procedures that clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of the organisation in receiving, responding to, and investigating complaints. These procedures include their own approaches to handling different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or their Code of Conduct, and the obligations to act and report.

Complaint handling and reporting processes should be effective, culturally safe, accessible, and understood by children, young people, families, and external contractors who may be making or receiving a complaint. All complaints are to be taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly, maintaining confidentiality and respecting the dignity of all involved.

The TAC has a zero-tolerance stance on child abuse and addresses all allegations and safety concerns in alignment with relevant policies and procedures.

All organisations must have established policies and procedures to report complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, ensuring compliance with reporting and privacy. This includes adherence to all relevant legislation, including [Failure to Protect](#) and [Failure to Disclose](#).

Through these measures, organisations can ensure a responsive complaint handling framework that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

Education and training (Child Safe Standard 8)

External contractors must be committed to the ongoing learning and development of their employees, and where suitable, should prioritise the inclusion of child safety education in future planning and investment.

Child safety education and training should be tailored to specific roles and provided through various platforms and methods including scenario-based learning for those with direct access to children and young people. Training programs should be regularly reviewed to address emerging trends and areas for improvement.

Where necessary, organisations could consider engaging subject matter experts (SMEs) to support the development and delivery of training content.

Managing child safety risks (Child Safe Standard 9)

Risk management refers to the identification of the potential for an incident, abuse, harm or accident to occur and taking steps to reduce the likelihood or severity of its occurrence. Implementing risk management processes that actively anticipate, respond to and prevent child safety risks is essential to creating a child safe environment.

Monitoring and reviewing risks regularly (including after incidents, near misses or complaints) is vital to ensuring ongoing learning and improvement and can identify systemic issues that may be hindering child safety.

The TAC expects external contractors are committed to assessing and mitigating these risks.



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Physical environment risks

Organisations must regularly consider and review risks to child safety including (but not limited to):

- in office meetings with children and young people
- home visits with children and young people
- electronic communication with children and young people
- access to information regarding children and young people.

Strategies to reduce identified risks posed to the safety of children and young people can include:

- ensuring meeting spaces are safe and appropriate
- having a parent, carer, family member or other adult present for all meetings with children and young people, regardless of the location
- following internal policies in relation to methods of communicating with or managing data about children and young people.

Online environment risks (social media, email, instant messaging, text messaging and video calls)

There are many risks to the safety and wellbeing of children in online environments. Using online channels to communicate with children and young people can increase the likelihood of grooming, inappropriate media sharing and unsuitable communication.

These risks are compounded if an employee uses their personal account or device for online communication. These risks should be considered in policy and process development for staff.

Continual improvement (Child Safe Standard 10)

The TAC is dedicated to the ongoing enhancement of our child safety measures and expect that external contractors are too. We recognise that ensuring child safety is an ongoing effort that requires continuous attention and improvement.

Organisations should aim to integrate trends and data collected from complaints, incidents, and risks into their decision-making and policy development processes. By analysing this information, they can make informed changes and improvements, fostering a safer environment for all children and young people.

Policies and procedures (Child Safe Standard 11)

Organisations must maintain policies and procedures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. They should be actively promoted internally and externally and made accessible to various audiences.

Policies and procedures should be regularly reviewed and updated in accordance with legislative changes and insights from incidents and complaints.

Best-practice approaches engage children, young people, and their families in the development and review of policies and procedures that impact them, ensuring their perspectives are considered.