

A Parish guide to implementation of the Victorian 11 Child Safe Standards.

The *Victorian 11 Child Safe Standards* came into law on 1st July, 2022. Parishes and the Diocese have 12 months in which to be able to show they have started implementing each one of the standards.

Aims of the standards:

To support organizations implement child safe practices to:

- Create a culture where the safety of the child is promoted.
- Child abuse is prevented
- Alleged abuse is taken seriously and acted upon.

While the *Victorian 11 Child Safe Standards* are about children, Parishes should consider all young people and vulnerable people at the same time.

Most of the standards cross reference each other and require the same response – don't be daunted by the task ahead.

Foundations steps

1. Familiarise yourselves with the 11 standards. They have been developed by the *Commission for Children & Young People*. (CCYP) and there are a lot of resources on their website <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au>. You can also find the 11 Standards on the Diocesan Website under 'Being A Child Safe Organisation.
2. Ensure your Parish has a *statement of commitment* to child safety – on your noticeboard, in your own documentation etc. For instance,

Our Parish is committed to ensuring our centre(s) of worship and outreach are safe places for all, especially children and vulnerable people. We have a duty of care to protect all who participate in the life of the church from abuse. We have zero tolerance for abuse of any kind.

3. Visit the Diocesan Website at <https://www.gippslandanglicans.org.au> and download the *Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy*. This is a generic Diocesan policy that encompasses CCYP requirements for the 11 standards. Adapt this policy to your particular circumstances – or adopt it as is. It is important that you have read and understand this Policy.

Download the Diocesan *Safe Church Policy* which includes information about screening, training, incident reporting and complaint handling (Standard 7)

There are a lot of other forms, resources on the website that complement the *Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy*.

- Communication Policy
- Approval for Ministry (Ministry to children and young people)
- Being Together
- Incident/Injury Report Form
- Reporting & responding to safe church concerns
- Report of Abuse Notification

- Code Of Conduct – (when working with children)
- Electronic Communications Guidelines

Download and adapt these where they suit your circumstances.

4. Be aware that you will need to develop a '*plan of action*' of steps taken by your Parish to establish a culturally safe environment - by 1st July 2023.
5. Determine how you, as Parish Council, will go about implementing the 11 Standards.
Eg One Standard per Council Meeting, Set up a small task force. Work with another Parish, Enlist the support of someone from the *Safe Ministry Authority*.

Standard 1

Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which children from diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.

What is this standard about?

- New obligations to ensure the safety of Aboriginal people.
- Positive celebration of diverse cultures.
- What we tolerate.

Establishing a culturally safe environment takes time, dedication and meaningful engagement. Parishes will be starting at different stages in their implementation of this standard – most will be taking foundation steps. It is important that you begin this journey irrespective of whether Aboriginal children attend your church now.

Our Diocese does not yet have a *Reconciliation Action Plan* but the first stage of such a plan involves what CCYP are advising Parishes to do NOW:

What to do now:

1. Begin Parish activities with an acknowledgement of country. For instance

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to life in this region. We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.

2. Familiarise yourselves with the *Aboriginal Ministry* information on the Diocesan website.
3. Know the traditional name of your location – and which Aboriginal groups traditionally lived there.
4. Know and connect with local Aboriginal elders.
5. Discuss – what is ‘cultural safety’ - remembering that it means very different things to different people.

Cultural safety is a positive celebration of cultures. It is more than the absence of racism/discrimination. It is awareness of and sensitivity to different cultures. It empowers people and enables them to contribute and feel safe themselves.

Cultural rights are protected by law.

6. Get involved in Aboriginal activities. For instance
 - *NAIDOC week*
 - *International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination.*

Consider:

- inviting Canon Aunty Phyllis Andy and/or Rev Kathy Dalton to your Parish.
- inviting people from diverse cultures to discuss their needs
- connecting with other Parishes that already have children from diverse cultures attending.

- Racism. Watch Stan Grant's speech '*The Australian Dream*' (google - You tube and transcript available) or Cally Jetta's '*Australia We Need To Talk*' (Google - you tube TedX talk)
- Displaying positive Aboriginal posters / symbols – plaques, posters.
- Displaying an Aboriginal flag.
- Displaying Aboriginal artwork.
- Visiting an *Aboriginal Cultural Centre* – eg Krowathinkooloong Keeping Place (Bairnsdale).

Your Parish priest can use learning about Aboriginal culture and wellbeing as part of her/his professional development requirements for the Diocese.

It is important now that you begin a plan of action to implement this standard. It is a good idea to first take a 'stock take' of where your Parish currently is. Visit the SNAICC – *Nation Voice for Children* (Aboriginal Children) website. They have an online audit tool to help you assess your current status. They also have pictures, posters etc.

Consider:

- What are your barriers to establishing a culturally safe environment?
- How can you address racism – especially as it is often an unconscious bias?

Standard 2

Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.

This standard is the foundation for all the other standards.

It is about turning policy into practice.

The Diocesan *Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy* encompasses CCYP requirements and should be adapted to your Parish's circumstances – or adopted as is.

The 11 child safe standards refer to a '*Code Of Conduct*'. Our Diocese has adopted '*Faithfulness In Service*' as our Code Of Conduct – and it already meets all the safe standard requirements. We are not able to simplify, change or condense this document without referral to General Synod. However, you may consider a situation specific 'code' for events/programs associated with children's ministries.

What to do now:

Make an assessment of where you are at now. Consider how you line up with the *Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy* and the table below.

- Do you use ministry application processes so that Parish Council can approve ministries?
- Do applications to run different ministries include risk assessments?
- Does Parish Council conduct regular risk assessments?
- Does Parish Council ensure privacy and proper record keeping?

What does a child safe culture look like in practice?

YES	NO
Leaders prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children.	Leaders prioritise the reputation of their Parish.
Clergy, paid staff and church workers are required to implement the <i>Child Safety & Wellbeing</i> policy.	The <i>Child Safety & Wellbeing</i> policy exists but most people do not know about it or what they should be doing.
Children have a voice in the organisation and adults listen to them	Children are seen and not heard. Adults are believed over children.
People in the Parish raise child safety concerns, even if they are not sure if the issue is a problem.	People are afraid to raise child safety concerns. They do not think they will be believed or taken seriously, or they worry that they will get into trouble or be treated negatively for speaking up.
If child harm or alleged abuse is identified, the Parish is quick to contact the Director of Professional Standards (DPS) or Police (if a child is in imminent danger).	The Parish avoids contacting the DPS or police and tries to minimise the nature of the identified child harm or alleged abuse.
Clergy, staff and church workers know it is important to speak up about child safety and do this even if it raises	Clergy, staff and church workers prioritise protecting their colleagues

concerns about the behavior of their colleagues.	
There are appropriate consequences for anyone who breaches the Diocesan Code of Conduct (Faithfulness In Service) or the Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy.	Leaders make decisions about breaches based on their views of the child and adult(s) involved.
The Parish culture makes it difficult for child abuse and harm to occur because everyone is focused on child safety.	The Parish's culture creates problems and results in gaps in child safety protections, meaning child abuse and harm can occur more easily.

Standard 3

Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participation in decision affecting them and taken seriously.

What is this standard about?

- Demonstrating your Parish's commitment to the ongoing importance of child safety.
- Training includes sexual abuse prevention education. (Note, the Diocesan Safe Ministry training materials have been updated to include CCYP requirements)
- Enabling the children's voices in decision making.

What to do now:

Make an assessment of how your Parish gets feedback from children and young people.

- How do you know if children are safe in your Parish activities?
- How do you know if children **feel** safe in your Parish activities?
- How are children made aware of your policies and procedures?
- How do you appoint leaders to young people's ministries?
- Is written material age appropriate?
- What opportunities do children have to express their views?
- Download and read the document 'Empowerment and *Participation: A guide for organisations working With Children And Young People*'. (CCYP website)

Tools and tips: Examples of participation activities:

Discussing personal safety with children – and how they can raise concerns.	Conducting workshops with children to hear about what makes them feel safe.
Encouraging feedback after activities in relation to feeling safe.	Giving children authority in tasks and activities.
Checking in regularly with children re their experiences in the Parish.	Including children in leadership meetings.
Having a suggestion box.	Conducting periodic surveys and discussions.

Standard 4

Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

What is this standard about?

- Family engagement
- Recognising that there is a new obligation to seek input from families and the community on decisions impacting families and children.
- Understanding what children understand by 'family' – nuclear, ethnic, multi-generational, shared in Aboriginal communities, Foster Care, informal grandparents etc.

Possible barriers to family / community involvement:

	Possible ways to overcome
People are busy	Create opportunities to engage when it suits the person. Eg a small survey to do at home. Offer engagement by phone, text, email and video call. Nominate a child safety person and introduce them to families/communities. Have written material available for families.
Children attend your programs without parents/families	Have an induction session. Plan and use opportunities to engage with families when they drop off or pick up children. Create a social event for families.
Events and activities are not accessible to all families.	Hold events/activities in accessible spaces. The way your Parish provides information can exclude some people – especially those with disabilities.(there are 4.4 million people with a disability in Australia)
Information provided is difficult to understand.	Try to provide information in easy English or plain language. Find out about translating services if required.
The Parish may not feel welcoming.	Do you have staff, church workers who have strong community links who can support engagement? Make sure your Parish is culturally safe.
Limited awareness of child abuse and harm risks.	Share information that builds family/community awareness. Host child safety events to share information and invite speakers with specialist knowledge about child safety.
Lack of trust or suspicion of the church.	Be honest, open and transparent. Provide easy access to key information about your Parish. Deliver on promises. Acknowledge mistakes or problems. Apologise if something goes wrong and take steps to make improvements. Clearly provide reasons why your Parish wants to engage and what you hope to achieve for the benefit of children.
Difficult for families/communities	Make events free or minimal cost.

to access opportunities to participate.	Offer to hire a bus, set up a carpool and subsidise travel costs. Post information.
Parish has limited experience and resources re engaging with families/communities.	Start small – learn as you improve. Gather ideas from organisations you think link well with families. Share the load of engagement – it makes it more manageable. Use existing newsletters/websites.

What to do now:

- Assess where you Parish is re engagement with families and the community.
- Create opportunities to engage. For instance
 - Morning teas
 - Meals
 - Visiting families
 - Invite speakers – eg Smith Family, psychologist.
- Your Parishioners already work with other groups in the community – use their links and advice.
- Ensure Parish policies and procedures reflect the important of family and community involvement.

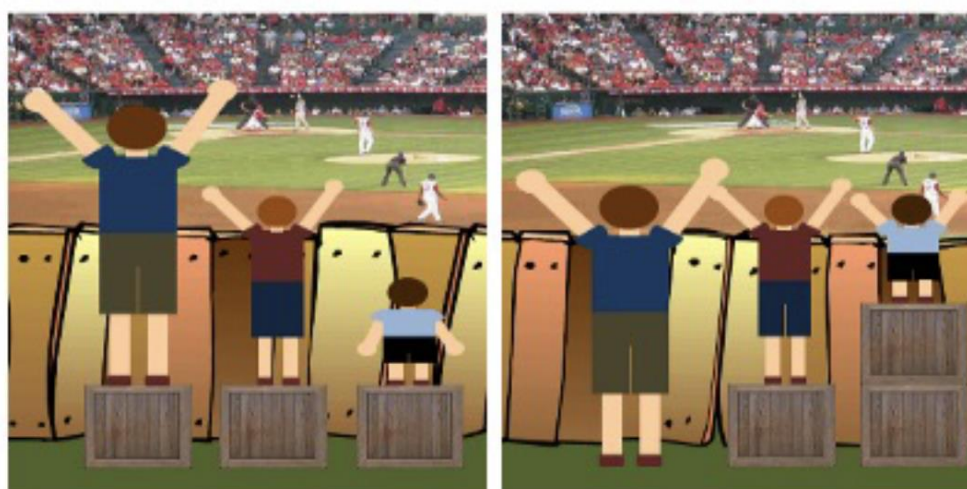
Standard 5

Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

What is this standard about?

- Understanding the difference between equity, equality and diversity.

Equity	making adjustments so that children have equal opportunity to the skills, knowledge and resources they need to be safe regardless of their characteristics, circumstances, life experiences and backgrounds.
Equality	aims to ensure that everyone gets the same things in order to enjoy full healthy lives.
Diversity	describes a range of personal characteristics, circumstances, life experience and backgrounds. The combinations of these differences make a child's unique identity and shapes the way they experience the world and the types of needs they have.



Equality (left) versus equity (right)

- Respecting diversity.
- The influence of Parish culture on the risk of abuse.
- Additional obligations for Parishes.

A child safe Parish will ensure it is informed and capable of responding effectively to diverse needs so that it includes all children in its child safety initiatives.

Parishes can consider:

- A trauma-informed approach – being aware that abuse such as neglect, loss of a parent, exposure to violence etc. takes a toll on a child's outlook. Be aware that trauma may lie behind behavior.
- How to empower children with a disability.
- Special needs of Aboriginal, LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender and gender diverse, intersex, queer and questioning, CALD (cultural and linguistically diverse) children.
- Discuss – what is your response to asylum seekers?

What to do now:

- Be respectful, welcoming and inclusive of all people from diverse backgrounds.
- Identify and respond to the diverse needs, abilities and backgrounds of children in your care.

Standard 6

People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

What is this standard about?

- A new obligation for Parishes
- Record keeping
- Information sharing
- Recruitment
- Training

Parish documents:

- Employment advertising includes Parish's commitment to child safety and wellbeing.
- Position descriptions set clear expectations about the role's requirements, duties and responsibilities. See Diocesan website for generic role descriptions.
- Induction documents include information about the Parish's child safe practices and complaint handling process as well as reporting, record keeping and information sharing.

Standard 7

Processes for complaint handling and concerns are child focused.

What is this standard about?

- The importance of a complaints process.
- Hearing the child.
- Being child-focused – from child and family perspective
- Handling of prior concerns – remembering that the average time for disclosure is 23 years.

Everyone in the Parish should know how to report abuse allegations and raise child safety concerns – and feel comfortable doing so.

The Diocesan complaint handling process is outlined in the ‘Safe Church Policy’ and in all training provided by the Safe Ministry Authority (SMA)

Complaint handling in the Diocesan ‘Safe Church Policy’:

All complaints and reports of misconduct are to be directed to the Director of Professional Standards. This process is outlined on the Diocesan website and on notices displayed on every Parish noticeboard and in every Parish bathroom.

Where the Diocese receives a complaint or information relating to reportable conduct, or a complaint that relates to issues of whether a member of clergy or a church worker is fit to engage in ministry, the Diocese may consider that complaint in accordance with the Professional Standards Act 2017 and the Protocol for responding to complaints of abuse and harassment.

If there is imminent danger of violence – report directly to Police 000

Our policies and processes take into account:

- Mandatory Reporting requirements
- The Reportable Conduct Scheme,
- Failure to report legislation.
- All forms of abuse – including grooming.

Consider:

- Who can people raise a complaint with? Is it a designated person or group of people?
- How can children make a complaint? Is there a designated person/group?

What to do now:

- Assess what complaint handling processes there are in your Parish. You may have good practices, but they need to be written down.
- Write down your complaint handling process so that it is
 - Easy to understand
 - Culturally safe
 - Accessible and
 - Child focused
- Take any complaint seriously.
- Keep records of complaints.

Standard 8

Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.

What is this standard about?

- Giving staff and volunteers confidence to act re child safety.
- Reinforcing that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

The Diocesan '*Safe Church Policy*' (available on the website) sets out the training requirements for clergy and laity in our Diocese. Records of training are kept and uploaded to Safety Management Online (SMOnline).

Face to face training is delivered by the *Safe Ministry Authority* and has been updated to include information about all child safe standards and Parish requirements. A training schedule is published on the Diocesan website at the beginning of each year and individual Parish arrangements can also be made.

Consider:

- Offering specialised training for those involved in children's ministry.
- Ensuring safe ministry awareness is ongoing and for all members of your Parish.
- Have safe ministry as an agenda item at all Parish Council meetings – and addressed in Parish reports to Bishop In Council (BIC).
- Minute decisions / concerns re Safe Ministry.

What to do now:

- Survey a cross section of staff and volunteers about how confident they feel in some of the areas they have been trained in.

Standard 9

Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimizing the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

What is this standard about?

- New requirements – an obligation that our online environment promotes safety and wellbeing.
- Recognising risks and ensuring they are mitigated.
- Engaging third party contractors.

Risk identification and analysis. Consider the following:

1. Situational risk – what activities are children involved in and where might harm or abuse occur?
2. Vulnerability risk – what are the circumstances or characteristics of children in your Parish that might make them more vulnerable to harm or abuse?
3. Propensity risk – what is the profile of the adults who engage with children in your Parish?
4. Institutional risk – how do the characteristics of your Parish, such as its structures, attitudes, practices, affect the risk of child abuse and harm?

The online environment

The online environment poses serious risks for children and young people. Your Parish may not have an 'online presence' however, you can still contribute to ongoing education and discussion on the inherent dangers of online use. Download the '*Electronic Communication Guidelines*' from the Diocesan website.

How can you manage risks in online environments?

Areas to consider	Examples of management strategies
Examine any opportunities for adults to have unwanted contact with children via online technologies and phones.	Advise children not to engage with people in the Parish and unknown adults or private online environments (eg direct messaging) Be clear how your social media texting, video and other technologies should and should not be used.
Establish appropriate oversight practices and safeguards for any contact with children using online technologies and phones.	Provide clear Guidelines for Parish members. Limit one-on-one services to situations where a parent/guardian can be in the room or where parental consent is given.
Assess whether online platforms used to deliver services are secure and appropriately protect children.	The eSafety Commissioner's ' <i>Tips for online collaboration tools</i> ' can help you work through the risks associated with online platforms and technologies.
Consider if children's images should be shared online.	Obtain consent from children and parents or carers for any use of their images or personal

	information online. NOTE: a separate consent form is required for each time an image is used.
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Engaging with third parties

- Ensure third party contractors meet expected child safety and wellbeing standards.

What to do now:

- Review your online presence.
- Take a walk around your physical environment while programs are running. How can you further minimise risks?
- Research how to ensure online safety.
- Assess what online interaction adults in your Parish may have with children.
- Ensure people working in children's ministry never befriend children online.

The *eSafety Commissioner* provides a range of practical resources to assist parents and children to stay safe online.

Standard 10

Implementation of the child safe standards is regularly review and improved.

What is this standard about?

- Reviewing policies and procedures.
- Analysing complaints and procedures.

When to conduct a review:

1. If policies/procedures are not current – more than 3 years old.
2. If staff and volunteers do not know how to access policies/procedures.
3. If you are seeing the same issue over and over and have not implemented changes.

What to do now:

- Ensure all Parish policies and procedures have a version listed and a regular review period indicated on the document.
- Analyse any reported incidents over the past year – look for trends and patterns.

Standard 11

Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

What is this standard about?

- Implementation of policies and procedures.

Compliance indicators.

This is what CCYP will be looking for:

- A Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy.
- Evidence of risk assessments undertaken and management plans adopted in response.
- Evidence of complaint handling policy and process and how you will respond. (this is outlined in the Diocesan 'Safe Church Policy')
- Evidence of safeguarding actions taken when contracting with 3rd parties.

What to do now:

- Ensure you have the documents mentioned above.