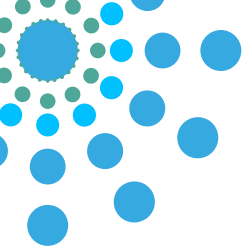


Safeguarding Children and Young People

Information Sheet





About this guide

This guide provides general information for people who work or volunteer with children and young people, and for organisations committed to creating child-safe environments.

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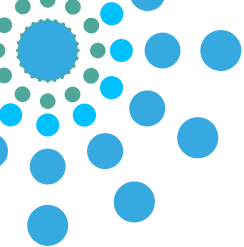
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This guide provides general information and is not legal advice.



What is child safeguarding?

Every child and young person should be safe, respected, supported and protected from harm.

Child safeguarding brings this commitment into everyday practice. It is about promoting children's wellbeing and creating environments where children and young people are welcomed, heard and able to participate safely.

Safeguarding includes:

- protecting children and young people from abuse, neglect and maltreatment
- supporting their health, development and wellbeing
- providing safe and effective care
- taking proactive steps to prevent harm and address risks
- helping children and young people achieve the best possible outcomes

For organisations, safeguarding means having clear policies, practical procedures and appropriate safeguards in place. When these are understood and followed, people are better prepared to recognise risks, respond to concerns and help keep children and young people safe.

Child safeguarding is an ongoing, shared commitment. It relies on organisations and the people within them working together to make safety, respect and wellbeing part of everyday decisions and actions.

Who is responsible for safeguarding?

Keeping children and young people safe is a shared responsibility. Everyone who works or volunteers with children and young people has a role to play, including:

- employees
- volunteers
- contractors
- self-employed professionals

People working with children and young people should understand their organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures, remain alert to possible concerns and know how to respond appropriately.

Organisations also have responsibilities for creating child-safe environments and meeting the legal requirements that apply to their activities and location. Individuals may have specific responsibilities depending on their role and the circumstances.

See the **Legal and reporting responsibilities** section for more information about the requirements that may apply to organisations and individuals.



Recognising safeguarding concerns

A safeguarding concern is anything that may affect the safety, wellbeing or rights of a child or young person, or place them at risk of harm.

Safeguarding concerns can take many forms and may include:

- a child or young person speaking about abuse or neglect
- signs that a child or young person may be experiencing abuse, neglect or other harm
- behaviours that raise concerns about their safety or wellbeing
- a lack of appropriate supervision
- practices or environments that may place children and young people at risk
- concerning or inappropriate behaviour by an adult
- gaps in recruitment, screening or the way risks are identified and managed
- unsafe online environments or exposure to inappropriate online content



Listening to children and young people

Children and young people communicate in many different ways, and concerns may not always be shared openly or through words. They may:

- talk about something that has happened
- hint at a concern through conversation or changes in behaviour
- express themselves through writing, drawing or other creative ways
- communicate through expressions, actions or subtle cues

Being heard is about more than having the opportunity to speak. It means knowing someone is listening, that their experiences matter and that what they communicate will be taken seriously.

Children and young people may not always feel ready or able to speak openly, and some may not recognise that what they are experiencing is harmful. Creating safe and supportive ways for them to communicate can help adults and organisations better understand their experiences and include their views in decisions about their safety and wellbeing.





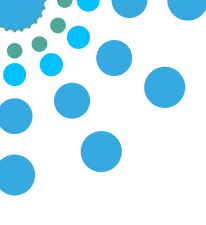
Creating child-safe environments

Creating a child-safe environment involves more than having policies in place. It means making the safety and wellbeing of children and young people part of an organisation's culture, everyday practices and decisions.

Organisations can help create safer environments by:

- making child safety a clear priority for leaders, employees and volunteers
- listening to children and young people and including their views in decisions that affect them
- welcoming the involvement of families and communities
- respecting each child's identity, background, culture and individual needs
- carefully recruiting, screening and supporting people who work or volunteer with children
- providing clear guidance, training and support so everyone understands their responsibilities
- making it safe and accessible for children, families and others to raise concerns
- identifying and reducing risks in physical and online environments
- responding to concerns in a fair, timely and child-centred way
- regularly reviewing practices and looking for ways to strengthen them

Child-safe environments are created through everyday actions. When children and young people are listened to, treated with respect and supported to participate, organisations can better understand risks and respond to their needs.



Legal and reporting responsibilities

Reporting concerns about a child or young person is an important part of keeping them safe.

Reporting responsibilities vary across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. The requirements that apply depend on the relevant law, the organisation, the person's role and the circumstances.

Organisations should have clear and accessible procedures so employees, volunteers and contractors understand:

- how to raise a concern within the organisation
- when a concern may need to be reported to an external authority
- who is responsible for making and managing reports
- how information should be recorded and handled
- where to find current guidance and support

Reporting responsibilities in Australia

Mandatory reporting requirements are set by each Australian state and territory. Who must report, what must be reported and when a report is required depend on the relevant law, the person's role and the circumstances. Professional, organisational and sector-specific requirements may also apply.

The National Office for Child Safety provides reporting information and links to child protection authorities in each Australian state and territory.



Reporting responsibilities in Victoria

Depending on the organisation, the person's role and the circumstances, responsibilities in Victoria may include:

- complying with the Child Safe Standards where the Standards apply
- reporting concerns about possible abuse or neglect to Child Protection, including when required under mandatory reporting laws
- notifying the Social Services Regulator under the Reportable Conduct Scheme where the Scheme applies
- reporting suspected criminal conduct to Victoria Police

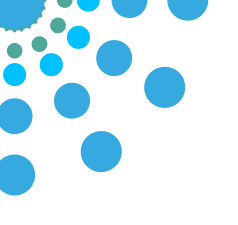
The Social Services Regulator has overseen Victoria's Reportable Conduct Scheme since February 2026. Organisations covered by the Scheme are legally required to notify the regulator of reportable allegations involving workers or volunteers.

Reporting responsibilities in Aotearoa New Zealand

In Aotearoa New Zealand, anyone concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person can make a report of concern to Oranga Tamariki or New Zealand Police.

Under the Children's Act 2014, specified government agencies, school boards and some providers of children's services must have child protection policies. These policies must include provisions for identifying and reporting possible abuse and neglect.

Oranga Tamariki provides guidance on child protection policies and organisational requirements.



How Kooyoora can help

Creating and maintaining a child-safe environment takes ongoing care, clear systems and a shared commitment across the organisation.

Kooyoora works alongside organisations to build effective safeguarding practices, understand their responsibilities, manage risks and respond appropriately when concerns arise. Kooyoora can help with:

- child-safe training and development
- pre-employment screening for employees and volunteers
- managing **Working with Children Checks** and other clearances through Kooyoora's **Online Screening Application OSCA**
- complaints management and independent investigations
- reviewing and improving organisational policies, systems and practices

Preventing harm through culture change

Policies and procedures are important, but creating a child-safe environment also depends on an organisation's culture. Kooyoora's **Abuse Prevention Through Culture Change Framework** offers free, research-informed tools to help organisations identify risks, strengthen their culture and create environments where children and young people feel safe, supported and able to raise concerns.

Kooyoora provides independent, impartial and trauma-informed support tailored to each organisation's needs.

Explore Kooyoora's Safeguarding Services



Further information and resources

This section brings together information and practical tools from trusted sources in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, along with Australian research to support child-safe policies, practices and environments.

Australia

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

A nationally consistent framework to help organisations create cultures and practices where children and young people are safe, supported and respected.

Child Safe Organisations resources

Practical tools from the Australian Human Rights Commission, including guidance, templates, a self-assessment tool and an online safety checklist.

Child safety and wellbeing resources

Links to child-safe requirements, screening schemes, reportable conduct schemes and other resources across Australian states and territories.

Reporting child safety concerns

Information from the National Office for Child Safety, including links to child protection authorities in each Australian state and territory.

Mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect

An overview of mandatory reporting laws across Australia, including how requirements differ between states and territories.



Victoria

Victorian Child Safe Standards

Information about Victoria's mandatory Child Safe Standards and the systems, policies and practices organisations need to help protect children and young people from abuse and harm.

Reportable Conduct Scheme

Information about the responsibilities of organisations covered by the Scheme, including notifying and responding to allegations involving workers and volunteers.

Mandatory Reporting Advice

Information about mandatory reporting requirements in Victoria, including who must report and the protections and confidentiality provisions that apply.

Reporting Child Abuse

Victorian Government information about when and how to report concerns to Child Protection, including current contact details.

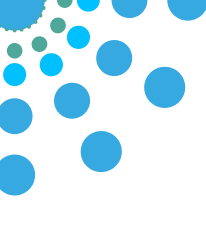
Failure to Disclose Offence

Information about the responsibility of adults in Victoria to report a reasonable belief that another adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16, subject to applicable exceptions.

Aotearoa New Zealand

Child protection policies for organisations

Guidance from Oranga Tamariki about child protection policy requirements and creating a strong culture of child protection.



Children's Act 2014

The New Zealand legislation covering child protection policies and safety checking requirements for specified organisations and children's workers.

Reporting a concern about a child or young person

Information about contacting Oranga Tamariki when there are concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a tamaiti or rangatahi.

Research and learning

Australian Child Maltreatment Study

National research examining the prevalence and impact of child maltreatment in Australia.

Australian Child Maltreatment Study Resource Library

Reports, research articles, infographics, webinars, videos and other resources based on the study's findings.

Institute of Child Protection Studies at Australian Catholic University

Research, evaluation, training and community education focused on improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

Safeguarding Children and Young People research and resources

Research, practical tools, reports, webinars and child-friendly resources about participation, prevention, organisational culture, risk management and child safety.