



VACCA

# Cultural safety and Child Safe Standards

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Connected by culture

# Children's rights

- **Child safety and cultural safety** are about a commitment to human rights
- Children's rights need to be promoted.
- Children are our most vulnerable in society.
- Human rights that support self-determination are fundamental to a holistic approach to Aboriginal children's safety.



# Culture is a human right

- **United Nations instruments**
- **The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006**
- **The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005**
- **The Charter for Children in Out-of-Home Care**



# Cultural Safety

*“an environment which is spiritually, socially, and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, of learning together with dignity and deep listening”*

# Cultural Safety

Cultural safety upholds the rights of Aboriginal children to:

- identify as Aboriginal without fear of retribution or questioning
- have an education that strengthens their culture and identity
- maintain connection to their land and country
- maintain their strong kinship ties and social obligations
- be taught their cultural heritage by their Elders
- receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible manner
- be involved in services that are culturally respectful.

Building Respectful Partnerships: The Commitment to Aboriginal Cultural Competence in Child and Family Services, VACCA (2010), p. 17.



# Cultural Safety

- Cultural safety needs to be a key element of the child safe standards.
- For Aboriginal children, an organisation cannot be child safe without also being culturally safe.
- Culture must always be at the forefront when working with Aboriginal children.
- A service system that values Aboriginal culture and is culturally competent is one which can provide safety for Aboriginal children.

# Cultural Safety in mainstream and Aboriginal organisations

Support is needed that promotes: empowering Aboriginal communities and organisations to develop processes and services which promote cultural safety; and mainstream organisations and governments and their departments to work as respectful partners with Aboriginal communities in the creation of a culturally safe service system and environment for Aboriginal children.



# The seven Child Safe Standards

- All of the seven elements in the Victorian child safe standards are necessary but not sufficient to ensuring organisations are child safe environments.
- Having these elements in organisations' policies and procedures for creating and maintaining a child safe environment is important.
- However what is critical is how these standards are implemented, communicated, understood and trained to on a regular and ongoing manner.



# Child Safe Standards Training Consultation Checklist

- What evidence in accreditation do you currently have in place to reach each of the 7 Child Safety Standards?
- How do you know your organisation has knowledge and is aware of implementation strategies for complying with child safety processes and systems?
- What methods and approaches do you currently use in your organisation to monitor and achieve the requirements of each standard?

## **Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements**

**Is your organisation providing information to staff, volunteers and your community about cultural safety and child safety?**

For example; Section on cultural safety is in your annual report, Organisational vision statement includes cultural safety?

**Does your organisation provide messages around cultural safety?**

For example; Brochures, pamphlets, newsletters, posters etc.

**What messages does your reception and front line staff say about child safety?**

For example; Culturally safe work environments, visually welcome Aboriginal children and families; Promotion of cultural safety

**Does your organisation have policies and practices like;**

For example; Induction for new staff and volunteers on cultural safety and child safety  
Charter of Rights for Aboriginal Children?

**Does your organisation have a person that champions child safety?**

For example; Encouraging Staff and volunteers to raise any cultural safety concerns with champion/s, Supporting leadership to model child safety

**Is cultural safety and child safety an agenda item at leadership meetings and reported against?**

For example; Reports about dealing with incidents, monitoring of programs and activities.

## **Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety**

**Does your organisation have a child safety policy or a commitment statement to demonstrate your commitment to safety?**

For example; Duty of Care obligations, Zero tolerance of child abuse, Managing online risks – email, internet, mobile that may mitigate cultural safety and child safety

**Does your organisation have mechanisms to actively listen to and empower Aboriginal children?**

For example; Improve child safety systems and tools from feedback/ideas provided by Aboriginal children

**Does your child safe policy promote cultural safety for Aboriginal children?**

For example; How does your organisation understand the requirements relating to failure to disclose and failure to protect to ensure safety for children is upheld?

## **Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children**

**Does your organisation have a clear code of conduct specific to appropriate and inappropriate behaviour with Aboriginal children for staff and volunteers and is it well known to all Board Members, staff and volunteers?**

For example; Ensure all Board, staff and volunteers are aware of the Code and for sign off. Clear instructions in our work where there is physical contact, sport coaching, overnight stays.

**Does your organisation recognise the needs of Aboriginal children, culturally appropriate behaviours and recognising difference in what is considered acceptable behaviour?**

For example; Personal care for Aboriginal children with a disability, inappropriate use of communication by non-Aboriginal staff.

**Does your organisation have clear procedures for dealing with identified child safety risks or breaches of code of conduct are clearly communicated and understood?**

For example; Guidance to deal with breaches of the procedure and consequences for staff and volunteers who may breach the procedure.

## **Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel**

**What safeguards have you in place to ensure the most suitable and appropriate people work with Aboriginal children?**

For example; Reference, police and WWC checks completed before a worker starts.

**Do your position descriptions include a statement on child safety?**

For example; Does your child safety champions have position descriptions.?

**Do your interviews include a question regarding cultural safety and child safety?**

For example; Face to face interviews and use of probation period.

**Does your organisation have a child safety training strategy?**

For example; Cultural safety areas include -

-Understanding risk of harm to children?

-What is child abuse?

-How to identify and reduce child abuse risks

-Identify signs of children at risk

**How will you train new staff in child safety and how will existing staff be trained?**

For example; Cultural competence training for non Aboriginal staff – appropriate language to avoid cultural harm.

**Does your organisation regularly assess the child safety needs of the organisation?**

For example; supervision, staff child ratio to protect cultural safety for children on activities.

**How does your organisation understand the impact of cultural harm?**





## **Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse**

**Does your organisation comply with all legal requirements to report child abuse via OOO to appropriate authorities, when it is suspected that child's safety is at immediate risk?**

For example; All processes are clear, robust for reporting suspected abuse and Aboriginal people are supported, feel comfortable following them – referral and supports

**Does your organisation have a process for outlining when and to whom a report must be made?**

For example; Reporting to Leadership and authorities with all legal requirements

**Does your organisation have a register of child safety reports including incident reports?**

For example; Accurate recording keeping and actions taken, using incident reporting forms and all information securely stored.

**Do you review your policies and practices around management and reporting of child safety?**

For example ;Undertake timely reviews of child safety procedures and followed if child abuse occurs.

**Does your organisation have disciplinary procedures around breaches of child safety policies and procedures are not appropriately followed and managed?**

For example; Complaints process that is accessible for Aboriginal children and their families.

## **Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse**

**Does your organisation have a risk management plan that includes child safety aiming to reduce all risks posed by situations, activities, physical environments and risks regarding the needs of Aboriginal children?**

For example;

- Includes visits
- Overnight stays
- Camps
- Programs
- Community events

**Does your organisation regularly review its risk management plan?**

For example; Provision of cultural training to fill gaps in knowledge and awareness for non Aboriginal staff to mitigate identified risks

**Does your organisation have discussions around previous incidences of risk in relation to cultural safety to prevent future recurrences?**

For example; Identify and address risks for Aboriginal children which may exist because of past experiences – a child may not feel as safe to identify as an Aboriginal person if there has previously been an inadequate response to their self-identification.

## **Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children**

**Does your organisation include reporting procedures that are accessible to all Aboriginal children?**

For example; Aboriginal children understand how to report allegations of abuse or concerns for their safety

**Are Aboriginal children provided with a culturally safe environment to talk about their safety?**

For example; Aboriginal children are taken seriously if they raise concerns

**Do you consult with Aboriginal children about decisions that affect them in relation to their safety?**

For example; Use of culturally appropriate ways of asking Aboriginal children if they feel safe, story time, yarning, cultural activities, art surveys.

**How do you involve and promote child safety to Aboriginal children so they feel it is right to be safe and ways of staying safe?**

For example; Child appropriate and accessible information about safety, rights to make decisions about their body, privacy.

**Do your children receive a welcome pack with information on child safety, posters, access to recognised websites on safety?**

For example; Use of culturally appropriate language, photographs and artwork for Aboriginal children and links to cultural safety and child safe information.

# Achieving cultural change

- Indigenous children's rights including their right to self-determination need to be asserted and amplified in all areas of life that relate to them.
- Organisations need to create an environment that gives children a voice, ensuring there are processes for children to be heard, empowered and a visible and active part of the organisation.
- A child who is strong in their cultural identity is more likely to have a voice.
- Therefore ensuring children are strong in their identity will ensure they are better able to have a voice and participate in communicating when they feel safe and importantly when they do not feel safe.

# Further Information

VACCA: <http://www.vacca.org/>

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