

ACTION PLAN TO IMPLEMENT CHILD SAFETY STANDARDS



The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the Victorian Government Inquiry into the handling of child abuse resulted in a series of recommendations for sectors and organisations working with children. The Victorian Government mandated that organisations working with children adhere to a series of standards to promote child safety, prevent child abuse and properly respond to allegations. The aim is to ensure organisations are well prepared to protect children from abuse and neglect. But at its core is the need to ensure child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture.

Outlined below are the 7 Child Safety Standards established by the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People (<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/being-a-child-safe-organisation/the-child-safe-standards/>) Outlined beside them are the steps/ action plan that the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions will take to adhere to these child safety standards. As an institution working with children we are obligated by our Christian beliefs and by regulation to adhere and implement these standards.

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

- Register Head of Organisation with CCYP
- Inaugurate the Diocese Child Safety Committee
 - Organize child safety committee, outline scope of work, terms of reference and decision making procedures
 - Child Safety Committee to draft Child Safety Framework and associated policies and procedures
 - Child Safety Committee to develop protocols and procedures to investigate allegations of abuse within the Diocese
- Draft a Child Safety Framework and related documents/policies
- Brief the Diocese Management Committee (DMC), which was established by papal decree to manage the affairs of the Diocese on 8 November 2018, on draft policies and obtain the endorsement of the Child Safety Framework
- Prepare presentation and briefing packets for DMC to hold Diocese wide meeting with clergy and church leadership to communicate child safety culture, get their inputs and introduce Child Safety Framework and explain how churches/ organisations will begin implementing Child Safety Standards
- Incorporate any input or adjustments to Child Safety Framework
- Communicate clearly and repeatedly that the Diocese has a zero-tolerance policy of child abuse or harm
- Publish statement by the DMC on importance of child safety, communicating roll out of new child safety policies and explaining the following steps the church will be conducting to address the 7 Child Safety Standards to the congregation
- Publish Child Safety Framework and policies on Diocese website
- Put together a child safety manual that includes the Diocese Child Safety Framework, all child safety policies, forms, procedures and training information/expectations for those working with or volunteering with children.
- Conduct a Child Safety Review/ Risk Assessments of each parish/related organisation
- Hold meetings with individual church boards to communicate child safety culture and introduce Child Safety Framework and explain how churches/ organisations will begin implementing Child Safety Standards
- Hold Diocese wide meetings w volunteers who work with children in each church/organisation to communicate child safety culture and introduce Child Safety Framework and explain how churches/ organisations will begin implementing Child Safety Standards
- Establish individual child safety committees within each parish to ensure implementation of Child Safety Framework and related policies
- Ensure child safety signage is put up in all churches/organisations

- Establish screening/ intake/ training practices of employees and volunteers
- Establish that child safety is quarterly topic for all board meetings

Standard 2: A clear commitment to child safety. A child safe policy and/or a statement of commitment to child safety

- Draft, approve and publish Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
- Draft, approve and publish child safety statements and policies on Diocese website
- Child safety policies reviewed by all clergy/church leaders in meeting with DMC and provide input
- Child safety policies and statement of commitment reviewed and signed by all clergy/church leaders and parish boards
- Statement of Commitment to Child Safety displayed in all church/organisations/buildings related to Diocese

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

- Draft, approve and publish Code of Conduct
- Draft, approve and publish child safety statements and policies on Diocese website
- Ensure that Code of Conduct reviewed and signed by all clergy and church leaders
- Ensure that Code of Conduct reviewed and signed by all members of all parish boards
- Ensure that Code of Conduct reviewed and signed by all volunteers, and employees of church working regularly with and around children
- Keep database and records of all who reviewed and signed code of conduct

Standard 4: Develop screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse or harm within your organisation.

- Distribute child safety manual that includes the Diocese Child Safety Framework, all child safety policies, form, procedures and training information/expectations for those working with or volunteering with children
- Child safety training and review of manual for all clergy
- Child safety training and review of manual for all Sunday School teachers and volunteers who work regularly with children
- Ensure volunteers/ employees have completed child safety intake forms (with referee information) and they are reviewed and approved by church leadership
- Audit working with children checks and ensure that all volunteers/employees who work regularly with children and going on activities/camps have working with children checks. Ensure that **only** individuals that have working with children check are participating in church activities/excursion/ camps

Standard 5: Establish a process for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

- Draft, approve and publish child safety reporting and responding policies
- Brief and train clergy, volunteers, staff on reporting/responding requirements
- Implement investigation procedures and protocols of the Child Safety Committee

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

- Conduct a Child Safety Review/ Risk Assessment of each parish/related organisation
 - Look at what is already has in place, identifying **strengths and areas for improvement**.
 - Understand the **level of risk associated** and the services and activities it provides.
 - **Identify what further information, advice and support is needed.**
 - **Make and implement a plan to address any gaps.**
 - Establish **timeframes to address gaps**.
- Address gaps in risk assessments
- Introduce intake forms, consent forms, activity approval forms, incident reporting forms regime
 - Ensure compliance
- Risk assessment reviews to include:
 - Consent and forms policies adherence
 - Code of conduct signed by all working with children within the Diocese
 - Working w children check audits and compliance
 - Review and standardize Sunday school curriculum
- Establish child safety intake/training procedures and processes
 - Provide copy and training on child safety framework (develop presentation based on)
 - Provide copy and read and sign code of conduct
 - Provide copy and training on reporting protocols
 - Ensure working with children checks
 - Develop child safety training session – all must attend and sign they have attended
- Establish referral network of counsellors, medical, legal, child service practitioners, etc.

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

- Draft, approve and publish Rights and Responsibilities of Children
- Ensure that Rights and Responsibilities of Children is displayed in all facilities where there are children's instruction and activities
- Develop age appropriate Sunday school curriculum modules on child safety
- Communicate to children that their views and voices matter and will be listened to and believed

Approved by The Diocese Management Committee 21 August 2021