FACT SHEET FOR EMPLOYERS: CHILD SAFE STANDARDS AND WORKPLACE LEARNING

The Victorian Government is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people.

As part of the Victorian Government's commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Betrayal of Trust report, which found that more must be done to prevent and respond to child abuse in our community, there is a new regulatory landscape surrounding child safety, underpinned by new Child Safe Standards.

The Child Safe Standards are compulsory minimum standards for organisations that provide services for children, including Victorian early childhood services and schools, to help ensure the safety of children. Examples of other organisations which must comply with the Child Safe Standards include hospitals, local councils, youth services, and sport or recreation services for children. For a list of in scope organisations for Child Safe Standards, see:

https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/being-a-child-safe-organisation/the-child-safe-standards/who-do-the-standards-apply-to/

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR WORKPLACE LEARNING UNDERTAKEN BY SCHOOL STUDENTS?

Ministerial Order 870 – Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools operationalises the Child Safe Standards in registered schools.

Standard 6 requires the school governing authority to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate risk management strategies to ensure child safety in school environments. Ministerial Order 870 defines a child as "a child enrolled as a student at the school".

The definition of 'school environment' in Ministerial Order 870 extends to any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours. This includes workplace learning environments where students undertake work experience, structured workplace learning, school community work (volunteering) and School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs).

Registered schools are therefore required to develop and implement risk management strategies prior to students undertaking workplace learning to ensure their safety will not be compromised and the school complies with the requirements of Ministerial Order 870.

WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS DO TO MANAGE CHILD SAFETY RISKS IN THE WORKPLACE?

1. Nominate a supervisor (or supervisors) who will directly supervise the student throughout their placement.

2. Ensure that the student's supervisor/s and other employees in the workplace understand acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in dealing with students. (Refer to the table on the reverse side of this fact sheet for some examples of these behaviours.)

3. Schools are encouraged to make employers aware of the school's approach to child safety by providing them with a copy of their child safety policy or statement of commitment. Employers are encouraged to seek a copy of this from schools if it has not been provided. Similarly, if the employer is an in scope organisation for Child Safe Standards, they are encouraged to provide a copy of their child safety policy or statement of commitment to schools.

4. Explain your workplace policies regarding bullying, harassment and discrimination, and any other behavioural standards or codes of conduct that apply to the workplace, to the student.

5. Explain your workplace policy for dealing with concerns or complaints about behaviour at work. Encourage the student to report any concerns directly to you and/or their supervisor, and to the school principal or another staff member at their school.

6. Ensure the student can readily contact their school if required during the placement.

7. Ensure school staff can readily contact the student to check in with how their placement is progressing.

8. Liaise immediately (or as soon as possible) with the school regarding any issues arising in the workplace.

MORE INFORMATION

- Department of Health and Human Services Child Safe Standards information:

  https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards

- Commission for Children and Young People's *A Guide to Creating a Child Safe Organisation:*

  https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/CSSGuideFinalV4-Web-New.pdf

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOURS WHICH ARE ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE IN DEALING WITH STUDENTS IN THE WORKPLACE?

Acceptable behaviours
Treating everyone in the workplace, including students with respect
Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and students with a disability
Listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they have been harmed or abused, or that they are worried about their safety
Reporting any child safety concerns to the school principal and, if needed, the police
Reporting to the school principal any charges, committals for trial or convictions in relation to a sexual offence, or physical or psychological abuse, by an employee, or certain allegations or concerns about an employee

Unacceptable behaviours
Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
Exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with a student which may be construed as inappropriate
Discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students
Use inappropriate language in the presence of students
Treat a student unfavourably because of their age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
Turn a blind eye to behaviours by other adults towards students that appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
Communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc.) except where that communication is reasonable and related to the student's work activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
Work with students whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
Consume alcohol or drugs at the workplace in the presence of students

Adapted from: Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority's *Child Safety Code of Conduct: Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviour:* https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/Documents/CSSConductBehvr.docx