

## 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**

- Draft documents/policies related to Child Safety Framework and Child Safety Standards
- Brief and obtain approval of Bishop to begin implementing
- Inaugurate Child Safety Committee
  - Organize child safety committee – write a letter of invitation from bishop to individual
  - Child safety committee to give feedback on draft documents – their feed back incorporated into documents
- Communicate clearly and repeatedly that the Diocese has a zero tolerance policy of child abuse or harm
- Prepare presentation and briefing packets for Bishop to hold Diocese 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
- Publish statement by Bishop 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, form, 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 Diocese Meeting 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
- 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
- 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 child safety statements and policies on Diocese website
- Child safety policy reviewed by all clergy/church leaders in meeting with Bishop
- Child safety policy and statement of commitment reviewed and signed by all clergy/church leaders and parish boards
- Child safety statement 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 child safety statements and policies on Diocese website
- Code of Conduct reviewed and signed by all clergy and church leaders
- Code of Conduct reviewed and signed by all members of all parish boards
- Have all volunteers, and employees of church working regularly with and around children review and sign code of conduct
- 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 on Diocese website
- Brief and train clergy, volunteers, staff on reporting/responding requirements
- Implement via 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
- Risk assessment reviews to include:
  - Consent and forms policies adherence
  - Code of conduct signed by all working with children
  - Working w children check audits and compliance
  - Review and standardize Sunday school curriculum
- Establish child safety intake/training procedures and processes
  - Provide copy and read child safety framework (develop presentation based on)
  - Provide copy and read and sign code of conduct
  - Provide copy and read reporting protocols
  - 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
- Develop Sunday school curriculum session on child safety education
- Communicate to children that their views and voices matter and will be listened to and believed