
DOCUMENT REFERENCE:	PPP012
RESPONSIBLE MANAGER:	Manager - Student Engagement and Support
CATEGORY:	Governance
DATE APPROVED:	24/04/2024
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:	April 2026
RELATED DOCUMENTS:	Legislation: Ministerial Order 1359 – Child Safe Standards, Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools Child Safe Standards (2022) Privacy and Data Protection Act (amended) 2014 (Vic) Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)
	Documents: PPP036 Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy PPP052 Duty of Care Guidelines PPP083 Staff Code of Conduct PPP083a Staff Code of Conduct - Child Safety PPP095 Disciplinary Management Guidelines PPP149 Student Code of Conduct PPP149b Student Code of Conduct - addendum PPP161 Risk Management Framework PPP141 Complaints Resolution procedure PPP141a SWTAFE Making a Complaint (Easy English) PPP106 Police and Working with Children Check PPP105 Recruitment and Selection Guidelines PPP170 SWDS Responding to Abuse and Neglect Guidelines PPP202 Professional Boundaries PPP292 Child Safe Incidents – Responding and Reporting Procedure SWTAFE Induction Program and Annual Corporate Refresher Child Safe Standards – VRQA guidelines and resources Department of Education and Training – ‘Child Protect’ resources ‘Commission for Children and Young People’ Resources Child Safe Standards – Information for Young People Child Safe Standards Translated Resources Reportable Conduct Scheme

Introduction

South West TAFE (SWTAFE or the ‘Organisation’) has a zero tolerance to child abuse and is committed to embedding an organisational culture of child safety and wellbeing. These Guidelines demonstrate a strong commitment to ensuring that children are safe when in the care of the organisation, and provides an outline of the procedures and practices implemented to keep everyone safe from harm, including all forms of abuse.

They provide a framework for:

- the development of a Child Safety & Wellbeing Program inclusive of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child safety and wellbeing within the organisation;
- the creation of a positive and robust child safety and wellbeing culture;

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- the promotion and open discussion of child safety and wellbeing issues within the organisation;
- complying with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child safety in Victoria.

Definition of a Child

For the purposes of implementing a child safe culture and environment, a child is inclusive of anyone under the age of 18 years of age. It is not restricted to students of South West TAFE.

Child	For the purposes of implementing a child safe culture and environment, a child is inclusive of anyone under the age of 18 years of age. It is not restricted to students of South West TAFE.
Mandatory Reporting	<p>Mandatory reporting refers to the legal requirement for certain professional groups/occupations to report a reasonable belief of child's physical or sexual abuse to Child Protection. This will apply to some members of the SWTAFE community if they belong to one of professional groups, regardless of whether they are employed by SWTAFE in such a capacity.</p> <p>All mandatory reporters must make a report to Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection as soon as practicable if, during the course of carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a child has suffered or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical abuse or sexual abuse • the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type. <p>It is a criminal offence not to report in these circumstances.</p> <p>Mandatory reporters must also follow the Four Critical Actions to ensure they fulfil all their legal obligations.</p>
Reasonable Belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is more than just a suspicion (must be some objective basis for the belief) • Doesn't require proof or certainty • May be formed from directly observing conduct or physical or behavioural indicators, or receiving a disclosure from a child or another credible source
Reportable Conduct	<p>Reportable conduct is conduct against a 'Child'. It is a scheme administered by The Social Services Regulator (SSR) is an independent statutory authority that exists to safeguard the rights of children and young people as well as people who use social services in Victoria.</p> <p>For full details, refer to PPP284 Reportable Conduct Scheme.</p> <p>There are five types of 'reportable conduct' listed in the <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sexual offences (against, with or in the presence of, a child) • sexual misconduct (against, with or in the presence of, a child) • physical violence (against, with or in the presence of, a child) • behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm • significant neglect.
SSR	The Social Services Regulator

CCYP	The Commission for Children and Young People
Misconduct	Misconduct may be committed against a 'Child' or an adult. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A breach of professional standards • A breach of a Code of Conduct • Criminal Conduct eg: theft or fraud.
Harmful Sexual Behaviours	Harmful sexual behaviour involves one or more children engaging in sexual discussions or acts that are inappropriate for their age or stage of development. Child to Child only

Child Safety & Wellbeing Principles

SWTAFE's commitment to child safety and wellbeing is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse.

1. All children have the right to be safe and their safety is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture
2. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility
3. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount and their views and privacy must be respected
4. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our organisation's community
5. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our PPP083 Staff Code of Conduct, PPP083a Staff Code of Conduct – Child Safety and PPP202 Professional Boundaries Guidelines
6. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, volunteers, third party contractors and external education providers who have direct contact with children
7. Child safety training is mandatory for all South West TAFE Board members, staff and volunteers. More in depth training targeting staff who engage with children and vulnerable people will be conducted on an annual basis.
8. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the organisation's community. *(Refer to PPP292 Child Safety Incidents – Responding and Reporting Procedure)*
9. Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
10. Children will be supported to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights
11. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support
12. Children identifying as part of the LGBTQIA+ community have the right to special care & support
13. We have zero tolerance of racism and expectations that staff and volunteers will act on incidents of racism
14. staff and volunteers will actively support and facilitate participation and inclusion by Aboriginal children and their families within the organisation
15. the organisation's leadership has a responsibility to help everyone involved with the organisation to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children.

Children's Rights to Safety and Participation

SWTAFE has an ethical and legal responsibility to develop and implement strategies that embed a culture of child safety, as per Ministerial Order 1359. These include allocating roles and responsibilities; keeping staff informed; and periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and revising them where appropriate.

We encourage all our students –*whether they are a child or not by definition* - to express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them. We listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them. We teach students about what they can do if they feel unsafe, and listen to and act on any concern's students, or their parents or carers raise with us.

Valuing Diversity and Inclusion

We value and celebrate diversity including cultural diversity, and we do not tolerate discriminatory practices. To achieve this, we promote the:

- cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students and their families
- cultural safety, participation and empowerment from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) and their families
- personal safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability and their families to make them feel welcome and part of all aspects of school life
- personal safety, participation and empowerment of LGBTQIA+ students and their families make them feel welcome and part of all aspects of school life

Our Child Safety & Wellbeing Program

Our Child Safety & Wellbeing Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work practices, policies and procedures and information channels to protect children from abuse. It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators;
- clear procedures and channels for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse;
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, volunteers (direct and indirect), third party contractors, external education providers, parents and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters;
- procedures for recruiting and screening staff and volunteers; and processes for monitoring third party service contractors;
- support strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe and encouraged them to raise concerns;
 - Child Safe contact officers
 - Classroom discussion
 - Reporting information present throughout our organisation
 - Wellbeing officers present and in contact with children
 - 'Reporting' and 'Where to get help' documents displayed
- policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities;
- a child safety and wellbeing training program implemented;
- information providing the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children (*PPP292 Child Safety Incidents – Responding and Reporting Procedure*);
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality; As per clause 10 Short Guide to Child Safe Standards. Refer to: [Short guide to the Child Safe Standards](#)
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards); and

- a system for continuous improvement and review
- SWTAFE will provide children with access to complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand. The process will be modified on a case by case basis according to need. Refer to PPP141 Complaints Resolution and Appeals procedure.

Responsibilities

Child safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility. Anyone acting on behalf of SWTAFE including staff, the Board, volunteers, and third-party contractors have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children.

Specific responsibilities include:

- **South West TAFE Board**

Each member of the Board is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the organisation's *Child Safety & Wellbeing Guidelines* and related Programs to be effectively implemented and are responsible for holding the CEO with the support of the Executive team, accountable for effective implementation.

- **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**

The CEO is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this *Child Safety & Wellbeing Guideline* and related Programs are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child safety culture is maintained within the organisation.

- **Child Safety Contact Officers**

A number of staff members are nominated as the organisation's Child Safe Contact Officers. They receive additional specialised training with respect to child safety issues, and are responsible for championing child safety and wellbeing and assisting in coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- **Staff Members and Volunteers**

All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our *Child Safety and Wellbeing Guidelines* and related Programs and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the organisation's Contact Officers.

All staff are required to sign a Staff Code of Conduct - Child Safety PPP083a which recognises the critical role that staff play in protecting the students in our care and establishes clear expectations of employees, volunteers, and contractors for appropriate behaviour with children in order to safeguard them against abuse and or neglect. The Code of Conduct also protects staff through clarification of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

SWTAFE staff teaching on secondary school sites are required to have Victorian Institute of Teaching registration under 'Permission to Teach (VET)'.

All staff are required to observe and supervise interactions between children and adults within our service and report all concerns immediately.

- **Our Student Body**

All South West TAFE students are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the organisation's environment. Students will be informed of South West TAFE's Child Safety and Wellbeing Guidelines PPP036 and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy PPP012 through the Student Code of Conduct PPP149 and Student Code of Conduct – addendum PPP149b, and will be made aware of what to do to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse.

- **Third Party Contractors**

All third-party contractors (service providers) engaged by the organisation are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the organisation's environment. All service providers engaged by the organisation are required to be familiar with our PPP012 Child Safety

and Wellbeing Guidelines. South West TAFE may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the service provider and this information will form part of their induction.

- **External Education Providers**

An external education provider is any organisation or individual that has been engaged to deliver a specified course of study, workshop, forum or guest speaking session. The delivery of such a course may take place on South West TAFE premises or elsewhere. All external education providers engaged by the organisation are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the organisation's environment, and are required to be familiar with our Child Safety & Wellbeing Guidelines PPP012. South West TAFE may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the service provider and this information will form part of their induction.

Recruiting and Inducting Staff and Volunteers

SWTAFE will apply the most thorough and rigorous standards in the recruitment and screening of staff and volunteers. Our Recruitment and Selection Guidelines PPP105 specify the requirement to interview and conduct referee checks on all staff and volunteers and require police checks and Working with Children Clearance (WWCC) to be submitted.

As a part of the SWTAFE's induction process, all staff, volunteers and Board Members are required to participate in training on child safety. Induction programs for third party service contractors and external education providers also contain information in relation to child safety to ensure they are consistent with the organisation's approach to child safety.

Our commitment to child safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for staff and volunteer positions, as per our recruitment practices.

Breach

Where a SWTAFE employee is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within these Guidelines, the organisation may start a disciplinary process for a breach of the Staff Code of Conduct PPP083. This may result in disciplinary consequences.

Where the CEO is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within these Guidelines the concerned party is advised to contact the Chair of the Board.

Reporting Concerns

SWTAFE's nominated primary Child Safe Officer is the Manager of Student Engagement and Support. In addition, SWTAFE have a number of Child Safe Contact Officers throughout its campuses. Our Child Safe Program ensures that Child Safety Contact Officers are trained and able to provide detailed guidance as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Third party contractors, external education providers, students, parents/carers or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact one of the organisation's Child Safety Contact Officers or report their concerns directly to an appropriate external authority.

The organisation's Complaints Manager will undertake an initial evaluation of any complaints made in relation to child safety and refer on to the organisation's Child Safety Officer. Communications will be treated confidentially on a "need to know basis".

Reportable Conduct Scheme (administered by the Social Services Regulator)

As an organisation registered to deliver Senior Secondary Programs, SWTAFE is bound by the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme. This seeks to improve organisations' responses to allegations of child abuse and neglect by their workers and volunteers. The scheme is established by the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (the Act). The Reportable Conduct Scheme is focused on worker and volunteer conduct, and how organisations investigate and respond to allegations of child abuse. From 1 July 2024, organisations will also need to notify SSR about reportable allegations for labour hire workers, secondees, directors of companies and individual business owners and investigate under the Scheme.

The Reportable Conduct Scheme does not replace the need to report allegations of child abuse, including criminal conduct and family violence to Victoria Police.

Risk Management

SWTAFE adopts a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of the activity being undertaken; the physical and online environments; and the demographic and characteristics of our student body from time to time.

Communication

Information about SWTAFE's commitment to the protection of children will be communicated through our public website as well as through other relevant marketing and communication mediums. Where possible, opportunity will be given for family and community to provide feedback on Child Safety provisions.

Record Keeping

Data on complaints, investigations or incidents relating to Child Safety is collected in a Central Register and managed in-line with legislative and privacy requirements. Actions taken to investigate and resolve the issue are recorded. Any reporting to third parties will only use de-identified data. Where data indicates systemic issues and causes items will be added to the Continuous Improvement Register for further action.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

SWTAFE is committed to making diversity, equity and inclusion part of everything we do, including in the implementation of this policy/procedure/guideline. For more information, please visit the 'Our Values' page on our [website](#) [external] or the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Homepage on ECHO [internal]. [Diversity, Equity & Inclusion \(DEI\)](#)

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

South West TAFE is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a Child Safe Program designed to keep children safe within our organisation. For Child Safe key documents, resources, contact officer details please go to: [Child Safe Commitment](#)