

Healthcare that counts

A framework for improving care for vulnerable children in Victorian health services

Putting the framework into action

What does the framework do?

It articulates the role of all Victorian health services in the early identification and effective response to vulnerable children at risk of child abuse and neglect. It provides guidance to enable health services to embed organisational governance, systems and processes that are focused on vulnerable children and families.

Who does the framework apply to?

All health and community service organisations funded by the Department of Health and Human Services to provide a range of health services and programs for children and adults including:

- **Hospitals**
- **Registered community health services**
- **Alcohol and drug services**
- **Mental health – clinical and community based**
- **Dental**
- **Aboriginal health**
- **Counselling, parenting and other supports**
- **Public and preventative health programs.**

Other health providers in Victoria can use the framework to support practice improvement:

- **General Practice**
- **Maternal Child Health Programs**
- **Private hospitals.**

Areas for organisational improvement

Action area 1 – High quality governance for vulnerable children and families

Health services must have demonstrated leadership and systems in place to protect and promote the health, safety and wellbeing of children and families.

Action area 2 – Access for vulnerable children and families

Health services are accessible, flexible, inclusive, safe and responsive to the needs of vulnerable families.

Action area 3 – Family-sensitive and inclusive practice

Health services must uphold the rights of the child; consider the needs and interests of children when working with adults and promote family-sensitive practice.

Action area 4 – Working together

Health services and health professionals must work together and with others to ensure care is effective, comprehensive and coordinated.

Action area 5 – Effective communication and information sharing

Communication is open, transparent and information is shared between professionals and services in the best interests of the child.

Monitoring and Review

Annual Self-Assessment

- Review indicators of best practice in each action area
- Rate your progress
- Document evidence of best practice in action
- Identify gaps in practice
- Action specific areas and timeframes for practice improvement

Healthcare that counts self-assessment tool is a guide that supports monitoring and review.

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/populations/vulnerable-children>

Continual Service Improvement

Incorporate the annual self-assessment into continual safety and quality improvement processes within the organisation.

Workforce Development

Provide professional development specifically focussed on identifying and responding to vulnerable children at risk of child abuse and neglect.

Free e-learning training is available

<http://vulnerablechildren.e3learning.com.au>

Victorian Child Safe Standards

Align self-assessment process alongside work to embed mandatory Child Safe Standards.

See over page for alignment between Healthcare that counts and Child Safe Standards.

Healthcare that counts indicators of best practice

Alignment with child safe standards

Action area 1

High quality governance for vulnerable children and families

- Articulate the vision and purpose of how the organisation will improve support for vulnerable children and families in its strategic plan.
- Ensure that strong strategic and cultural leadership from the board and executive is demonstrated through planning, decision making and workforce development which includes a focus on vulnerable children and families.
- Implement organisational policies and procedures that focus on vulnerable children at risk of child abuse and neglect.
- Embed risk management systems that support the vision and purpose relating to vulnerable children and families.
- Meet compulsory child safe standards to demonstrate that there are systems in place to protect children from abuse within your organisation.

Child safe standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.

Child safe standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety.

Child safe standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.

Child safe standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.

Action area 2

Access for vulnerable children and families

- Identify and understand the needs of vulnerable population groups within the local area served by the organisation and implement culturally appropriate strategies to address the needs of these groups.
- Creating a child safe, inclusive and welcoming environment.
- Providing priority access and referral for high risk vulnerable children.

Child safe standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.

Child safe standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

Action area 3

Family-sensitive and inclusive practice

- Develop organisational values and guidelines that promote a culture of respect for children's rights and family diversity.
- Build workforce knowledge and capacity to deliver effective family -sensitive practice at all levels of the health service from intake and reception through to ongoing care.
- Implement care coordination and planning that considers the family and focuses on how the care and safety of children can be supported.

Child safe standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.

Child safe standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.

Child safe standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.

Action area 4

Working together

- Establish an active multidisciplinary committee that meets regularly to support intra and inter-agency relationships and strategic planning for vulnerable children.
- Develop strong organisational leadership that models collaborative practice and actively builds workforce capacity.
- Establish agreed communication and referral policies/processes in relation to vulnerable children that are actively supported and reviewed regularly.
- Implement multidisciplinary and multiagency case management and case conferencing for vulnerable children.

Child safe standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.

Child safe standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.

Child safe standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

Action area 5

Effective communication and information sharing

- Have ratified policies, protocols and procedures that provide clear guidance regarding reports and referrals and the obligations and responsibilities to share information.
- Educate health service staff about the requirements for information sharing in the best interests of children and the interface with health privacy and confidentiality.
- Develop and implement local agreements in collaboration with local child protection services that include information sharing and the resolution and escalation of issues that may arise in the management and transfer of information.

Child safe standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.

Child safe standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.