

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS FOR BSV

In direct response to the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry in 2013, Victoria introduced 7 compulsory minimum standards for organisations that provide services to children and young people, to help safeguard them from abuse.

There are 7 Standards and 3 Principles that BSV must consider

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

What does it mean to have a culture of child safety in an organisation?

Having a culture of child safety is more than having a set of policies and procedures in place. It is an attitude that is built into everyday thinking and practice within an organisation. It is the best defence against abuse.

For example

- BSV prioritises the safety and best interests of the children in its care
- BSV understands the nature and risks of child abuse and takes deliberate steps to protect children. BSV undertakes a risk assessment
- BSV is committed to removing all barriers to reporting child abuse

Leadership

Strong and clear governance arrangements allow leaders to ensure child safety is a focus within BSV.

The commitment of BSV's committee will ensure that positive changes it makes will be sustained over time. It is vital that BSV adopts an ongoing review and continuous improvement approach to meeting the standards. Governance arrangements to set directions and make important decisions need to be clear and well communicated.

Standard 2: A Child Safe Policy or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

BSV has demonstrated its commitment to child safety by having both a Child Safe Policy and a Statement of Commitment to Child Safety. Please refer to the BSV website.

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

Benefits of a code of conduct

A code of conduct plays an important role in protecting children from harm. It can:

- Provide clear written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children
- Detail acceptable and unacceptable behaviours for example physical contact, personal care, online communication, professional boundaries or complying with organisational policy and procedures
- Educate Sangha, volunteers, parents and children about the expected standards of behaviour and what will happen if a person does not comply
- Assist BSV to act on concerns or allegations of non-adherence to the code of conduct

Developing a code of conduct

Having undertaken a risk assessment the risks will be clearer and help to advise the code of conduct.

Implementing a code of conduct

The code of conduct needs to be widely communicated so everyone understands the expectations. The code of conduct needs to be applied consistently. All breaches must be addressed.

BSV to consider best practice to require volunteers to sign their agreement to adhere to BSV's code of conduct at all times.

Standard 4: Human resources practices

Develop and implement human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse such as screening, supervision and training.

Promoting a commitment to child safety

Use the BSV Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safe as a communication tool to let people know BSV takes child safety seriously.

Talking about child safety regularly and having visible messages and reminders will help remind volunteers and those coming to BSV about the commitment to child safety.

Robust recruitment practices

Having policies and procedures can help keep inappropriate people from volunteering at BSV.

Suggestions include:

- Have key selection criteria when recruiting including for volunteers

- Consider why the person wants to work with children, their values and attitudes, their understanding of children's rights and needs, and what keeps children safe
- Screen potential Sangha and volunteers using a Working with Children Check, police checks, referee checks and identity checks
- Speak with at least 2 referees of any potential Sangha or volunteer including the most recent supervisor or person in authority

High quality supervision and professional development

Providing a positive, supportive working environment will allow volunteers to perform to the best of their ability and will provide a safe environment for children.

This may include:

- Induction for new volunteers including discussion about child safety and the code of conduct
- Formal and informal supervision and mentoring
- Training opportunities

Standard 5: Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

BSV has a responsibility to promote and provide an environment in which children, Sangha, volunteers and contractors are encouraged to speak up when they are uncomfortable or concerned.

This includes:

- Recognising that the safety of children is everyone's responsibility
- Having a clear procedure for reporting concerns and allegations
- Encouraging children to report if they feel unsafe or concerned
- Making people within BSV aware of their duty of care and legal responsibilities
- Appropriately acting on concerns and complaints
- Keeping and securely storing accurate records

Responding

Children who disclose that they are feeling unsafe or being abused must be heard, must be taken seriously and must be treated with sensitivity and compassion.

They and their families and carers need to be connected with services that can support them to manage a difficult or traumatic experience.

BSV's response to reports of suspected abuse should be the same no matter how the organisation feels about the child's disclosure or the person or persons implicated in their disclosure.

Reporting

Please refer to the BSV Flowchart: Child Safe Reporting Process

An organisation's reporting process must also be known by children and provided in an age appropriate form.

A clear reporting process includes

- What types of behaviour or concerns need to be reported
- Who within an organisation should be notified of a child safety concern
- What an organisation's internal investigation process will involve and how it will keep records

The reporting process includes:

- Report criminal child abuse to the Police or Child Protection as soon as possible.
- Call 000 if a child is in immediate danger

Standard 6: Risk management and mitigation

Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

Risk assessment

This includes:

- Thinking about BSV's activities and the services it provides to children
- Planning how to make activities as safe as possible
- Being proactive to reduce the likelihood of risks

How do you start?

BSV needs to ask:

- What could go wrong within BSV or in any specific activity?
- Are there any circumstances that expose children to risk?
- Does the activities BSV does involve bodily contact between adults and children?
- Is there a low level of parental involvement?
- Are there places where interactions between adults and children can be obscured from sight?
- Are there circumstances where a volunteer could be left alone with a child?
- Does the organisation work with children who are particularly vulnerable

Engage children in the process

It is suggested that organisations involve children and young people in the process of identifying and managing risks. Communicate with them about the measures you are putting in place to keep them safe.

An ongoing process

Remember that reducing risks to children is an ongoing process. BSV needs to monitor the strategies in place to reduce risk and be willing to incorporate the learning's that happen when things work well or do not work so well.

Standard 7: Empowering children

Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

Children have unique insights into their lives, their needs and the world around them. They have a right to be heard and have their concerns and ideas taken seriously, particularly on matters that affect them including how to keep them safe.

Enabling and promoting the participation of children includes:

- Supporting children and young people to understand their rights, contribute to child safety planning and raise concerns
- Promoting and encouraging children's participation in decision-making
- Valuing and respecting children's opinions
- Seeking children's views about what makes them feel safe and unsafe
- Establishing an environment of trust and inclusion that enables children to ask questions and speak up if they are worried or feel unsafe

Benefits of empowering children

Promoting children's participation can benefit BSV because it will provide valuable information about their experience.

Most importantly, when children have opportunities to participate and feel their contributions are valued, they are more likely to speak up when harmed or feeling unsafe.

The 3 Principles for BSV to uphold are:

1. Promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
2. Promote the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
3. Promote the safety of children with disability