



## *Child Safety Officer Handbook*

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### Introduction

This handbook is a reference for EDFL Clubs on matters of child safety, and provides guidance to appointed CSO's regarding their responsibilities, obligations and duties.

### Background

In April 2012, the Victorian government initiated an inquiry into the handling of child abuse allegations within religious and other non-government organisations. The inquiry's final report, *Betrayal of Trust*, made a number of recommendations that have been acted on by the Victorian Government. The creation of Child Safe Standards (the Standards) was one of the key recommendations.

The Child Safe Standards will apply to sporting organisations that operate and provide sporting services to children within Victoria (including National Sporting Organisations). The Standards apply to organisations as a whole, not only the areas that work with children. The standards are flexible and principle-based initiatives to increase the safety of all children within the organisation. The Standards apply to all personnel in an organisation.

This includes:

- Board of Management / Committee Members
- All paid staff (CEO, Executive, Employees)
- All Volunteers (Coaches, Officials, Administrators, etc)
- All students on placement
- Any contractor the organisation engages

In response to the introduction of the Standards, the Essendon District Football League (EDFL) and all its affiliated clubs are required to implement a number of measures to be compliant and to instil a child safety culture across the League. This handbook details the Standards, provides guidance for what can be done to improve child safety at your Club and also outlines the expectations of the Child Safety Officer (CSO).

Child safety is not an add-on or one-off exercise. It is now a legal requirement for many organisations. Having policies and procedures in place is not enough - creating a culture and

environment within sport that is supportive and protective of children should be the objective.

It is the responsibility of all at the EDFL from the Board of Management, through to the executive, staff and volunteers, to:

- Protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying and exploitation by our people;
- Be alert to incidents of child abuse and neglect occurring outside of our sport that may have an impact on the children and young people; and
- Create and maintain a child safe culture that is understood, endorsed and put into action by all the individuals who work for, volunteer or access our programs and services.

We expect all within our sport, regardless of their role or level of responsibility, to act to keep children safe from such harm by adopting the practices and behaviour we have set as our standard when carrying out their roles, and reporting any abuse or neglect of which they become aware to EDFL management and/or to the relevant external authorities responsible for child protection or to Police.

#### [Changes to Legislation](#)

As of the 1 August 2017 Amendments based on The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse made several recommendations aimed at strengthening the protection children receive through Working with Children Checks. The following amendments to the Act implement these recommendations;

1. Expanding the definition of 'direct contact' in the Act. The definition of direct contact now includes oral, written or electronic communication as well as face-to-face and physical contact.
2. Removing references to 'supervision' from the Act. This means that even if a person's contact with children as part of their child-related work is supervised by another person, they will still need to apply for a Working with Children Check (Check).
3. Creating a new occupational category of child related work to cover out of home care known as 'kinship care'. Family members or other persons of significance caring for a child placed in their care by Child Protection or otherwise under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 are required to obtain a Check.
4. Ensuring that non-conviction charges (charges that have been finally dealt with other than by a conviction or finding of guilt) for serious sexual, violent or drug offences are considered as part of Check assessments and reassessments.
5. Enabling the Secretary to the Department of Justice and Regulation to compel the production of certain information for the purposes of compliance monitoring.

## EDFL Child Safety Mission Statement

The EDFL and its affiliated clubs are committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring the EDFL and clubs are a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

## Club Checklist – Child Safety Standards

- Appoint a Child Safety Officer and ensure they have done the following:
  - Acquired a Working with Children Check (WWCC)
  - Online “Play by The Rules - Child Protection Course” module completed via <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/got-an-issue/child-safe-sport/child-protection-online-course>
  - Contact details supplied to EDFL
- Adopt and communicate the EDFL Mission Statement in relation to child safety.
- Adopt and communicate the EDFL Child Safety Policy.
- Create and/or communicate your club Code of Conduct.
- Adopt the EDFL Minimum Standards for Recruitment and implement sound recruitment practices.
- Educate your club in appropriate methods on their responsibilities, rights and risks, including:
  - Club Officials
  - Coaches
  - Trainers
  - Players
  - Parents
- Promote and communicate the EDFL Incident Reporting Procedure.
- Conduct risk assessment to identify potentially dangerous situations, address weaknesses before they are exploited, and form response plans for situations that may arise.
- Find initiatives to “empower” kids and give them a voice in their team and their club.
- Ensure your policies and information are accessible by all parties within the club, including parents.
- Include Child Safety as a semi-regular agenda item in club committee meetings and training night addresses.
- Ensure all relevant volunteers/club members have correct qualifications, in particular Working with Children Checks.
  - Status of WWCC must be verified via <https://online.justice.vic.gov.au/wwccu/checkstatus.doj>
- Assess club facilities and equipment – are they well maintained? Could they pose a risk to children or others?

## The Seven Standards for Child Safety

The seven standards as defined by VicSport are:

1. Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.
2. A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety.
3. A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.
4. Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.
5. Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.
6. Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.
7. Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

## Defining Child Safety

Child abuse involves conduct which puts children, including unborn children, at risk of harm or neglect.

Child abuse can be inflicted by adults or other children and can include:

- Physical abuse by hurting a child or a child's development (e.g. hitting, shaking or other physical harm; giving a child alcohol or drugs; or training that exceeds the child's development or maturity).
- Sexual abuse by adults or other children where a child is encouraged or forced to watch or engage in sexual activity or where a child is subject to any other inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature (e.g. sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, pornography including child pornography or inappropriate touching or conversations).
- Emotional abuse by ill-treating a child (e.g. humiliation, taunting, sarcasm, yelling, negative criticism, name calling, ignoring or placing unrealistic expectations on a child).
- Neglect, including medical neglect (e.g. failing to give food, water, shelter or clothing or to protect a child from danger or foreseeable risk of harm or injury).

It is important to remember that child abuse can be present in other ways, such as bullying, inappropriate behaviour, or inappropriate communication. Negligence can also be considered as child abuse. For example, leaving one child alone after training while they wait for their parents, or neglecting to maintain facilities or equipment, can lead to the injury of a child under your care. Do not limit your awareness of this issue to the extreme cases.

**Remember:** Consider ALL forms of child abuse as you seek to make your club safer.

## Child Safety Officer

From February 2019, all EDFL clubs must have a nominated CSO, and have supplied their details to the EDFL Child Safety Liaison Officer. The role of a Child Safety Officer (CSO) is to give players, clubs and parents a known point of contact for matters regarding child safety, and to give clubs a liaison for training and information.

Having a CSO is intended to provide support at club level to all members and proactively promote child safety and enforce strategies to strengthen the club culture and environment, so that it is, at all times, safe, fair and inclusive. In the case an incident occurs, people will have confidence in knowing who to turn to, and that the CSO in turn understands what to do.

### Where do I start?

To begin with, make sure you understand the issue you will be dealing with. Take a look at the policies and templates used and provided by the EDFL and take the time to understand the training resources intended to help you. In particular, complete some of the online Australian Sports Commission training modules (visit <https://learning.ausport.gov.au/auth/login/?returnUrl=%2F>). Once you have read this handbook, it is the CSO's responsibility to lead the way in getting your club up to the standards that this new legislation has set. You won't be expected to do this alone, and you will have the support of the EDFL and from other sources.

### Requirements

The EDFL will require you to undertake certain training, in the form of online modules and information sessions, the details of which will be provided to you when you nominate as your club CSO. This training will ensure you understand what to do if someone reports an incident to you, and what kind of problems to look out for. In order to be accepted as the CSO for your club, you must supply the certificate of completion for all requested online modules, and a valid Working with Children check.

### Responsibilities

To ensure your club is compliant with the new legislation, you need to:

- Adopt a Child Safety Mission Statement
- Promote the EDFL Child Safety Policy
- Adopt a club Code of Conduct
- Review club recruitment process
- Educate your club personnel, players and parents about these issues and standards - Create an Incident Reporting Procedure
- Run risk assessments on the club
- Implement some initiatives to empower children at your club

Each of these steps will be addressed in more detail during EDFL CSO Training. In addition to these, you should also familiarise yourself with the process for applying for a WWC check, so you can assist others from your club in getting theirs (this is addressed below).

## Play by the Rules – Child Protection Course

As the CSO for your club, you are required to complete an online training module. This module is an educational resource from the Australian Sports Commission and provides a great foundation of understanding for a child safety role. The module takes around 45 minutes to complete, but it can be completed in multiple sittings.

To access this module, you should:

1. Go to [www.learning.ausport.gov.au](http://www.learning.ausport.gov.au)
2. Create an account and sign in
3. Click on Learning Resources
4. Enrol in the Child Protection Training module. You will find it on the second page of Learning Resources

Enrolling should take you directly to the beginning of the module. If it does not, you can access it by the link that is immediately emailed to you, or by clicking the number next to your profile icon. Doing so will take you to an inbox, with a direct link waiting for you in a message.

Complete the training module. Make sure you save your certificate of completion and send a copy to your EDFL Child Safety Liaison.

It is recommended that you go over the case studies that are part of this module with your club committee, to see how they respond to each situation. Doing so will allow you to consider situations that show the complicated nature of child safety issues before any potentially arises.

## Working with Children's Checks

### Who Needs One?

The list of personnel requiring a WWC check includes:

- Coaches
- Assistant Coaches
- Coaching Coordinators
- Trainers
- Runners
- Team Managers
- Child Safety Officer
- President, Secretary, and club Committee Members
- Club Tribunal Advocates
- Club Volunteers and members who are in regular contact with children under 18 (eg. Canteen workers, club umpires, senior players helping with junior training)

## Applications

When a member of your club is applying for their WWCC, they need to complete the first part of the application online at [www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au). They will need to complete the online application portion, after which an email will be sent to the applicant. They must then go to their nearest participating Australia Post outlet to finalise the application (not all locations do this, so check online before going).

If you verified your identity online:

- show counter staff the barcode in the email you received from [workingwithchildren@smarteform.com.au](mailto:workingwithchildren@smarteform.com.au) on a smart phone or a printed copy
- present one acceptable proof of identity document that includes your photo, such as your Australian passport or driver's licence
- pay the non-refundable fee, if you are applying for an Employee Check. Volunteer Checks are free
- Australia Post will take your photo at no charge

If you did not verify your identity online:

- show counter staff the barcode in the email you received from [workingwithchildren@smarteform.com.au](mailto:workingwithchildren@smarteform.com.au) on a smart phone or a printed copy
- present the required proof of identity documents, including one with your photo
- pay the non-refundable fee, if you are applying for an Employee Check. Volunteer Checks are free
- Australia Post will take your photo at no charge.

**Note:** If the applicant is a paid staff member of your organisation, they must get an employee check, not a volunteer check and must also pay a small fee at this point of the application process.

Once they have received a receipt to say the process has started, they must return to the website and create a MyCheck Portal. Once they log in to this, they need to click "Change My Details" and align themselves with the club AND the league by clicking "add an organisation" and entering the following:

- To align with club: Enter club name in full – eg. "Aberfeldie Sports Club"
- To align with league: Enter full league name plus shortened club name – eg "Essendon District Football League - Aberfeldie"
- It is recommended that applicants complete this part during the initial online application, but it can be done at a later time by logging in again.

**Note:** applicants need to apply under organisational codes #42 and #70

## Expiration and Non-Compliance

If a member of your club does not have a WWCC and are required by the EDFL (list above) to have one, they must not perform duties at the club until they do. In many cases, it will be illegal for them to do so, and both the club and the individual can be liable. This is why it is so important for these checks to be completed and properly monitored.

For this reason, the EDFL suggests keeping a file that houses a copy of all WWCC. At club level, it is vital that you ensure all required personnel get their WWCC prior to working and supply you with a copy (or at the very minimum, sight their card and verify their status online). This is in the best interests of clubs, personnel, players and the EDFL as it allows a proper level of accountability.

Once a qualification expires, they cannot continue to perform their duties until they are reaccredited and proof of this is provided the club. It is also recommended to set up a notification system and add in expiry dates for each WWCC, this will allow you to ensure all members are keeping up to date.

All members, as listed above, must have a WWCC to undertake their role at the club. The EDFL may audit your club for WWCC compliance at any stage, so it is vital to keep an accurate record. If your club does not already keep a file or database, it is recommended that you start one.

## Exemptions

There are several situations listed in the *Working with Children Act 2005* (the Act) where people doing child-related work are exempt and do not need a Working with Children Check (Check).

The exemptions in the Act are described below.

- If you are under 18 years of age, you are exempt from the Check.
- If you are a teacher who is currently registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), you are exempt from the Check.
  - *However, if your VIT registration is suspended or cancelled, you are no longer exempt and must apply for a Check. You must, in writing, notify every organisation that engages you in child-related work within seven days of the suspension or cancellation of your registration.*
- If you are a Victoria Police officer or an Australian Federal Police (AFP) officer, you are exempt from the Check.
  - *However, if you are suspended or dismissed from Victoria Police or the AFP, you are no longer exempt and must apply for a Check. You must, in writing, notify every organisation that engages you in child-related work within seven days of being suspended or dismissed.*

## Negative Notices

If a person applies for a Working with Children Check, they will either pass all background checks and receive their card, or the checks may find something that prevents them from being issued a WWCC. In such cases, they are issued either a Negative Notice or an Interim Negative Notice.

If this occurs, the process below should be followed (by you, the Secretary or whoever is in charge of such notices). Note that this process is different from our Reporting Procedure – this is because a Negative Notice does not necessarily mean an offence.

Important things to remember if your club receives a notice from the Department of Justice and Regulation:

- The letter you receive is confidential and should only be read by yourself and not be shared with others. Sharing personal information with others is an offence against the Department of Justice and Regulation.
- The letter you receive will also be received by the EDFL. This will only occur if the person has nominated EDFL as an employer, which is why it is crucial for them to align with the club and league correctly.
- The letter you receive may be an interim negative notice, negative notice or withdrawal notice.
- Ensure the letter is filed or stored away in a secure area where no one else can gain access.
- It is not your responsibility to question or assume guilt of the person. There are several reasons this notice may be triggered.
- Do not answer questions as to why they must stop, beyond stating that it is due to the negative or interim negative notice that has been received.

If you are unsure what to do, contact the EDFL CSO or the Department of Justice for assistance.

### **Step 1: Check status of application**

Go to WWCC site and perform a check on the negative notice received application. Once you enter the required details (card number and surname, both of which will be on the letter), the system will tell you whether or not the person must be removed from work in the meantime.

If you are not confident or have questions, call the Department of Justice at this point, BEFORE contacting anyone else.

If the information you receive from the Departments site tells you that the person in question cannot work with children, you must ensure this person cannot work with children at your club. Please follow the steps below if the Departments website informs you the person in question cannot work with children.

## **Step 2: Contact the club Child Safety Officer at the EDFL**

You must contact the CSO of the EDFL to ensure they are aware of this notice, in case they have not received a letter. You must not divulge any information to other staff members besides the CSO. Currently, the league CSO's are Taylah Morris and Pauline Leslie.

Inform the CSO if the individual is required to stand down from duties or reassigned.

Inform them that you will contact the individual to inform them of the situation.

## **Step 3: Contact the individual to notify them**

- Do not issue a "Please Explain" or similar – you are required to notify, not investigate
- Do not make accusations or inferences about the individual – there can be a range of reasons that may trigger this notice.
- Direct them to contact the Department of Justice regarding the issue.
- Do not give extra information to the individual – anything beyond "we have received this notice and you are unable to continue your duties at this time" is not your place to say.

## **Step 4: Follow up with the club to ensure the individual has ceased work, if required**

Confirm, prior to next training/game, that the individual will not be present.

## Change of Club Safety Officer

If the CSO role is changing hands at your club, you must tell the EDFL at least a week prior to the new CSO beginning their duties. This allows us time to confirm the new CSO is compliant with the requirements for the role, update our contact sheets, and ensure that the new CSO has everything they need to perform their duties.

**Note:** It is highly recommended by the EDFL that clubs do not change their CSO mid-season.

## Responding to a Report

If a child comes to confide in you regarding an incident, it is vital you handle the situation appropriately.

Make sure you:

- Remain calm. Hearing of serious incidents will likely invoke strong emotional reactions, getting angry or distressed will make this harder for the child.
- Listen to the allegation or disclosure supportively, without dispute.
- Reassure the child. i.e, it's not their fault, we're here to help, this is a safe space.
- Clarify the basic details, without seeking detailed information or asking suggestive or leading questions.
- Record basic information on the EDFL CSO Incident Register (jotform). If keeping a more detailed record at club level, ensure you use the child's own words and that it is kept in a safe place that only you have access to.

- Explain to the child (if present) that other people may need to be told, in order to stop what is happening.
- Provide reassurance that immediate action will be taken.
- Report the matter as per organisational policy requirements.

Do Not:

- Push the child for details – your job is to listen, not investigate.
- Ask leading questions or use phrases like “Then what happened?”
- Discuss what you have been told with others unless they are directly involved with helping the child.
- Leave the child alone in a distressed state.
- Promise confidentiality.

The person receiving the report must remember that the person about whom a report is made still holds certain rights in the ensuing process, including the rights to privacy, not be defamed, not be discriminated against and not be dismissed unfairly or without proper inquiry into the matter. They must be allowed to share their side of the story. An allegation of child abuse, whether true or false, will have sincere and lasting impact on a person and their standing in the eyes of others. An unfounded allegation handled poorly can ruin the reputation and career of an innocent person. As such, handle the situation discreetly and fairly.

## Contact List

After hours or immediate safety concerns:

Emergency Services

000

Child Protection Crisis Line (24 hours)

13 12 78

Victoria Police - Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT)

Contact the appropriate local office:

North-West Metropolitan (03) 8690 4056

Southern Metropolitan (03) 9556 6128

Western Victoria (03) 5448 1420

Eastern Victoria (03) 5820 5878

Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

General Enquiries: 1300 650 172

Northern and western suburbs 1300 664 977

Eastern suburbs 1300 360 391

Southern suburbs 1300 655 795

Eastern, S/E rural and regional 1800 020 202

[childsafestandards@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:childsafestandards@dhhs.vic.gov.au)

[www.dhs.vic.gov.au](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au)

Kids Help Line 1800 551 800

Beyond Blue 1300 224 636

## Other Contacts

EDFL

Pauline Leslie

(03) 9373 2712 | 0405 105 175

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Taylah Morris

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VicSport

(03) 9698 8109

[tomd@vicsport.com.au](mailto:tomd@vicsport.com.au)

[www.vicsport.com.au/child-safe-standards](http://www.vicsport.com.au/child-safe-standards)

The Commission for Children and Young People

(03) 8601 5281

[childsafestandards@ccyp.vic.gov.au](mailto:childsafestandards@ccyp.vic.gov.au)

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