CHILD SAFE STANDARD 4: Staff Selection Checklist

Introduction

Registered schools have an important responsibility for keeping children safe.

All registered schools are required to meet child safety requirements for staff selection, supervision and management (clause 10 of Ministerial Order No. 870).

This information sheet outlines important considerations for schools when recruiting and selecting staff. It provides a checklist for ensuring that the selection process has regard to the applicant's suitability to undertaken child-connected work and a checklist to ensure natural justice for applicants in the staff selection process.

Child safety standard four has six specific requirements.

1. Each job or category of jobs for school staff that involves child connected work must have a clear statement that sets out:
   o the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety; and
   o the job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety.
2. All applicants for jobs that involve child connected work for the school must be informed about the school's child safety practices (including the code of conduct).
3. In accordance with any applicable legal requirement or school policy, the school must make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child connected work:
   o Working with Children Check status, or similar check;
   o proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
   o the person's history of work involving children; and
   o references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.
4. The school need not comply with the requirements in step (3) above if it has already made reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the information set out in steps (3)(a) to (3)(d), above about a particular individual within the previous 12 months.
5. The school must ensure that appropriate supervision or support arrangements are in place in relation to:
   o the induction of new school staff into the school's policies, codes, practices, and procedures governing child safety and child connected work; and
   o monitoring and assessing a job occupant's continuing suitability for child connected work.
6. The school must implement practices that enable the school governing authority to be satisfied that people engaged in child-connected work perform appropriately in relation to child safety.

Explanatory note: To be 'satisfied', it is not necessary that the school governing authority make each decision about the selection and supervision of school staff engaged in child-connected work. The school governing authority needs to be satisfied about the appropriateness of the school's arrangements that would regulate or guide other people who make such decisions for or on behalf of the school about child safety matters and child-connected work.

Please note that the Ministerial Order defines some terms broadly. Some examples are included at the end of this information sheet. A full list of definitions is available at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe.

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Considerations when Recruiting New Staff and Volunteers

When recruiting new staff or volunteers some important child safety areas for assessment include the applicant's:

- motivation to work with children (personal or professional)
- relevant and verifiable child-related work experience
- understanding of professional boundaries
- communication skills.

Specialist roles may present different child safety risks for the school. Examples of specialist roles include the roles of nurse, welfare counsellor, bus driver, sports coach, boarding facility guardian, camps instructor or music teacher.

Additional advice on matters such as handling information obtained through a criminal records check can be found in references listed at the end of the checklist.

Checklist for Staff Selection

The checklist for staff selection can assist schools to strengthen their focus on child safety in the staff recruitment and employment process and minimise the risk of appointing a person who poses a child safety risk.

The checklist may be used to enhance existing recruitment practices and policies used by schools to select suitable and appropriately qualified staff. It may be used alongside existing practices or used to review existing practices.

The questions in the checklist are suggestions only. Each school is unique. Staff recruitment and selection process should reflect the individual school setting and each role. Schools also need to take account of the diversity of all children, (including but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with a disability, and children who are vulnerable.

The following selection procedures may be undertaken in any order. What matters is that multiple selection and screening processes are carried out during the recruitment process for child-connected work. Over-reliance on Working with Children Checks or failure to properly check references may result in a failure to protect children and schools.

Phase 1: Pre-selection – Ensuring transparency and natural justice in the selection process

Questions	Yes	No
Has the school reviewed its position description to reflect the child safe standards?		
Has the applicant been provided with a statement that sets out the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding: • child safety, and • essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety?		
Has the applicant been informed about the school's child safety practices including the school's child safety code of conduct?		
Has the applicant been informed of their role in ensuring a child safe environment?		
Has the applicant been advised that the selection process will involve a rigorous background check including a current Working with Children Check (WWCC)[1]?		

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[1] A Working with Children Check (WWCC) is a criminal and other relevant court records check and is valid for five years. It is an important point in the screening process but does not assess someone's suitability to work with children in a particular role.

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Phase 2: Screening/Background Check – Verifying the Applicant's Identity, Suitability and Qualifications

Questions	Yes	No

Have you checked at least two forms of personal identification eg driver's licence, passport? Is the name and address the same as those provided by the applicant?

Does the applicant have an original academic transcript or qualification/s that confirms their claims about their qualifications or registrations?

If the applicant is registered by the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) have you verified the registration and ensured that it is current? (noting that a teacher registered with VIT does not need a Working with Children Check)

Have you sighted and retained a copy of the applicant's current Working with Children Check?

Are there any unexplained gaps in the applicant's employment history? If so, are there satisfactory explanations such as travel, study leave, family leave?

Have you conducted any other background searches eg by using Google, Facebook or LinkedIn?

Has the applicant nominated at least two referees including:
- the current or most recent employer, and
- direct supervisor/line manager.

Is there any personal relationship between the applicant and his or her previous supervisor/manager (this may affect the objectivity of the reference)?

Have you checked with the referee that the work history and previous employment details the applicant has provided are accurate?

Has the referee(s) directly supervised the applicant and observed their work with children?

Would the referee(s) employ the person again?

Did a referee(s) have any concerns about the applicant working directly with children?

Did a referee(s) have any concerns about the applicant's adherence to the organisation's code of conduct?

Have you asked the referee(s) about a time when they observed the applicant managing the behaviour of a child?

If the reference is in writing, have you contacted the referee to confirm authenticity?

Does the applicant have experience working with children outside their employment (eg volunteering, private tutoring or coaching, non-commercial child-minding etc)?

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Further information

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority

Child safe standards website (all schools): www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe

Government Schools

Website: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/childsafestandards

Email: child.safe.schools@edumail.vic.gov.au

Catholic Schools

CECV Industrial Relations (03) 9267 0228

Catholic Education Melbourne, Student Wellbeing Information Line (03) 9267 0228

Catholic Education Office Ballarat, Child Safety (03) 5337 7135

Catholic Education Office Sale, Child Protection Officer (03) 5622 6600

Catholic Education Office Sandhurst, Child Safe Officer (03) 5443 2377

Website: www.cecv.catholic.edu.au

Seventh-day Adventist Schools

Adventist Schools Victoria Office (03) 9264 7730

Website: www.asv.adventist.edu.au

Lutheran Schools

Contact the regional office via phone (03) 9236 1250 or email operations@levnt.edu.au.

Independent Schools who are members of Independent Schools Victoria

Telephone: (03) 9825 7200

Email: enquiries@is.vic.edu.au

Website: www.is.vic.edu.au

The Victorian Institute of Teaching

For *Victorian Teaching Profession Codes of Conduct and Ethics* and information about employer responsibilities to report action taken against registered teachers in response to allegations and concerns about registered teachers.

Website: www.vit.edu.au

Acknowledgements

The VRQA would like to acknowledge the following organisations whose resources were consulted in the preparation of this information sheet.

- State Government of Victoria, Commission for Children and Young People, Version 2, 2015 *A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation*

- Moores and ourcommunity.com.au, Institute of Community Directors Australia 2016, *Child Protection Toolkit: What Every Not-for-Profit Organisation Must Do Now*

- Child Wise, *12 Steps to Building Child Safe Organisations*

- State Government of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services, 2015 *Code of Conduct: Toolkit Resource Three*

- State Government of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services, 2015 *Recruitment Practices for Child Safe Organisations: Toolkit Resource Five*

- Victorian Institute of Teaching, *Codes of Conduct and Ethics*

- Government of South Australia, Department for Education and Child Development 2012, *Child Safe Environments: Principles of Good Practice*

- Government of South Australia, Department for Education and Child Development 2015, *Child Safe Environments: Standards for Dealing with Information Obtained About a Person's Criminal History as part of a Relevant History Assessment*

- Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference 2005, *Creating Safe Environments for Children - Organisations, Employees and Volunteers*; *Schedule: An Evidence-based Guide for Risk Assessment and Decision-Making When Undertaking Background Checking*; and *Schedule: Guidelines for Exclusion of Persons from Employment/Volunteering in Child-Related Areas*

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Definitions

A full list of definitions for Ministerial Order No. 870 is available at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe.

Child abuse includes–

- any act committed against a child involving–
    - a sexual offence or
    - an offence under section 49B(2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of–
    - physical violence or
    - serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

School staff means:

- in a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
    - employed under Part 2.4 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (ETR Act) in the government teaching service or
    - employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act or
    - a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).
- in a non-government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
    - directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
    - a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
    - a minister of religion[2].

- *school governing authority* means:
    - the proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor; or
    - the governing body for a school (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the ETR Act; or
    - the principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.

Explanatory note: There is a wide variety of school governance arrangements. Depending on the way a school is constituted and operated, the governing body for a school may be the school board, the school council, or some other person or entity. The school governing authorities may share or assign responsibility for discharging the requirements imposed by this Order, in accordance with the school's internal governance arrangements.

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[2] **minister of religion** has the same meaning as in the *Working with Children Act 2005.*

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