

# CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

*Appropriate standards of behaviour towards children and young people*

## ABOUT VICSRC

VicSRC is the peak body representing school-aged students in Victoria. We exist to empower all student voices to be valued in every aspect of education.

VicSRC is led by a team of 15 secondary school aged students ([VicSRC Student Executive Advisory Committee](#)) that make decisions collaboratively with a group of six adults ([VicSRC Board of Trustees](#)) about how VicSRC operates, what programs it offers and how it hears from students about what changes need to be made in education.

A team of [staff members](#) put these decisions into action with consistent advice from the Student Executive Advisory Committee.

## SCOPE

*Who the Code applies to.*

Everyone at VicSRC must follow this Code of Conduct including all Board of Trustee members, Executive Committee Members, staff, other volunteers, interns, trainees. This Policy refers to this group of people as VicSRC representatives.

## PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOURS

VicSRC will not tolerate any abuse of children and young people. All VicSRC representatives are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of all children and young people we work with.

This Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour towards children and young people and aims to protect children and young people by reducing any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur. The Code of Conduct applies to all aspects of VicSRC's work, including the use of digital technology and social media.

All VicSRC representatives are expected to follow this code. Failure to do so will be considered misconduct, which may lead to dismissal and/or reporting to the police, in accordance with the VicSRC Child Safe Reporting Procedure and Incident Report.

### **All staff and volunteers must:**

- Always follow VicSRC's policies and procedures, including **Child Safe Policy** and **Child Safe Reporting Procedure** and adhere to all relevant Australian and Victorian legislation.
- Follow the [Code of Ethical Practice for the Victorian Youth Sector](#).
- Adhere to the [Victorian Child Safe Standards](#).

- Take all reasonable steps to protect children and young people engaged with VicSRC from physical, emotional, verbal, and sexual abuse, harm or neglect, grooming<sup>1</sup> and discrimination.
- Treat all children and young people with respect by listening to them, valuing their ideas and opinions and by acting in the best interests of the children and young people who engage with our organisation.
- Welcome and include all children and young people, regardless of their background, culture, lived experience and/or ability.
- Provide environments that are physically, emotionally and culturally safe for all children and young people.

Complete risk assessments for any activity or program that engages with children or young people, in line with the VicSRC Child Safe Policy and Risk Appetite Principles.

Maintain professional boundaries and model appropriate behaviour in all real world and online contact with children and young people. Professional boundaries ensure that the nature of the relationship between VicSRC representatives and Children/Young People does not move from a professional one to a personal one.

- Respect the privacy of children and young people, their families/carers, and only disclose information where you have informed consent or where there is a duty of care concern.
- Undertake all required child safety training as directed through the VicSRC Child Safe Policy, Code of Conduct or Reporting Procedure.
- Discuss with their line manager/supervisor and/or the VicSRC CEO, who is the designated Child Safe Officer, and report any concern, allegation, disclosure or observation of child abuse to the relevant person or authority as outlined in VicSRC's Child Safe Reporting procedure.
- Report any breaches of this code or disclosures of abuse to the VicSRC CEO within 24hrs.
- Immediately notify the VicSRC CEO of any charges or convictions of a crime that would make them ineligible to be granted a WWCC.
- **Contact the police** if a child or young person is at immediate risk of danger (telephone 000).
- Adhere to 1:2 ratio (either 1 staff to 2 children/young people OR 1 child/young person to 2 staff) at all times.

**All staff and volunteers will not:**

- Shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade any child or young person.
- Discriminate against any child or young person on the basis of age, disability, gender, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.
- Engage in any activity with a child or young person that is likely to cause them physical, emotional or cultural harm.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Crimes Amendment (Grooming) Act 2014*, which commenced in Victoria on 9 April 2014, introduced the offence of Grooming for sexual conduct with a child under the age of 16 years. This offence targets predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity with a child.

Grooming includes a range of behaviours that manipulate or control a Child/Young Person, their family, guardian and carers or other support networks, or organisations, with the intention to gain access to the Child/Young Person, obtain the Child/Young Person's compliance, maintain the Child/Young Person's silence, and avoid discovery of sexual abuse.

- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, including hugging, hand holding, or unnecessary assistance with personal care tasks.
- Be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily or without prior approval. Leniency is granted in situations where a staff member and student may pass one another in a hallway or cross paths in a public restroom, however these instances should still be directed to the Child Safe Officer.

Develop an inappropriate relationship with a specific child or young person in which actions go beyond the normal expectations of the role of the VicSRC staff or volunteer. These actions include but are not limited to personally driving a child or young person around, gift giving, special or preferential treatment, and any relationships which extend into personal time, places or behaviours.

- Make or accept connections or friend requests on any social media platform (except LinkedIn) with a child or young person they work with or first made contact with through VicSRC. Social media connections can only be made through official VicSRC logins.
- Engage in a romantic or sexual relationship with a young person they work with, or first made contact with through VicSRC, no matter the age of the child or young person or the VicSRC staff member/volunteer.
- Arrange unauthorised contact, including online or via the phone, with children or young people.
- Photograph or video a child or young person without their/their parents'/carers' consent.
- Photograph or video a child or young person using a personal device, even with consent. All photography or videoing must be done using official VicSRC equipment.
- Use inappropriate language or discuss inappropriate topics in the presence of or with children and young people where such language and topics are not clearly expected in the context of the engagement. This includes swearing, derogatory language, and conversations about, alcohol, other illicit substances, gambling, sex and personal relationships.
- Supply alcohol, or drugs (including tobacco) to a Child/Young Person
- Disregard any action or report that breaches VicSRC's child safe policies and procedures.

**In the event of a breach or suspected breach of these expectations, VicSRC staff and volunteers should:**

- Follow the VicSRC Child Safe Reporting Procedure. If necessary, complete an incident report with support from the Child Safety Officer as per VicSRC's Child Safety Reporting Procedure.
- If in doubt, report. This includes any incidents of grey area where the VicSRC representative could be seen to have breached an expectation.
- Not undertake any form of detailed investigation of the incident beyond clarifying details.
- Comply with all following organisation directions which may include ceasing contact with that child or young person/s, mandatory work from home period, internal or external investigation, or a review of their role at the organisation.

## **CONSEQUENCES FOR BREACHING OR FAILING TO FOLLOW THIS CODE OF CONDUCT**

VicSRC will enforce this Code of Conduct and the associated Child Safety Policy.

Potential breaches by any VicSRC Representative will be investigated and may result in restriction of duties, suspension or termination of employment or engagement or other corrective action.

More information can be found in our disciplinary policy.

## MONITORING, REVIEW AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

VicSRC recognises that creating safe environments for children and young people requires ongoing attention, reflection and learning. We are committed to regularly reviewing and improving our child safety systems and procedures, including how we receive, record and respond to concerns.

### Review Schedule

The Child Safety Officer will coordinate an annual review of all child safety procedures, including this Code of Conduct, in consultation with staff, children and young people (including the Executive Committee), the Board of Trustees, and external advisors as needed. The review will incorporate analysis of incidents or risks, and feedback from children and young people.

A review will also be conducted following:

- A serious child safety incident,
- Changes in relevant legislation or standards,
- Significant organisational changes (e.g. digital program expansion).

Changes will be clearly communicated to all staff and volunteers, and updates will be reflected in induction materials.

### Incident and Risk Analysis

All incident reports, including near misses and unsubstantiated disclosures, will be reviewed quarterly by the Child Safety Officer to identify emerging risks, gaps in training, or opportunities to improve environments and support systems.

De-identified data may be shared with the Board and relevant program staff to inform improvements to:

- VicSRC representative recruitment data
- Staff and volunteer training
- Risk management planning
- Event and environment design
- Online platform safety

### Child and Youth Involvement

Children and Young people engaged in VicSRC programs will be invited to contribute feedback on their experience of safety and their confidence in the Code of Conduct expectations through surveys, facilitated consultations, or peer-led review processes.

## RELATED

*What other VicSRC policies, procedures, guides and templates are associated with this policy or procedure? If something is not in this policy/procedure, it might be in one of them.*

CH 1.0 - Child Safe Policy

CH 1.2 - Child Safe Reporting Procedure

VicSRC's disciplinary procedures

[Code of Ethical Practice for the Victorian Youth Sector](#)

[CCYP | Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)

## REFERENCES

*What resources were used to create this policy, for example, example or other organisations' policies, legislation, government advice?*

[YACVic Child Safe Code of Conduct](#)