

# Child Safe Standards in Football



AFL Victoria put steps in place at the beginning of 2017 for Clubs, Associations & Leagues to begin implementing, with further development of a national AFL Child Safe Policy continuing. Additional education, templates and support will continue to be provided as we continue to improve the safety of our football environments for children.

The Commission for Children and Young People, who are the regulating body in Victoria for the Child Safe Standards, understand that we can't get everything perfect from the beginning, but want to see organisations working on this and actively improving. We are consciously staging the approach we use, putting small steps in place gradually to try and achieve the best outcomes, and not bombard everyone with everything at once.

Please be aware though, if you chose not to work on these steps, you do leave yourself and your organisation open to be audited by the Commission. We ask you all to work on this as a long term project, it really is a journey to take place over the coming years, that will be an ever-evolving piece in making small changes to our environments so that in five years time, we can look back on the progress that has been made and be proud of how we safeguard children in football.

## Goals of this Presentation

### To provide:

- An awareness of child abuse and child protection
- What your organisation needs to have in place from 2017 communications
- The next steps and what your organisation needs to do in 2018



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This Policy work is being done to help all of us to improve the safety of children in football and give us the tools to know how to work in this space. It is a preventative approach to try and minimise the risk of children experiencing harm in our sport, instead of only dealing with the issue when something may have already happened.

It is really important to acknowledge the potential impact of discussing issues of Child Abuse, as it can obviously be a very confronting topic to consider, and everyone will have different levels of experience and knowledge in this space. If anyone does feel they need to excuse themselves from discussions on this topic at any time, please do so.

## Why?

In 2013 the Victorian ***Betrayal of Trust*** and the Commonwealth ***Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse*** were undertaken, inquiring into the handling of child abuse by religious and other non-government organisations.

New Victorian legislation was passed in 2017 from the findings of the ***Betrayal of Trust Report***:

- Criminal law reform – offences relating to grooming, failure to protect & failure to disclose.
- Creating child safe organisations – mandatory child safe standards
- Civil law reform – removal of the time limit on legal action (no longer 12 year limit).

Findings from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse were released at the end of 2017, and it is expected that this will prompt other States to adopt similar reforms to what is in place in Victoria.



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Why the change in requirements for all organisations that work with children?

As a result, 'The Betrayal of Trust' report was released and contained a number of recommendations to prevent child abuse from occurring in organisations.

The Victorian Government then committed to introducing Child Safe Standards for organisations who work with children.

Other recommendations also included new criminal laws which we will go over later in the presentation.

## Standards of Child Safety

From the Royal Commission findings, the following 10 Standards have been released as vital considerations for institutions to implement for the safety of children to be of primary consideration.

1. Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture
2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
3. Families and communities are informed and involved
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
5. People working with children are suitable and supported
6. Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused
7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
10. Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.



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The Royal Commission findings released the following 10 Standards as vital considerations for institutions to implement for the safety of children to be of primary consideration.

These are similar to the Victorian 7 Standards that were released in 2016, and do not mean additional requirements are now in place.

These have guided the development of the following AFL Victoria work and recommendations we have provided, and will continue to guide what we put in place in the future to ensure we have all football compliant to these standards.

## Why is there a need to protect children?

### How many child protection reports each year?

355,935 (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare 2015-16)

### Australian Childhood Foundation research has found:

- Child abuse rates in importance below cost of petrol, transport & roads
- One third of respondents don't know how to recognise signs of child abuse
- One third of respondents believed that children make up stories about being abused, and 1 in 5 respondents may not believe a child who discloses abuse to them



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Most people either don't know or significantly underestimate the problem of Child Abuse, and awareness is the first step in this journey for everyone.

355, 935 reports to child protection each year, and this only includes those instances of child abuse that are reported, and it is obviously a highly under-reported issue.

Community attitude tracking research undertaken by the Australian Childhood Foundation over more than a decade found that Child Abuse rates 13<sup>th</sup> on the list of community concerns, below the cost of petrol, transport and roads. While we all understand it is an important and serious issue, research shows us that other issues rank much higher in people's concern.

43% of respondents felt so poorly informed on the issue they were unable to even try and guess at a number of reported cases, while those prepared to guess, significantly underestimated the problem.

One third of people lacked the confidence to recognise the signs of Child Abuse, and believe that children lie about Child Abuse.

Community awareness and concern for child protection is low due to it not being a priority in people's lives if they don't experience it directly. People consider themselves responsible for their own children and don't need to worry about others, or it's a confronting topic that people prefer not to think about, and people assume it happens in families and organisations elsewhere and it won't affect them. These mindsets have all contributed to it not being front of mind in our communities.

## Definitions

*Child abuse is an act or omission by a parent, caregiver, other adult or child that endangers or impairs a child's physical or emotional health and development.*

Types of child abuse include:

- **Physical, emotional, sexual and neglect**
- **Family violence:** occurs when children are forced to live with violence between adults in their home, and can be very harmful. Exposure to family violence places children and young people at increased risk of physical injury and harm, and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.
- **Grooming:** is the behaviours used to prepare a child with the intention of sexually abusing them. This includes building a trusting relationship with a child and their parents/carers, and 'special relationships' and spending time alone with children or outside the work role. It graduates from attention-giving and non-sexual touching to increasingly intimate and intrusive behaviours.



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Important to clarify the relevant definitions of child abuse.

Grooming behaviours might include:

- Gaining trust, lavishing with attention, praise, gifts
- Roughhousing, tickling, patting so that they become comfortable with close physical contact
- Gaining trust of carer, assisting with babysitting, finance, tutoring
- Isolating, creating a situation where the child wants to spend time with the perpetrator, spending time exclusively with the child
- Providing cigarettes, drugs or alcohol
- Making sexual comments or jokes
- Using pornography to open sexual discussions
- Using the internet to communicate privately

It is really difficult to distinguish between grooming and caring behaviours.

While we are NOT expected to identify or judge potential perpetrators, we are expected to identify when someone is not following the rules.

It is important to focus on what the expectations of our organisations say about appropriate behaviour, and that if someone may be behaving inappropriately, that it is against these expectations rather than to suggest that they are a potential perpetrator of abuse.

## Definitions

**Physical abuse** is intentionally causing or threatening to cause physical injury to a child, or inadvertently causing injury as a consequence of physical punishment or physically aggressive treatment.

Examples: Physical assault, hitting, shaking, restraining, etc.

Signs: Bruises, cuts, burns, fractures, covering up seemingly unnecessarily

**Emotional abuse** occurs when a person engages in inappropriate behaviours such as rejecting, ignoring, humiliating, isolating, threatening or verbally abusing a child, or allowing others to do so.

Examples: Yelling, ignoring, teasing, verbal abuse, bullying, etc.

Signs: Delayed physical/emotional development, withdrawn, low self esteem, shy, agitated, anxious, self harming



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The signs (in terms of physical effects and behaviour) that you might see in child that have experienced these types of abuse are listed here.

## Definitions

**Sexual abuse** is when any person uses their authority over a child to involve the child in any sexual activity.

Examples: Fondling genitals, masturbation, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, sexting, etc.

Signs: Bruising, withdrawal, anxious, over-sexualisation, secretive, low self esteem, weight loss, self harming

**Neglect** means failing to meet a child's basic needs such as providing adequate food, drink, shelter, clothing, supervision, hygiene or medical attention.

Examples: Withholding any basic need, lack of emotional support, no security or stability, withholding education, etc.

Signs: Hunger, lack of clothing, homeless, poor hygiene, stealing, skinny, tired, regularly ill, attention seeking



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The signs (in terms of physical effects and behaviour) that you might see in child that have experienced these types of abuse are listed here.



## Behaviour Guidelines

- Positive guidance
- Adhering to role boundaries
- Use of language and tone of voice
- Supervision – never alone
- Use of electronic communications
- Photographs of children and young people
- Physical contact with children and young people
- Sexual misconduct
- Change room arrangements
- Transporting children
- Gift giving
- Overnight stays
- Alcohol & Drugs



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AFL Victoria Behaviour Guidelines outline what is and isn't acceptable behaviour with children. This will give all involved in football a clear understanding of the expectations of behaviour to ensure the safety of children and minimising the risk of children being harmed in our organisations.

If in any circumstance these are required to be contravened, this must be done with full transparency with your organisation management and the child's parents/carers of the reasons why it is required to occur. Where exceptions are made, the risks involved in making those exceptions need to be understood and managed appropriately.

- Positive guidance - acting appropriately with children
- Adhering to role boundaries – should not act outside out of the confines of the duties of your role
- Use of language and tone of voice – no swearing or defamatory language, clear direction and encouragement, not being harmful in what you say
- Supervision – avoid being alone one on one with a child out of the view of others where possible
- Use of electronic communications – where possible email, text messages and social media communications to include parent/guardian or within an open group message
- Photographs of children and young people – within expectations of AFL privacy policy eg photos taken in context of the program, dressed appropriately, etc

- Physical contact with children and young people – done when reasonable and in an appropriate manner
- Sexual misconduct – under no circumstances are sexual acts to occur with or in the presence of children
- Change room arrangements – important to supervise children while also balancing a child’s right to privacy
- Transporting children – prior authorisation from management and child’s parents
- Gift giving – prior authorisation from management and child’s parents
- Overnight stays – work purposes only within a part of a formal program with authorisations from parents. Gender of supervisors considered and balanced with children participating
- Alcohol & Drugs – while on duty must not use, possess or be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, including being incapacitated from legal medications. And not supplying to children.

Where these expectations have been adopted in other organisations, all reports are that people feel safer knowing exactly what is acceptable and it gives them pride in their organisation’s professionalism

## Criminal Laws

- **Grooming offence** - which targets communication, including online communication with a child, with the intent of committing child sexual abuse.
- **Failure to protect offence** – applies to people within an organisation who knew of a risk of child abuse by someone and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.
- **Failure to disclose offence** – requires adults to report to police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child (unless they have a reasonable reason for not reporting i.e. risking the safety of the child or the person).
- **Mandatory Reporting** – requires certain professionals (teachers, principals, doctors, nurses, midwives and police) to report to DHHS if in the course of carrying out their duties, they form the belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection because the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse.



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New and updated Criminal Laws relevant to the Standards included here.

## Working With Children Check

- The Working with Children Check (WWCC) screens people's criminal records and professional conduct, preventing those who pose an unjustifiable risk to children from working with or caring for them. It is not a suitability tool, we as organisation's need to still assess if someone is suitable to be involved with children.
- AFL Victoria and all Affiliates have clear responsibilities to ensure all aspects of a proper check have been carried out, i.e. copy of the card is collected, status check on the Department of Justice website, alignment letter received from applicant, any negative notices followed up.

### Applying for a WWCC

- Online application and a verification of personal documents is done on the Department of Justice Website ([www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren))
- Applications are free for Volunteers as well as the passport photo required from Australia Post.
- A WWCC is valid for 5 years and is transferrable between organisations.
- A WWCC is different to a Police Check as it is an ongoing monitoring of offences.



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The Working with Children Check screens a persons criminal record, highlighting those who may pose a risk to children.

Currently Victorian legislation does not require Teachers with a current VIT card, or Police officers to have a WWCC.

AFL Victoria suggests where possible that anyone working with children to hold a valid and aligned WWCC no matter what occupation, due to the reporting system involved with this and there not being anything similar in place for occupational accreditations.

## Who Needs a WWCC?

AFL Victoria expects that Clubs with Junior teams (Under 18) will, as a minimum, have the following people obtain a WWCC:

- All Executive Committee Members – President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, as well as Canteen Manager/Supervisor
- Child Safety Officer
- Coaches of all Junior teams
- Team Managers of all Junior teams
- Club Trainers of all Junior teams
- Any adult attending overnight trips with any Junior teams
- Other members of the club Junior teams who are involved in regular contact with children

In the case where Junior players are playing in a Senior team, the minimum requirement for a Club is that the following people obtain a WWCC:

- Coaches of any team that will have a Junior player
- Team Managers of any team that will have a Junior player
- Club Trainers of any team that will have a Junior player



# WWCC - Updating Details & Organisations

A *MyCheck* Portal needs to be created by the card holder at the Department of Justice website - [www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren)

## Login

### What is MyCheck?

MyCheck is the online portal that enables:

- applicants and cardholders to update personal, contact and organisation/s details
- cardholders to:
  - renew their WWC Check
  - change from a Volunteer to an Employee WWC Check
  - order a replacement card.

### Existing user

Email

Password

Login

[Forgotten email address?](#)  
[Forgotten password?](#)

### New user?

You need to register before using MyCheck.

To register, you will need to provide your WWC application or card number and your personal details.

I want to register



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It is important that all current WWCC's have the correct personal details included, and that it is aligned to your organisations with the correct contact details, so that any communication of misconduct will be communicated to you. This is easily done on the Department of Justice website by creating a log in for the MyCheck Portal.

# WWCC - MyCheck Portal

Once a *MyCheck* Portal is created the Card Holder can update their details at any time, including adding an organisation. Login into the Portal and click on 'Change my details'.

The screenshot shows the WWCC MyCheck Portal interface. At the top, there are three tabs: 'About the Check', 'Applications', and 'Cardholders'. Below the tabs, there is a breadcrumb trail: 'Home > MyCheck > Welcome to MyCheck'. The main heading is 'Welcome to MyCheck'. A green banner indicates 'Your WWCC Check is current and expires on 19 May 2021'. The user profile information is displayed as follows:

Name	<b>Mrs Dale Lynley WAIN</b>
Application/Card number	
Card type	
Mobile	
Home phone	
Work phone	
Residential address	
Postal address	
Email address	

On the left side, there is a 'MyCheck menu' with the following options:

- MyCheck home
- Apply for Check
- Change my details (indicated by a blue arrow)
- Renew my Check
- Replace my card
- Volunteer to Employee Check
- [Resume draft](#)

Below the menu, there are 'Account settings' options:

- Change password
- Change registered email
- Logout

The AFL VICTORIA logo is visible in the bottom left corner.

Once you have a MyCheck Portal log in you can update your personal details and add additional organisations.  
Head to Change my Details to do either of these.

# WWCC - MyCheck Portal

Then scroll down and 'Add an organisation'.

## Organisation details

Organisation name **PARKHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
Postal number and street **PARKHILL DRIVE**  
Suburb **ASHWOOD**  
State **VIC**  
Postcode **3147**  
Phone **98072239**  
[remove](#)

Organisation name **AFL VICTORIA - AUSKICK IKON PARK**  
Postal number and street **GPO BOX 4337**  
Suburb **CARLTON NORTH**  
State **VIC**  
Postcode **3054**  
Phone **83416000**  
[remove](#)

[add an organisation](#)

## Examples of alignment

Jo Citizen

AFL Victoria – Inner West GDO  
GPO Box 4337  
Carlton North  
Vic  
3054

AFL Victoria – Multicultural Ambassador - Eastern  
GPO Box 4337  
Carlton North  
Vic  
3054

AFL Goulburn Murray – AFL Sportsready Trainee  
PO BOX 1253  
Shepparton  
Vic  
3630



Scroll down past the personal details to be able to 'Add an organisation', and then include the organisations details there.



## Expectations of your Organisation

### Child Safety Officer

Each organisation is required to nominate a Child Safety Officer who would be the initial point of contact for any report.

This must be communicated to all members and players, with a particular emphasis on children being made aware that the Child Safety Officer is a safe person for them to approach if they are feeling unsafe.

The Child Safety Officer **MUST** have a valid and current WWCC.

In the absence of a CSO, or lack of knowledge of roles by any child or member, anyone who suspects a child may be being abused is to report it to the President/Manager.



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Having a Child Safety Officer in place is an important part of ensuring junior members feel safe and supported.

This person may already hold another similar role i.e. MPO, integrity, welfare, etc. and needs to be a respected and approachable member of the organisation who can be trusted with sensitive information, and has good communication, particularly with management/committee.

In the absence of a Child Safety Officer, or lack of understanding of roles, anyone who suspects a child may be being abused is to report it to the President/Manager.

## Expectations of your Organisation

### Recruitment Processes

Child Safe Standards are integral in any appointment providing football to people under 18 years of age.

Child Safety Standards should be addressed for appointments to positions where the person will be working directly with children, and the processes used for appointments need to include clear steps that address the requirements of the Child Safe Standards.

The following steps are provided as the minimum which must be undertaken to appoint people to a role.

- Position selection criteria relevant to each role to be filled.
- Position description, including reference to the Child Safe Commitment, should be available to all potential applicants.



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Child Safe Standards need to be considered in all appointments to a role which is working with people under 18 years of age.

## Expectations of your Organisation

### Recruitment Processes

All positions which will have people working with children should include a formal application process, which requires a written application, including the following details:

- Contact details for two referees relevant to the role
- Proof of a current WWCC, or evidence of application for a WWCC
- WWCC number (if currently held) and alignment of the card to the organisations

An interview process should be undertaken, including within this, questions that identify:

- Why the person wishes to work with children
- The candidate's history of working with children and why they left their previous position

Ensure that the applicant is aware that referees will be contacted. Speak directly to listed referees and explore the applicants suitability to work with children. If unable to be contacted, ensure alternates are provided by the applicant and contacted.

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Template provided to assist in recruitment of people to roles working with children.

## Expectations of your Organisation

### Reporting

- a) Any report of child abuse is to be made to the Child Safety Officer (CSO). CSO to report to Police if there is any report of sexual or physical abuse of a child. CSO to stay in contact with reporter and alleged victim to provide support.
- b) CSO to communicate the report to President/Manager. Detailed written report must be recorded and stored by the CSO & President/Manager, including Who, What, When, Where & Why the incident is of concern.
- c) President/Manager to report to League Management if necessary i.e. if report was communicated to Police or DHHS, if report is of significance to League Management, etc.
- d) If the alleged perpetrator is a member of staff/volunteer, they are to be reassigned to other duties (no child-related work) until the process is completed.
- e) If the alleged perpetrator is a member of staff/volunteer, a League/Commission appointed independent investigation is to take place, only after Police involvement has been completed. Communication with and approval of investigation process from AFL Victoria Community department is required.



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All Clubs need to have a reporting process in place to make sure a consistent and thorough process is followed if a report of alleged child abuse is made.

## Reporting

### 1. Disclosures of actual harm to a child

If any adult suspects an instance of child abuse, you are responsible to report this to the police, and in an emergency situation must call 000 immediately

### 2. Signs or indicators

### 3. Breaches of policy

### 4. Potential risk



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If any adult suspects an instance of child abuse, you are responsible to report this to the police, and in an emergency situation must call 000.

You are not there to judge or investigate these matters, purely to report what you have seen or heard.

You may become concerned that a child is being harmed or is at risk of being harmed in several ways.

- Disclosures of actual harm – child disclosing an incident to you
- Signs or indicators – suggestions or indications that make you concerned for a child's safety; you may notice signs that a child is possibly being abused
- Breaches of behaviour expectations – any acts witnessed or heard in breach of the expectations of behaviour when working with children
- Potential risk – risk that a child may be in a situation where abuse may occur

# Reporting

DO	DON'T
Believe the child / young person	Make promises that you cannot keep
Be calm, supportive and reassuring	Promise secrecy
Reassure them that the abuse is not their fault	Push the child to give details of the alleged abuse
Concentrate on their feelings rather than on questions and answers	
Explain what you are going to do now that you have been told	



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Here are a few simple ways that you can make a difference to a child who tells you about their abuse:

- Your first response should be to believe that what the child tells you.
- Be calm, supportive and reassuring
- Reassure them that the abuse is not their fault
- Concentrate on their feelings rather than on questions and answers
- Explain what you are going to do now that you have been told
- Children must often overcome many hurdles in order to disclose their abuse – fear of being further abused, fear of being blamed, fear that they will be in trouble. Many children have been threatened if they tell anyone about their abuse.

As a result many children never disclose to anyone about the abuse they are experiencing. They remain frightened, alone and unprotected.

Do Not:

- Make promises that you cannot keep
- Promise secrecy – you will need to share this information
- Push the child to give details of the alleged abuse

The reactions of adults make a major difference to the short and long term effects of abuse on children.

It is critical to believe children when they tell you about their experiences of abuse or exploitation. You may be the first person that they have told. As such your response will be critical in determining whether they are likely to tell anyone else.

Believing starts with listening and keeping an open mind to what children tell you. Children rarely lie about abuse and neglect. Speaking out is rarely easy for them.

## Reporting

It is not your responsibility to investigate.

Gather information and report details about:

1. **WHO** was involved – including age, details of carers/parents
2. **WHAT** you saw or heard
3. **WHEN** it occurred
4. **WHERE** it occurred
5. **WHY** you are concerned
6. **WHAT** you think should be next steps



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Most important aspect of prosecuting abuse if it continues that far is the first reporting/disclosure from a victim, which may be given to you.

Don't write as they are speaking to you, don't judge or push too hard, just let them speak and support them. Immediately following, write down the above info in the child's words.

Don't try to solve the issue, just record as statements of what you have witnessed or been told.

## Commitment Statement

### **AFL Victoria Commitment to Safeguarding Children & Young People**

*AFL Victoria is committed to promoting and protecting the safety and well-being of children and young people in our care.*

*We seek to promote and protect the rights of all children in our care and prevent abuse from occurring by fostering a child safe culture.*

*All Victorian Leagues, Clubs & Associations that provide football to children and young people will present environments and experiences that always consider and put measures in place to ensure the safety of children.*



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This AFL Victoria Commitment Statement to Child Safety should be included on all websites and used in any relevant communications.



## Summary

- Child abuse can have devastating long term consequences for children.
- The first step in stopping abuse is being aware that it does occur in organisations that provide services and sport to children.
- Children cannot stop child abuse. Adults can.
- You can help protect children by:
  - Following rules for behaviour that protect children
  - Speaking up if you have concerns about a child or about the way they are being treated



## New Steps

In conjunction with the AFL and the Australian Childhood Foundation, AFL Victoria will be developing further resources to create an extensive and thorough Child Safe Policy for all football in Victoria.

- AFL Victoria Commitment Statement to be included on all websites and used in relevant communications
- Child Safety Policy – to be provided in near future



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Further resources and development in this space will be provided as they become available and at an appropriate time for implementation.