



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia



National Principles for Child Safe Organisations WA: Information for parents, carers and family members

Revised November 2019



This is the second edition of *Child Safe Organisations WA: Information for parents, carers and family members*, produced by the Commissioner for Children and Young People. This edition replaces the 2016 edition shown here.



The Commissioner for Children and Young People WA

The Commissioner is the independent person who works closely with children and young people, their families, community and government to make WA a better place for 0 to 18 year-olds. Commissioner Colin Pettit reports to the WA Parliament.

The Commissioner undertakes projects, commissions research, publishes reports, and hosts events to highlight specific aspects of children and young people's wellbeing. Using research and the other evidence available, the Commissioner seeks to positively influence legislation, policy, services and attitudes.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People WA has created a range of resources to support organisations to develop child safe strategies including:

- *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations WA: Guidelines*
- *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations WA: Self-assessment and review tool*

All resources are available at ccyp.wa.gov.au

Contact us

Commissioner for Children and Young People WA

Ground Floor, 1 Alvan Street, Subiaco WA 6008

Telephone: (08) 6213 2297

Country freecall: 1800 072 444

Email: info@ccyp.wa.gov.au

Web: ccyp.wa.gov.au



Children and young people have the right to be safe, feel safe and be treated with respect wherever they are – at home, school, clubs, churches, sport – everywhere.

This publication describes three main things you can do to help keep children safe wherever they are.

1. Help children to understand and speak up
2. Choose organisations carefully and stay involved
3. Act appropriately on concerns.

1. Help children to understand and speak up

Teach children about **personal safety and their rights**, this is just as important as discussing fire, pool or road safety.

Talk regularly with children about different feelings and **practise ‘what if...’ scenarios**. This will help them to feel more comfortable and confident to speak to you or another reliable person about anything that worries them.

Start **age appropriate sex education** as young as possible. A great resource is **Talk soon. Talk often: A guide for parents talking to their kids about sex** available at healthywa.wa.gov.au

Discuss **body signals and emotions** that help tell them when they feel unsafe – like butterflies in their stomach, wobbly legs or sweaty hands.

Children need to understand the difference between touch that is part of their care and **touch that is not okay**.

Let them know it is not okay for others to touch their **private parts** or for them to touch others.

Reinforce they have **a right to say no to anyone** – other children and young people, adults, even someone they know or trust.

Use the **correct terminology** for private body parts so if a child speaks up about abuse it is clear what they are saying and how they are being harmed.

Make sure they **know how to use** the internet, social media and phones **safely**.

Help your child develop a **safety network** of at least five different people they can talk to about anything that worries them; include family members and people in the places they go. Make sure the people chosen are aware and would be willing to help if needed. Review the list often.

Reassure them that nothing is so awful that they can't tell someone about it and **not to keep secrets**.

Encourage your child to **be persistent** and to talk to another adult if the first person they tell doesn't seem to do anything.

Did you know?

Children and young people are more likely to be harmed by someone they know, and even trust, than by a stranger.

2. Choose organisations carefully and stay involved

Make sure the organisation can cater for all the **specific needs of your child** – physical, emotional, cultural, communication and developmental.

Look around at the physical environment and information available for children and young people, and check the organisation's website, policies and social media. Drop in to visit the organisation at different times and days.

Engage with the organisation so you **really get to know staff and volunteers** and also get a sense of their **values** and **respect** for children and young people. Ask any questions you feel are important. How staff respond to your questions will give you a sense of how they value you and your child.

Talk to your child to find out if they feel safe there or if they have any worries or concerns.

Talk to parents and others that have contact with the organisation.

Ask how the organisation talks with the children about their rights and personal safety.

Give feedback and let the organisation know what they are doing well, what they might improve and how you would like to be involved to continually support their work with children and young people.

If you are **concerned about an organisation** your child attends or want to make a complaint, ask someone at the organisation you feel comfortable with or visit their website to find out about their complaints system.

If you are **not happy with the organisation's response**, find the next step and contact that agency. The Ombudsman of Western Australia can investigate complaints about state government agencies, statutory authorities, local governments and public universities.

A checklist is provided if you would like to know more about what you can expect an organisation to do to make their service as safe as possible. The Commissioner for Children and Young People WA has developed resources to help organisations review and improve their approaches to child safety.

Visit ccyp.wa.gov.au or search for 'Child Safe Organisations WA'.



3. Act appropriately on concerns

If a child tells you they are being harmed or feel unsafe:

- Be **calm** and **supportive**.
- **Listen** to what they say, be patient and let them use their own words. Listening supportively is more important than what you say.
- **Reassure** them it is right they told you and it's not their fault.
- Ask just enough **questions** to plan how to keep them safe and what to do next and avoid quizzing for details.
- **Respect** the child may only want to reveal some details. Acknowledge their bravery and strength.
- Don't make promises you can't keep and let them know that to **keep them safe** you will need to tell someone else.

Seek help

- The Department of Communities has detailed information about what to do if you are concerned about abuse or neglect of any child. Phone 1800 273 889.
- If you continue to be worried and think nothing is happening for the child after contacting any agency, trust your judgement and keep trying until your concerns are taken seriously.
- Kids Helpline provides tips on dealing with issues and concerns for children, young people and parents as well as counselling services. Visit kidshelpline.com.au or phone 1800 551 800.

Did you know?


Children and young people have said that they feel safe and welcome when:

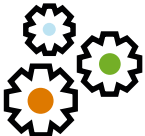




- people care about them
- people include them and listen to them
- the rules and their rights are explained to them
- they have choices
- they have fun and are happy
- they can talk to someone about any problems.



Checklist for parents

The ten National Principles for Child Safe Organisations outline what is important for making an organisation safe for children and young people. Consider asking the organisation your child is attending what they have in place in these areas.

Principles	Action areas
Leadership 	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear messages and policies about child safety are displayed at the organisation and on their website. <input type="checkbox"/> Leaders and staff show a commitment to child safety by their actions and behaviour. <input type="checkbox"/> Leaders can give examples of how they manage risks to safety.
Empowering children 	<input type="checkbox"/> Children and young people have a say in how the organisation runs and make suggestions for improvement. <input type="checkbox"/> Staff empower children and talk about their rights. <input type="checkbox"/> Children and young people are provided with a variety of safe ways to share their concerns.
Involving family 	<input type="checkbox"/> The organisation involves parents, carers, the wider family and community. <input type="checkbox"/> It is clear how to raise a concern and you would feel comfortable to do so. <input type="checkbox"/> It is clear how parents and carers are involved when a problem is identified.
Equity and diversity 	<input type="checkbox"/> The organisation caters for the diverse needs of children of all abilities and cultural backgrounds no matter where they live, their religion, age, sex or gender. <input type="checkbox"/> The strengths and differences of all children are celebrated. <input type="checkbox"/> The organisation supports and responds to vulnerable children.
Staff and volunteers 	<input type="checkbox"/> It is clear how the organisation recruits and conducts checks on staff and volunteers. <input type="checkbox"/> There is ongoing supervision and support for staff and volunteers. <input type="checkbox"/> Staff feel comfortable to raise any concerns about the behaviour of other staff members or volunteers or other areas for improvement.

Principles	Action areas
Complaint processes 	<input type="checkbox"/> The complaints system is clear, child friendly and children are comfortable to use it. <input type="checkbox"/> Children and young people are asked to give feedback on their experiences. <input type="checkbox"/> Staff can give examples of when a child or young person made a complaint and how it was handled.
Education 	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff and volunteers are educated about spotting the signs of child abuse. <input type="checkbox"/> Staff know what to do if a child talks about abuse. <input type="checkbox"/> Information is given to children about their rights, protective behaviours and online safety. <input type="checkbox"/> Information about child safety is offered to parents and family members.
Safe environments 	<input type="checkbox"/> The physical environment is safe and checked regularly. <input type="checkbox"/> Children can be seen at all times and in all places. <input type="checkbox"/> There are clear rules about communicating with children online or via phones and devices.
Continuous improvement 	<input type="checkbox"/> The organisation regularly reviews the way it does things and shares this information with parents. <input type="checkbox"/> The organisation is audited regularly internally or externally. <input type="checkbox"/> Children, young people and families are involved in reviews and audits.
Policies 	<input type="checkbox"/> There is a Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers. <input type="checkbox"/> There are rules for behaviour of all children. <input type="checkbox"/> There are guidelines about physical contact between adults and children and between children.



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