

# **The Safeguarding Capabilities in Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Survey**

## **Prospectus**

**A tool for monitoring capabilities of staff  
and volunteers to safeguard children in  
youth-serving organisations**

**ACU Institute of Child Protection Studies**



# Institute of Child Protection Studies

The Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) enhances outcomes for children, young people and families through quality research, program evaluation, training and community education, advocacy and policy development. We are nationally recognised for our expertise in child protection, and preventing and responding to the abuse and neglect of children. We promote children's participation, strengthen service systems, inform practice and support child-safe communities.

ICPS manages the ACU Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal. The Portal provides a central pathway to the range of ACU research projects, professional development opportunities, and capacity-building tools that aim to support institutions to better safeguard children and young people from sexual abuse and other forms of harm. Child safety is a priority for everyone, everywhere – from parents to parishioners, sporting clubs to dance classes. And at Australian Catholic University (ACU), we are committed to supporting and enabling the safety of children and young people in families, communities and organisations. ACU offers a range of services, courses and professional development programs to help individuals and organisations understand and apply child-safe and child-friendly practices and policies.

See: <https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/>

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## Why measure the capabilities of your workforce to safeguard children?

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse made recommendations in 2017 on how to improve practices and amend policies and legislation to prevent and better respond to child sexual abuse in institutions. The recommendations include the adoption of Codes of Conduct and policies that support better safeguarding practices to prevent child sexual abuse in youth-serving organisations. The Royal Commission also recommended that to comply with Child Safe Standards, organisations implement training to support staff, management and corporate executive boards.

Youth-serving organisations can use data to identify learning and professional development needs in relation to safeguarding children. The Safeguarding Capabilities Survey provides a means of understanding and measuring the capabilities of staff and volunteers to safeguard children and young people. Organisations can collect data that enables them to reflect upon current safeguarding practices and tailor specific policies, procedures and training programs to better equip their staff and volunteers to prevent child sexual abuse.

Implementing the Safeguarding Capabilities Survey on multiple occasions can help organisations to understand whether their organisational change efforts are contributing to improvements in workforce capabilities.



## Engaging staff to develop a stronger child-safe environment

The ACU Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) is offering youth-serving organisations an empirically validated and reliable survey tool that measures the capabilities of staff and volunteers in safeguarding and preventing the sexual abuse of children and young people. The tool is the Safeguarding Capabilities in Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Survey, more commonly known as the Safeguarding Capabilities Survey.

Your organisation can use the survey to help measure the following attributes of staff and volunteers:

- **awareness** of organisational policies, practice and safeguarding culture
- **confidence** to take action when a child or young person voices a concern about their safety and wellbeing
- **attitudes** in relation to children and young people's knowledge and access to safety education
- **knowledge** about the risks and prevention of child sexual abuse.

By exploring workforce capabilities, your organisation can demonstrate a commitment to child-safe practices and compliance with the following standards:

- Victorian Child Safe Standards (see: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/being-a-child-safe-organisation/the-child-safe-standards/who-do-the-standards-apply-to/>)
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (see: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/projects/child-safe-organisations>)



## Who can use the Safeguarding Capabilities Survey?

Any organisation (or network of organisations) that engages directly with children and young people can use the survey including:

- individual services, clubs, teams, schools, groups or other similar organisations
- organisations and services that work across a variety of locations, jurisdictions and service contexts
- membership organisations such as sector peaks, federated bodies and networks or clusters of services and programs for children/young people
- funding bodies and government agencies that contract services and programs for delivery to children and young people.

### WHAT MAKES THE SURVEY UNIQUE?

Other survey tools exist for youth-serving workers (such as teachers) and focus on attitudes to mandatory reporting. The Safeguarding Capabilities Survey assesses a wider array of capabilities for organisations to assess and reflect upon the safeguarding capabilities of their staff and volunteers. It is relevant to workers from any youth-serving sector.

### IS THE SURVEY SUITABLE FOR YOUR ORGANISATION?

The Safeguarding Capabilities Survey can be used by a wide range of youth-serving organisations:

Alcohol and Other Drugs Programs	Family Law Services
Arts/Drama/Cultural Groups	Health
Carer Support and Respite	Mental Health and Medical Services
Child Welfare (e.g. counselling)	Housing and Homelessness Services,
Children's Facilities	Out of home care – (Residential/Foster/Kinship
Children's Services	care)
Community Development/Community	Outreach
Engagement	Recreational/Youth Development/Youth
Domestic and Family Violence Services	Services/Holiday Programs
Early Childhood Education and Care	Religious, Worship or Faith Development
(including kindergarten)	Sexual Health
Education – Schools/Tuition	Sports Clubs/Groups
Employment Services	Youth Justice
Families and Children Services	Youth Work

## Matching the survey to your organisational type and structure

A decision on how to implement the survey can involve consideration of the different locations in which your organisation operates and the different staff and volunteers who will benefit from access to the results. Your organisation may require additional reporting on particular groups of staff and volunteers, or reporting after a particular policy or process changes.

### **Here are some examples of how organisations use the survey:**

The Great School is interested in examining the capabilities of its staff, in both teaching and administration roles, to safeguard children and young people. They will share the findings with the children, parents and staff in the school community.

Care4You Victoria is a welfare agency that oversees nine out-of-home-care facilities across the state. The agency is interested in supporting these facilities in developing their child safeguarding strategies. They will administer the survey in all nine out-of-home care facilities. Each facility is at a different location. Each facility will be able to access their results and the state-wide results but will not see another facility's results.

The Diocese of Salander is eager to support its parishes in developing cultures of safeguarding. The Diocese wants a report discussing each of its 17 parishes in detail, so it can support each Parish to make improvements and share its strengths. Each parish will be able to see its own data but not the data of other parishes.

## What does the Safeguarding Capabilities Survey measure?

The survey has 73 questions which cover the following four themes:

### **ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE & AWARENESS OF POLICY & PROCEDURES**

These questions relate to awareness of safeguarding policies, procedures and practices. The questions explore awareness of policies that affect the participant directly, to expectations of leadership in creating an organisational culture of safety. These questions not only help identify strengths (and gaps) in participant awareness but also encourage reflection about the design and delivery of policies within an organisation.

### **CONFIDENCE TO ACT**

The questions relating to confidence to act (or 'self-efficacy') assess the degree to which staff and volunteers feel confident to implement safeguarding strategies such as: providing support for children and young people to keep themselves safe, approaching colleagues and other adults when they feel someone hasn't followed a child-safe policy, or where a child/young person may be—or feel—unsafe, and responding to and supporting young people if something was to happen.

### **ATTITUDES TO PREVENTION & AGENCY OF CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE**

These questions relate to attitudes towards the activities that are needed to support prevention of child sexual abuse and the sense of personal responsibility staff and volunteers have for prevention activities. They focus on the role of staff and volunteers in prevention, as well as that of children and young people, and the role of parents and the government. The questions measure the attitudes of staff and volunteers towards supporting children's agency and the empowerment of children and young people.

### **SITUATIONAL PREVENTION KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATION**

The final group of questions address knowledge of situational prevention strategies (i.e. how to modify environmental factors to reduce opportunities for grooming and abuse to occur), and the education of children/young people and the staff and volunteers who work with them to support the prevention of grooming and sexual abuse.

## Administering the Safeguarding Capabilities Survey

### STAFF AND VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

All staff and volunteers 16 years of age and over in your organisation can participate. These staff and volunteers may work directly with children or young people or support the 'front-line' workforce.

Staff and volunteers complete the Safeguarding Capabilities Survey online using desktop or laptop computers, smart phones and other personal devices with an internet connection.

### TIMING OF THE SURVEY

Your organisation can decide how to implement the survey. Options include allowing individuals to complete the survey at the time of their choosing or setting aside time in a team meeting. To maintain the quality of the data, we recommend the survey is done in private, and personal responses are not discussed or shared while the survey is being completed.

You can stagger survey participation. For example:

Great Kids asked staff in their out-of-home-care program to complete the survey in January. The early childhood teachers completed it in May and the rest of the organisation in August. Great Kids then discussed the collated results with all staff.

We recommend repeating the survey with the same groups because there is value in capturing the capabilities of staff and volunteers at different points in time. This approach is beneficial to organisations wanting to explore the extent to which training, policy reviews and implementing safeguarding practices have contributed to changes in their workforces' capabilities. ICPS can provide advice on timing if your organisation decides to repeat the survey.





## Reporting findings from the survey

During the survey period your organisation will be able to view the survey data using user-friendly web-based data visualisation software. At the end of the survey period ICPS will provide your organisation with a report.

The report will provide insights into the capabilities of staff and volunteers within your organisation in four areas: organisational culture and awareness of policy and procedures; confidence to act; attitudes towards prevention and agency of children; situational prevention, knowledge and education.



The survey results can help your organisation identify gaps in policy or procedure, areas of training need, and concerns regarding workforce attitudes to child sexual abuse and its prevention.



Your organisation can share the report with management and governance groups, funding bodies, staff, parents, children and young people, as well as the broader community. We encourage organisations to share the report widely. An example of the standard report is available on the Safeguarding Portal: <https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au> ICPS can tailor the report to meet specific organisational needs.

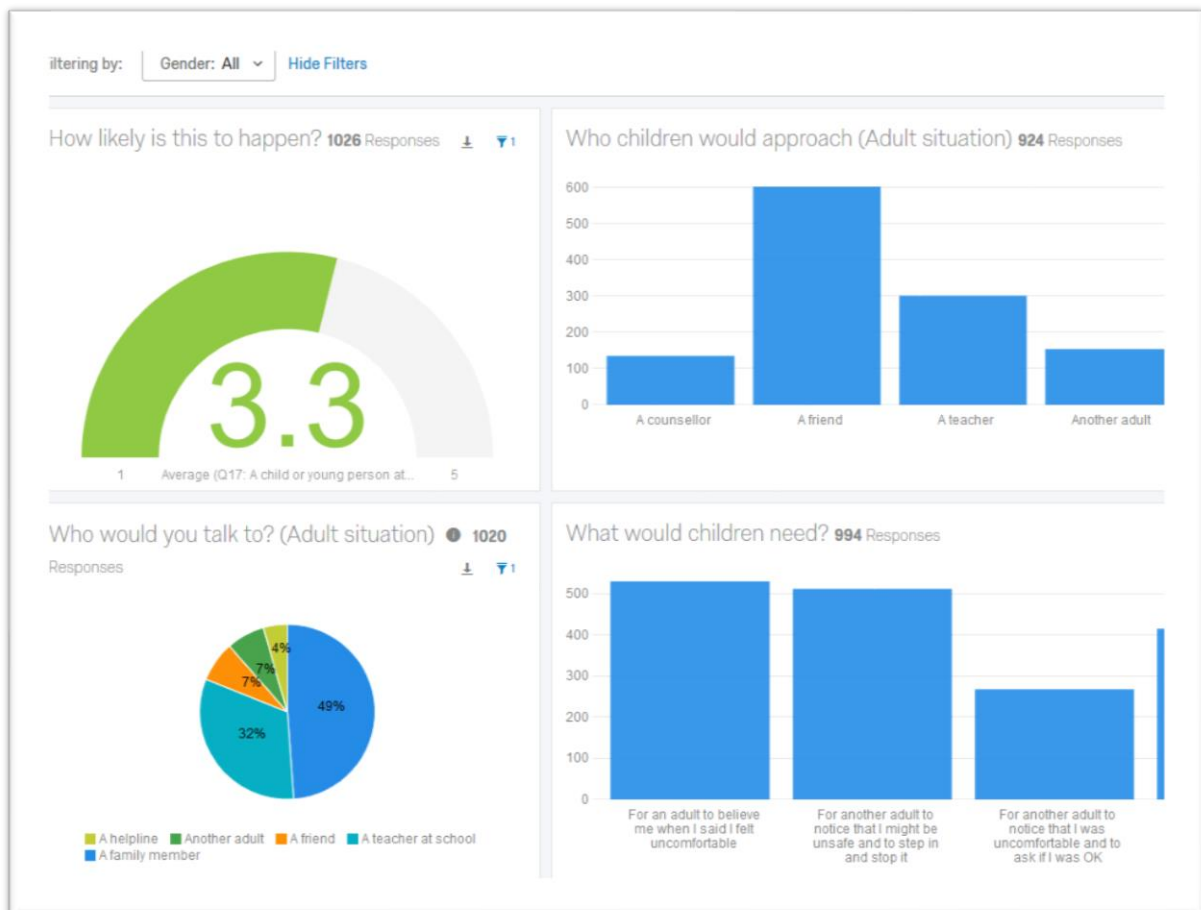
## Data visualisation during the survey period

The user-friendly web-based data visualisation software (also known as a ‘dashboard’) will allow your organisation to view the survey data during the survey period.

Data visualisation allows organisations to easily access their results in real time, through percentages, graphs, plots and tables (see figure below).

The data visualisation software we use enables you to do the following:

- use filters, such as department, gender and job role or position, to view specific results
- identify workforce capabilities that may require attention from leadership or policy revision
- recognise sub-groups requiring specific child-safe training or supports
- compare results with broader data sets.



## **MORE ABOUT THE DATA**

Your organisation will be able to ‘filter’ results to view findings from the data collected across individual programs, locations and services. For example, if there were seven clubs who form a state or regional body and that body signed up to use the survey, each club could see their own results in the form of customisable graphs, tables and statistical plots, and the state/regional body could see the overall results of all seven clubs.

If your organisation has multiple programs, locations and services, you will be able to breakdown the findings by individual areas of the organisation and compare the findings between these (individual areas/groups must be identified prior to data collection commencing).

Filters also enable organisations to view data relating to specific subgroups of staff who have participated. For example, an organisation can see the results for teachers of year 7 students, or workers in an out-of-home-care program. This option is only available when more than 10 participants in the subgroup have responded.

Your organisation will also have access to practice tools on the ACU Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal to support the growth of a child-safe culture and improve children’s safety within your organisation (see: [https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/practice\\_tools](https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/practice_tools)).

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Your organisation will need to:**

- encourage participation of staff and/or volunteers aged 16 years and above
- identify a key contact within your organisation to support workers who may feel uncomfortable about issues of safety for a child or young person or want to discuss their thoughts and feelings
- share results with staff, parents, children and young people (where appropriate).

### **ICPS will support you by:**

- guiding your organisation on how to plan for the survey, how to invite participants (who, how many and when) and how to understand and make use of the real-time results shown on the dashboard
- preparing relevant documentation (e.g. invitation emails, information letters, FAQ for participants)
- providing access to the Safeguarding Capabilities Survey and the ACU Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal (see: <https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/self-assessment>)
- providing a standard report of the findings for your organisation.

## **ICPS Children’s Safety Study – A research project**

Your organisation’s survey data will be used as part of an overarching research project, the ICPS Children’s Safety Study.

The data your participants provide for the Safeguarding Capabilities Survey will not only enable your organisation to measure the capabilities of your staff and volunteers to safeguard children and young people and tailor specific policies, procedures and training programs to better equip your staff and volunteers, it will also be used for the purposes of the ICPS Children’s Safety Study research project.

This research project is under review by the ACU Human Research Ethics Committee (Application 2018-222H). Your organisation’s survey data will be de-identified so that no participants or organisation will be able to be identified. The data will then be used by the research project to investigate trends and broad results across all organisations that participate in the Children’s Safety Study.

Findings from the Safeguarding Capabilities Survey research project will be presented through regular reports that will be made available on the ACU Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal, in journal articles and other publications.

The research project involves ICPS providing other research agencies (in Australia and overseas) with the de-identified data so that comparisons can be made with different locations and countries.

Findings from the Children’s Safety Study research project will be used to inform further research, policy development and child-safe strategies. It is our hope that these findings will lead to improvements in child-safe practice in Australian organisations and internationally.

## Development of the Safeguarding Capabilities Survey

The Safeguarding Capabilities Survey was developed by ACU child protection researchers Douglas Russell and Professor Daryl Higgins as part of their employment at ACU. They would like to acknowledge the contributions of other ICPS staff who assisted: Dr Chloe Gordon, Dr Bianca Hoban, Associate Professor Tm Moore and Associate Professor Stephanie Taplin.

Douglas Russell, Professor Daryl Higgins and the ICPS team used a rigorous theory-driven process to develop the survey questions and test their suitability. International experts in preventing child sexual abuse reviewed the questions. ICPS ran a pilot study to test and refine the questions (see: Russell, D., & Higgins, D. (2019). *Safeguarding capabilities in preventing child sexual abuse: A scale measuring knowledge, attitudes and skills applicable to all youth-serving sectors*. Manuscript under review).

Development of the measure was also assisted by an external expert panel comprised of: (1) an education specialist whose research focuses on school-based interventions and strategies to prevent CSA, with experience in scale development; (2) a criminologist, who has extensive organisational expertise in CSA; an internationally recognised mental and public health specialist with expertise in child sexual abuse prevention and scale development.

**Get in touch**

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to find out more about  
the survey**

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