

Children and Young People (Care and Protection Organisation) Standards 2025 (No 1)

Disallowable instrument DI2025-272

made under the

Children and Young People Act 2008, Section 887 (Standard-making power)

1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Children and Young People (Care and Protection Organisation) Standards 2025 (No 1)*

2 Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after notification.

3 Standards

I make the following Children and Young People (Care and Protection Organisation) Standards.

4 Revocation

This instrument revokes the *Children and Young People (Care and Protection Organisation) Standards 2018 (No 1)* [DI2018-124].

Michael Pettersson
Minister for Children, Youth and Families

8 October 2025



ACT
Government

Health and Community Services

Children and Young People

Care and Protection Organisation Standards

2025

ACT Children and Young People Care and Protection Organisation Standards 2025

About the ACT Children and Young People Care and Protection Standards

The ACT Government is committed to protecting vulnerable children and young people from harm. The *Children and Young People Care and Protection Organisation Standards 2025* (the Standards) support this commitment by establishing the minimum requirements for the delivery of care and protection services in the ACT.

These Standards replace the *Children and Young People Care and Protection Organisation Standards 2018*. They are the result of extensive revision and consultation across the sector in 2025.

Under the *Children and Young People Act 2008*, the Director-General has regulatory functions regarding Care and Protection Organisations (Organisations). These include:

- the assessment and approval of Organisations;
- the receipt and investigation of complaints;
- monitoring of, and intervention with, approved Organisations;
- revocation of approval of Organisations if they are unwilling or unable to comply with requirements.

The Director-General has delegated regulatory functions to the Human Services Registrar.

The following purposes are prescribed as care and protection purposes:

- to provide kinship and foster care services;
- to provide residential care services;
- to provide placement prevention, reunification and supported contact services in a home or community setting;
- to provide placement prevention, reunification and supported contact services in a residential setting;
- to provide clinical services;
- to provide engagement, empowerment and advocacy services;
- to provide transition to adulthood services.

The rights of children and young people arise from the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the *Human Rights Act 2004* (ACT) and the *Children and Young People Act 2008*. These Standards reflect the:

- Children and Young People (ACT Out of Home Care (OoHC) Standards 2016), which were adopted from the National Out of Home Care Standards on 1 July 2016
- ACT Child Safe Standards, which came into effect on 1 August 2024
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

The range of areas covered by the Care and Protection Organisation Standards is broader than the OoHC Standards and the ACT Child Safe Standards. The OoHC Standards and the ACT Child Safe Standards map directly to requirements of these Standards (Appendix A).

The Standards are supported by policies and procedures that guide the Human Services Registrar in their regulatory activities and decision-making.

Purpose

The primary purpose of regulation in this sector is to:

- safeguard children and young people who are receiving services; and
- establish minimum requirements for the provision of services in the sector that focus on quality child safe practice and continual improvement.

The regulation of organisations is a key strategy in strengthening accountability, ensuring a high functioning system and providing ongoing oversight.

Organisations that seek to be suitable entities for a care and protection purpose must demonstrate they have the capacity to comply, and are likely to continue to comply, with the Standards. Approval is made under section 63 of *the Children and Young People Act 2008*.

The Standards provide a framework for creating child safe organisations. They are designed to drive cultural change to create, maintain and improve child safe practices and support the development of strong organisational cultures that keep children safe.

The Standards aim to strengthen protections for children and young people and safeguard them from harm, abuse and neglect. Core objectives include:

- supporting safe and effective service delivery;
- minimising the risk of harm in service delivery;
- protecting their rights;
- strengthening protections;
- supporting environments that assist them to achieve their full potential.

How to use the Standards

To help achieve these objectives, there are six Standards that all approved Organisations must meet:

- Standard 1: Safe service delivery
- Standard 2: Agency and dignity
- Standard 3: Safe environments
- Standard 4: Feedback and complaints
- Standard 5: Accountable organisational governance
- Standard 6: Safe workforce.

Each Standard includes overall outcomes which set goals to be achieved. Each Standard is supported through one or more service requirements. These outline sufficient and effective approaches to support quality services and to allow for a determination whether outcomes are met. To meet a Standard, an Organisation must meet all of the Standard's services requirements.

While the desired outcomes for Organisations remain consistent, the strategies used to achieve the outcomes may vary. The Standards are not prescriptive and have been designed to allow Organisations to be flexible, responsive and innovative in the way they deliver services to children and young people, and to build on existing frameworks where available.

Organisations must demonstrate they meet the requirements. The Human Services Registrar assesses an Organisation's ability to meet requirements against the Standards as a whole. The assessment is based on available evidence, including the Organisation's policies, procedures and practices and their application.

Acknowledgement

The ACT Government acknowledges and is grateful for the assistance provided by the Victorian Social Services Registrar to enable the preparation of the ACT Children and Young People Care and Protection Organisation Standards 2025 using the Victorian Social Services Standards as a guide.

Standard 1: Safe service delivery – Services are safely delivered based on assessed needs

Standard 1 protects children and young people from harm, neglect and abuse. The Standard requires Organisations to identify and manage risk, and consider children and young people's:

- physical health
- mental health
- cultural background
- Aboriginal cultural safety.

Standard 1 supports the safe delivery of services using current evidence-based practice, including trauma-informed practice.

What this Standard will ask you to demonstrate

The **outcomes** Standard 1 aims to achieve are:

- to protect children and young people from avoidable harm when providing services;
- to be risk responsive: identifying and managing risks, including those in the online environment;
- to consider children and young people's needs, wellbeing and development and ensure this is reflected in planning, policy, guidelines and service delivery;
- ensure staff and volunteers are equipped with the appropriate skills and knowledge to provide holistic support for a child or young person's health, wellbeing and development;
- children and young people receive services that acknowledge diversity and are culturally safe;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people receive services that are culturally safe.

Service requirements

1.1 Child and young person's safety

- 1.1.1 An approved organisation must implement and maintain practices that identify and reduce the risk of harm to children and young people in the delivery of services, including the delivery of online services.

1.2 Needs assessment and service planning

- 1.2.1 An approved organisation must assess and review each child and young person's needs, taking into account their individual circumstances and goals. This will include a broad range of health and wellbeing needs including physical and mental health, emotional and social development, therapeutic support and needs related to education, and transition to independence.

- 1.2.2 If a child or young person is provided with a range of services, by the approved organisation and those delivered by other providers, the approved organisation must plan and coordinate the provision of the services having regard to the other services and providers and the child or young person's wishes and preferences.

1.3 Health and wellbeing

- 1.3.1 An approved organisation must implement and maintain practices to ensure that:
- (a) services provided to a child or young person support their health and wellbeing, including physical and mental health, emotional and social development, therapeutic support and needs related to education, and transition to independence.
 - (b) the delivery of services is consistent with current evidence-informed practice, including trauma-informed practice.

1.4 Cultural safety and inclusion

- 1.4.1 An approved organisation must ensure that services delivered to a child or young person respect their cultural identity and lived experience.
- 1.4.2 An approved organisation must ensure workers access training and are supported to deliver culturally safe services that respect each child or young person's cultural identity and experience.
- 1.4.3 An approved organisation must ensure that, with respect to all children and young people, measures are adopted to identify and confront racism within the organisation, ensure it is not tolerated and is addressed with appropriate consequences.

1.5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety and inclusion

- 1.5.1 An approved organisation must ensure that, with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people:
- (a) a child or young person's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights is encouraged and actively supported.
 - (b) strategies are embedded within the organisation that equip all members and workers of the organisation to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture as a critical protective factor and understand its importance to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons.
 - (c) measures are adopted by the organisation to ensure racism within the organisation is identified, confronted and not tolerated and that instances of racism are addressed with appropriate consequences.
 - (d) the organisation actively supports and facilitates participation and inclusion within its organisation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and their families.

- (e) all of the organisation's policies, procedures, systems and processes together create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and their families.

Standard 2: Agency and dignity – Services are child-centred and respect and uphold the rights and agency of children and young people

Standard 2 focuses on the dignity and agency of children and young people. It recognises the importance of staying connected to culture, family, friends and community.

Children and young people have diverse characteristics and lived experiences. The care, services and support a person needs is impacted by their unique social, cultural, health and wellbeing needs.

Standard 2 requires organisations to acknowledge this diversity and to uphold children and young people's rights around:

- advocacy
- accessible information
- participation
- informed consent.

What this Standard will ask you to demonstrate

The **outcomes** Standard 2 aims to achieve are:

- the rights of children and young people are promoted and upheld;
- children and young people can exercise their agency and take part in decisions about the services they receive;
- children and young people's connection to culture, family, friends, and community is supported and respected.

Service requirements

2.1 Dignity and respect

2.1.1 An approved organisation must implement and maintain practices which ensure that:

- (a) each child or young person is treated with dignity and respect, acknowledging their individual diversity.
- (b) services are delivered free from discrimination.

2.2 Rights and responsibilities

2.2.1 An approved organisation must implement and maintain practices that:

- (a) support each child or young person to freely exercise their rights and responsibilities.
- (b) are compatible with a child or young person's right to personal privacy.

2.3 Advocacy and support

- 2.3.1 An approved organisation must implement and maintain practices that support children and young people to freely access any relevant independent or government-funded advocacy services or other relevant support services.

2.4 Clear and accessible information

- 2.4.1 An approved organisation must provide clear, comprehensive, and accurate information about the following matters in a way that is accessible to and understandable by children and young people:
- (a) the services that are provided and, if applicable, any relevant service or activity that is not provided by the organisation.
 - (b) the rights and responsibilities of children and young people in relation to the provision of services.
 - (c) the processes for lodging feedback, complaints, or concerns in relation to service delivery or safety.
 - (d) the processes for dispute management in relation to service delivery or safety.

2.5 Inclusion and participation

- 2.5.1 An organisation must implement and maintain practices that support each child or young person and their support persons to actively participate in decisions about the services provided.

2.6 Informed consent

- 2.6.1 An approved organisation must, before providing any service to a child or young person obtain and document the informed consent of:
- (a) the child or young person;
 - (b) the child or young person's authorised representative;
 - (c) if the child or young person does not have decision-making capacity, a person authorised by law to make decisions for the child or young person in relation to the provision of the service.
- 2.6.2 An approved organisation is not required to obtain informed consent to the provision of a service if the organisation is authorised or required under another Act or law to provide the service without consent and the approved organisation:
- (a) complies with the requirements of that Act or law, including any notification requirements.
 - (b) unless notification is required under that Act, notifies the following persons as soon as practicable of the provision of the social service without informed consent and of the legal authority or requirement to do so
 - i. the child or young person;
 - ii. the child or young person's authorised representative;

- iii. if the child or young person does not have decision-making capacity, a person authorised by law to make decisions for the child or young person in relation to the provision of service.

2.7 Connection to culture, family, friends and community

- 2.7.1 An approved organisation must implement and maintain practices that support children or young people to maintain connections to their culture, family, friends and community.

Standard 3: Safe environment – Services are provided in environments that are safe for children

Providing a safe service environment is essential for ensuring the safe delivery of services.

Standard 3 requires Organisations to meet a minimum standard to maintain a safe space that:

- supports the health and wellbeing of service users
- demonstrates adherence to child safety and wellbeing principles and practices
- is compliant with occupational health and safety requirements.

Under this Standard, organisations must:

- provide children and young people opportunities to express their views and wishes concerning their care environment;
- manage the risk of harm within the environment;
- provide a safe, secure and stable environment;
- ensure staff, carers and volunteers are aware of their responsibility to protect and support children and young people and adhere to the principles of child safety and wellbeing principles and practices;
- ensure staff, carers and volunteers have a clear understanding of occupational health and safety requirements.

What this Standard will ask you to demonstrate

The **outcomes** that Standard 3 aims to achieve are:

- services are provided in an environment that supports the safety, health and wellbeing of children and young people;
- understanding and implementation of child safe principles;
- robust occupational health and safety policies and procedures are in place.

Service requirements

3.1 Safe environment

- 3.1.1 An approved organisation delivering services at premises that they own or occupies must:

- (a) identify and manage risks of harm to children and young people.

- (b) ensure the premises used to deliver services are suitable for the provision of the service, including having regard to the accessibility needs of children and young people.
- (c) ensure services are provided in accordance with legislative requirements.
- (d) ensure the premises used to deliver services are maintained in a safe and serviceable condition.

3.1.2 An approved organisation who delivers services at a place other than premises owned or occupied by them must implement and maintain practices to manage risks to ensure the safe delivery of services at that place.

Standard 4: Feedback and complaints – Children and young people are supported to provide feedback, complaints or raise concerns about service safety

Children and young people have the right to raise concerns and make complaints about the care and services they receive from an organisation.

Children and young people must be able to raise concerns about services without being punished for doing so. The core requirements of Standard 4 are providing:

- a safe environment
- clear processes
- effective systems for safely raising concerns without facing retribution.

Organisations need to adopt a continuous improvement approach. You should regularly review feedback and complaints data to identify potential systemic issues impacting safe service delivery.

Organisations should regularly review, evaluate and improve their services and child safe practices.

What this Standard will ask you to demonstrate

An organisational culture that supports and facilitates feedback, where complaints are taken seriously and prompt action taken, is critical towards achieving this Standard.

The **outcomes** Standard 4 aims to achieve are:

- children and young people understand complaint handling processes;
- children and young people are supported to provide feedback, complaints or concerns on service safety and quality;
- children and young people are protected from reprisal when providing feedback, complaints or concerns about service safety and quality;
- feedback, complaints or concerns are promptly acknowledged and dealt with;
- organisations ensure processes are in place to review, evaluate and improve their service delivery and practices.

Service requirements

4.1 Feedback

- 4.1.1 An approved organisation must seek feedback from children and young people or their support persons about service safety.

4.2 Systems and processes

- 4.2.1 An approved organisation must implement and maintain systems and processes:
- (a) to support children and young people and their support persons to give feedback, make a complaint or raise a concern about the safety of a service.
 - (b) to investigate, respond to and resolve any feedback given, complaint made or concern raised by children and young people and their support persons about the safety of a service.
 - (c) to review, evaluate and improve service delivery and practices.
 - (d) to report on
 - i. any feedback given, complaint made or concern raised by children and young people and their support persons about the safety of a service;
 - ii. the approved organisation's response to, or resolution of, the feedback, complaint or concern.
- 4.2.2 An approved organisation must inform children and young people about their right:
- (a) to raise matters of service safety with the Human Services Registrar for the purpose of monitoring and enforcing compliance with the CAPO Standards.
 - (b) to make a complaint about the safety of a service to any other entity.

4.3 Response to feedback, complaints and concerns

- 4.3.1 An approved organisation must acknowledge and respond to feedback, complaints or concerns of children and young people and their support persons in a way that:
- (a) is confidential;
 - (b) appropriate and accessible to children and young people;
 - (c) is without reprisal to the child or young person or support person;
 - (d) meets timeframes agreed with the child or young person or support person.
- 4.3.2 An approved organisation must use the feedback, complaints and concerns of children and young people, support persons and community to inform continuous improvements to safe service design and delivery.

4.4 Dispute management

- 4.4.1 If requested, an approved organisation must assist children and young people and their support persons to access services to manage and resolve disputes between the child and young person and the organisation about the delivery of services, whether or not the dispute management services are delivered by the approved organisation or another provider.

Standard 5: Accountable organisational governance – Effective governance and organisational systems support safe delivery of social services

Children and young people should be confident that an organisation is well run and accountable for safe services.

Governance is at the heart of how organisations ensure ongoing safe service delivery. Effective governance arrangements will help organisations maintain and improve safety standards over time.

Under Standard 5, organisations must set up and maintain policies, procedures and review mechanisms that foster accountable governance practices.

Standard 5 ensures:

- governance arrangements set clear directions for leadership;
- systems are in place that identify and reduce risk, and improve service delivery;
- there is a commitment to child safety and wellbeing through all levels of the organisation;
- Organisations have a transparent incident management system;
- staff can confidentially raise concerns around safe service delivery without punishment.

What this Standard will ask you to demonstrate

The **outcomes** Standard 5 aims to achieve are:

- governance arrangements are transparent and accountable;
- governance and leadership arrangements support children and young people's safety, agency and dignity;
- approved Organisations have governance and leadership arrangements in place to:
 - identify and reduce risk;
 - improve safe service delivery and service quality.

Service requirements

5.1 Accountable governance and leadership

- 5.1.1 An approved organisation must implement and maintain governance arrangements to provide for leadership accountability for, and continuous improvement of, children and young people's safety.

5.2 Strong financial governance

- 5.2.1 An approved Organisation must maintain appropriate operational and financial performance and manage financial risk exposure, to ensure quality service delivery.
- 5.2.2 An approved organisation has effective governance structures and financial management systems that ensure coherent and robust strategic, operational, financial and risk planning.

5.3 Safe and inclusive practice culture

- 5.3.1 An approved Organisation must implement and maintain practices that support workers to raise concerns confidentially, without reprisal, to assist in safe service delivery.

5.4 Incident and adverse event reporting

- 5.4.1 An approved Organisation must implement and maintain an incident management system that transparently records, reports on and responds to incidents and adverse events relating to safe service delivery, to improve safe service delivery.

5.5 Outsourced services

- 5.5.1 If an approved organisation engages contractors or other persons (other than employees) to deliver services in whole or partially:
- (a) the approved organisation remains accountable for safe service delivery;
 - (b) the approved organisation must have governance and contractual arrangements in place that hold those contractors and other persons to account to the approved Organisation for safe service delivery.

Standard 6: Safe workforce – Services are delivered by a workforce that has the knowledge, capability and support to deliver safe services with care and skill

Safe service delivery relies on a safe, effective and capable workforce.

Standard 6 recognises the importance of strong recruitment practices that attract staff with the right skills, qualifications and knowledge. These practices can also prevent unsuitable people entering the sector.

Under Standard 6, Organisations must also properly support staff through ongoing:

- training
- supervision
- performance management
- workforce planning.

What this Standard will ask you to demonstrate

The **outcomes** that Standard 6 aims to achieve are:

- staff have the knowledge and capability to deliver safe services;
- staff are adequately supported to deliver safe services;
- staff are supervised and managed to deliver safe services.

Service requirements

6.1 Workforce recruitment

- 6.1.1 An approved Organisation must implement and maintain recruitment practices that give priority to children and young people's safety and wellbeing.

6.2 Workforce training

- 6.2.1 An approved organisation must ensure staff access ongoing training and are supported to deliver safe services.

6.3 Worker performance and conduct

- 6.3.1 An approved organisation must implement and maintain practices to monitor and manage staff performance and conduct to deliver safe services.

6.4 Workforce planning

- 6.4.1 An approved organisation must implement and maintain practices for planning and managing a workforce that is adequately supported to deliver safe services.

Appendix A: Mapping of the Children and Young People Care and Protection Standards 2025 to the ACT Child Safe Standards and the ACT Out of Home Care Standards 2016

| Children and Young People Care and Protection Standards 2025 | ACT Child Safe Standards | ACT Out of Home Care Standards 2016 |
|---|---|---|
| Standard 1: Safe service delivery – Services are safely delivered based on assessed needs | <p>Standard 4: Equity is upheld, and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.</p> <p>Standard 5: People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.</p> <p>Standard 7: Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.</p> | <p>Standard 4: Individualised plan</p> <p>Standard 5: Health needs</p> <p>Standard 6: Education and early childhood</p> <p>Standard 7: Education, training and/or employment</p> <p>Standard 8: Social and/or recreational</p> <p>Standard 10: Identity development</p> <p>Standard 13: Transition from care planning</p> |
| Standard 2: Agency and dignity – Services are child-centred and respect and uphold the rights and agency of children and young people | <p>Standard 2: Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.</p> <p>Standard 3: Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.</p> <p>Standard 4: Equity is upheld, and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.</p> | <p>Standard 2: Participate in decisions</p> <p>Standard 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities participate in decisions</p> <p>Standard 9: Connection with family</p> <p>Standard 10: Identity development</p> <p>Standard 11: Significant others</p> |

| Children and Young People Care and Protection Standards 2025 | ACT Child Safe Standards | ACT Out of Home Care Standards 2016 |
|--|--|--|
| Standard 3: Safe environment – Services are provided in environments that are safe for children | <p>Standard 2: Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.</p> <p>Standard 8: Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.</p> | <p>Standard 1: Stability and Security</p> <p>Standard 12: Carers</p> |
| Standard 4: Feedback and complaints – Children and young people are supported to provide feedback, complaints or raise concerns about service safety | <p>Standard 6: Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.</p> <p>Standard 7: Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.</p> <p>Standard 9: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.</p> | Nil |

| Children and Young People Care and Protection Standards 2025 | ACT Child Safe Standards | ACT Out of Home Care Standards 2016 |
|--|--|--|
| Standard 5: Accountable organisational governance – Effective governance and organisational systems support safe delivery of social services | <p>Standard 1: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.</p> <p>Standard 8: Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.</p> <p>Standard 10: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.</p> | Nil |
| Standard 6: Safe workforce – Services are delivered by a workforce that has the knowledge, capability and support to deliver safe services with care and skill | <p>Standard 5: People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.</p> <p>Standard 7: Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.</p> | Standard 12: Carer |