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| Standard 1: Safe service delivery |
| Social Services Standards |
| OFFICIAL |

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Social Services Standard 1

**Safe service delivery – Social services are safely delivered based on assessed needs.**

The *Social Services Regulation Act 2021* (Vic) and the *Social Services Regulations 2023* (Vic) created a new regulatory framework for social services in Victoria. This framework puts the protection and safety of social services users at the centre of social services delivery.

The Social Services Regulator will replace the current Human Services Regulator. The Social Services Regulator aims to strengthen protections for social services users to safeguard people from harm, abuse and neglect. Core objectives include:

* protecting the rights of service users
* supporting safe and effective social services delivery
* minimising the risk of avoidable harm in service delivery.

To help achieve these aims, there are six Social Services Standards that all registered social services providers must meet:

* Standard 1: Safe service delivery
* Standard 2: Service user agency and dignity
* Standard 3: Safe service environments
* Standard 4: Feedback and complaints
* Standard 5: Accountable organisational governance
* Standard 6: Safe workforce.

# Standard 1 – safe service delivery

Standard 1 protects service users from harm, neglect and abuse. The Standard requires social services providers to identify and manage risk, and consider service users’:

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

Standard 1 supports the safe delivery of social 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 service users from **avoidable harm** when providing social services
* to take into account service users’ **needs, circumstances and goals** when providing a social service
* service users receive services that **support their health and wellbeing**
* service users receive social services that are **culturally safe**
* **Aboriginal service users** receive social services that are **culturally safe**.

# How to meet Standard 1

Service requirements outline actions for social services providers to demonstrate they are meeting a Standard.

To meet the Standard, you must meet **all** of the Standard’s services requirements[[1]](#footnote-1).

The requirements often guide providers to build on existing frameworks. The Social Services Regulator recognises that many providers will use needs assessment frameworks in procedures to ensure safe service delivery.

For Standard 1, the service requirements focus on:

* service user safety
* needs assessments and service planning
* health and wellbeing
* cultural safety and inclusion
* Aboriginal cultural safety and inclusion.

For ease, the service requirements for Standard 1 are detailed in **Appendix 1: Service requirements for Standard 1**. Appendix 1 also includes more information on:

* suggested actions
* useful documents
* indicators of success.

## Getting ready

Before checking your readiness to meet Standard 1, you may find it useful to gather these documents:

* policies and procedures on eliminating and reducing the risk of harm to service users
* needs assessment frameworks
* policies supporting the health and wellbeing of service users
* procedures that embed cultural safety in induction, training, service delivery and feedback mechanisms
* policies outlining approaches to meeting the specific cultural requirements of Aboriginal service users.

Here are some starting points to assess your readiness to meet Standard 1 service requirements:

### Service user safety[[2]](#footnote-2)

* Risk management system to identify and manage risks of harm to service users.
* Policies, processes and records on incident management, including near misses.
* Policies on staff supervision and performance management.

### Use needs assessments and service planning[[3]](#footnote-3)

* Intake, transition or exit forms that identify individual needs of each service user.
* Systems to regularly review service user needs, with insights incorporated into service planning.
* Contracts with other providers that address service user needs.

### Support service users’ health and wellbeing[[4]](#footnote-4)

* Systems and processes to make sure service delivery is in line with current evidence-informed practice.
* Systems to monitor service users’ health and wellbeing.
* Staff training on trauma-informed practice.
* Staff training on assessing and managing service users’ health and wellbeing.

### Ensure cultural safety and inclusion[[5]](#footnote-5)

* Policies and training on how to provide culturally safe services.
* Initial assessments that identify service users’ cultural needs and preferences.
* Individual support, case or service plans that address service users’ ongoing cultural needs.
* Systems to prevent and appropriately address racist incidents.

### Aboriginal service users’ cultural safety and inclusion[[6]](#footnote-6)

* Policies on respecting Aboriginal service users’ cultural identity and lived experience.
* Staff training and education on:
  + importance of Aboriginal culture to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal people
  + how to support Aboriginal service users to express cultural rights.
* Procedures that support and promote participation and inclusion of Aboriginal people and their families.

## How the Standards relate to the old Human Services Standards

During their preparation, some social services providers may be reviewing policies and procedures that are in line with the Human Services Standards.

While the outcomes for safe service delivery under Standard 1 are **broadly in line with** the Human Services Standards, there are **more specific** requirements for providers to put in place and maintain.

For example:

* **Service user safety**: Providers must put in place and maintain practices for safety risks, where previously the Human Service Standard simply stated this as an outcome. The service requirement is also broader as it explicitly covers **online** safety.
* **Cultural safety**: The service requirements for cultural safety (and Aboriginal cultural safety) emphasise the safety aspect of cultural issues. There are steps providers must complete to manage this safety risk, such as by training workers.
* **Aboriginal cultural safety**: This service requirement is modelled on the Child Safe Standards’ Aboriginal Cultural Safety Standard (which began on 1 July 2022). A number of social services providers will already be addressing this requirement.

Table 1: Social Services Standards and Human Services Standards

| Standard | Social Services Standards | Human Services Standards |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | **Safe service delivery**: Social services are to be safely delivered based on assessed needs | **Empowerment**: People's rights are promoted and upheld |
| 2 | **Service user agency and dignity**: Social services are to be person-centred and respect and uphold service user rights and agency | **Access and engagement**: People's right to access transparent, equitable and integrated services is promoted and upheld |
| 3 | **Safe service environment**: Social Services are to be provided in a safe, secure and fit-for-purpose environment | **Wellbeing**: People's right to wellbeing and safety is promoted and upheld |
| 4 | **Feedback and complaints**: Service users are to be supported to provide feedback, complaints or concerns about service safety | **Participation**: People's right to choice, decision making and to actively participate as a valued member of their chosen effectively community is promoted and upheld |
| 5 | **Accountable organisational governance**: Effective governance and organisational systems are to support safe delivery of social services | **Governance and management**: Organisations must be effectively governed and managed at all times |
| 6 | **Safe workforce**: Social services are to be delivered by a workforce that has the knowledge, capability and support to deliver safe social services with care and skill | - |

## Track ongoing compliance with Standard 1

Regularly review your policies and procedures to track your performance against Standard 1.

Positive indicators may include:

* examples of staff appropriately responding to and reporting abuse or neglect of service users
* strength-based assessment practices that use an early intervention approach to service delivery
* showing that social services are delivered based on evidence-informed practice
* data showing that service users feel safe to express cultural needs
* evidence that service users' cultural identity and lived experience have been respected
* examples showing how you actively support service users and their families to take part
* feedback showing that staff can provide culturally safe services, including respecting the cultural identity and lived experience of Aboriginal service users.

# Appendix 1: Service requirements for Standard 1

Service user safety

### Service requirement (clause 7)

1. A registered social service provider must implement and maintain practices that identify and reduce the risk of harm to service users in the delivery of social services, including the delivery of online services.

### Actions, useful documents and success indicators

Table 2: Service user safety requirement guidance

| Actions | Documents and other evidence | Indicators of success |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Leaders put in place risk management frameworks, systems and processes to identify and manage risks of harm to service users * Leaders and staff include risk management in decision making * Leaders and staff actively monitor risks to service user safety * Staff have the knowledge and skills to assess service user needs and risks to safety * Staff receive information, education or training on risks of harm to service users, including abuse and neglect * Staff follow risk management policies and processes * Leaders and staff actively embed service user safety in organisational leadership, governance and culture * Leaders and staff identify and mitigate risks in both physical and online environments | * Risk management system, including frameworks, policies, processes, records of implementation and reviews * Risk assessment and management plans that identify risks of harm to service users and how to manage them * Individual risk assessments for service users, if needed * Incident management policies, processes and records, including near misses * Records of staff information, education and training on risks of harm to service users, including abuse and neglect * Code of conduct that includes acceptable and unacceptable conduct and staff behaviour * Policies and processes for staff supervision and performance management * Policies and processes for handling feedback, complaints or concerns * Information for service users and staff about online safety * Environmental scan or audit of the physical service environment, where applicable | * Leaders and staff are aware of risks of harm to service users and take active steps to reduce or remove risks * Safe service delivery is embedded in day-to-day practices * Staff follow the code of conduct and follow risk management policies and procedures * Staff appropriately respond to and report service user abuse and neglect * Staff performance and conduct is managed to ensure safe service delivery |

Needs assessment and service planning

### Service requirement (clause 8)

1. A registered social service provider must assess and review each service user's needs, taking into account the service user’s individual circumstances and the goals of the service user.
2. If a service user is provided with social services and other services delivered by other providers, the registered social service provider must plan and coordinate the provision of the social services having regard to the other services and providers and the service user’s preferences.
3. The intended purpose of the service requirement in subclause 1 is for registered social service providers to assess their ability to support service users.

### Actions, useful documents and success indicators

Table 3: Needs assessment and service planning

| Actions | Documents and other evidence | Indicators of success |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Leaders put in place systems and processes to make sure service user needs are regularly reviewed * Staff identify a service user’s needs through an initial assessment and review needs regularly * Staff apply a cultural lens as they develop support, case or service plans * Leaders and staff use proper due diligence when contracting or partnering with other organisations to provide services * Staff coordinate exit or move to other services and ensure important information is shared | * Policies and processes about initial and ongoing assessment of service user needs * Intake, transition or exit forms that identify service user needs, circumstances and goals * Support, case or service plans include:   + the service user’s needs   + services received (including provider details)   + scope to review needs * Contracts, service agreements or information sharing arrangements with other providers that show how service delivery is planned and coordinated | * Service users are actively involved in developing and reviewing their plans * Support, case or service plans reflect the service user’s circumstances and goals * Assessment practices are strengths-based and take an early intervention approach to service delivery * Social service providers plan and coordinate services with other providers to meet the service user’s needs |

Health and wellbeing

### Service requirement (clause 9)

1. A registered social service provider must implement and maintain practices to ensure that:
   1. social services provided to a service user support the health and wellbeing of the service user
   2. the delivery of the social services is consistent with current evidence-informed practice, including trauma‑informed practice.

### Actions, useful documents and success indicators

Table 4: Health and wellbeing

| Actions | Documents and other evidence | Indicators of success |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Staff monitor the health and wellbeing of service users and put in place intervention strategies when needed * Leaders put in place systems and processes to make sure service delivery is in line with current evidence-based practice * Relevant staff receive information, education or training about trauma-informed practice * Staff work with other service providers to assess and manage service user health and wellbeing needs, when needed | * Intake form and initial assessments that identify the service user’s health and wellbeing needs * Support, case or service plans that address the service user’s ongoing health and wellbeing needs. If relevant and with the service user’s consent, the plan notes other services used by the service user * Policies and processes on how the provider supports service users’ health and wellbeing * Evidence of research into evaluation of best-practice service delivery * Records of staff information, education and training on trauma-informed practice | * Leaders and staff provide social services that support service users’ health and wellbeing * Social service delivery is based on current evidence‑based practice, including trauma‑informed practice |

Cultural safety and inclusion

### Service requirement (clause 10)

1. A registered social service provider must ensure that social services delivered to a service user respect the service user's cultural identity and lived experience.
2. A registered social service provider must ensure service workers access training and are supported to deliver culturally safe services that respect each service user's cultural identity and experience.
3. A registered social service provider must ensure that, with respect to all service users, measures are adopted by the registered social service provider to ensure racism within the organisation of the registered social service provider is identified and confronted, is not tolerated and is addressed with appropriate consequences.

### Actions, useful documents and success indicators

Table 5: Cultural safety and inclusion

| Actions | Documents and other evidence | Indicators of success |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Leaders and staff respect each service user’s cultural identity and lived experience * Leaders and staff help service users express their cultural rights * Staff receive information, education or training on how to provide culturally safe services * Leaders put in place systems and processes to make sure racism is identified and addressed with appropriate consequences * Leaders and staff put in place and maintain practices to make sure all policies, procedures and systems create a culturally safe environment for service users and their families | * Intake forms and initial assessments that include scope to identify service user cultural needs and preferences * Support, case or service plans that address a service user’s ongoing cultural needs and preferences * Policies, processes and practices that show the provider’s commitment to creating a culturally safe environment that respects each service user’s cultural identity and experience * Policies and processes for responding to racism, including potential consequences * Records of staff information, education and training on providing culturally safe services * Code of conduct that includes acceptable and unacceptable conduct and staff behaviour | * Service users’ cultural identity and lived experience are respected * Service users feel safe to express their cultural needs * Staff are equipped to provide culturally safe services * Racism is not tolerated – it is addressed promptly and with appropriate consequences * The provider actively supports service users and their families to take part |

Aboriginal cultural safety and inclusion

### Service requirement (clause 11)

1. A registered social service provider must ensure that, with respect to Aboriginal service users:
   1. a service user’s ability to express the service user's culture and enjoy the service user's cultural rights is encouraged and actively supported; and
   2. strategies are embedded within the organisation of the registered social service provider that equip all members and workers of the organisation to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal persons; and
   3. measures are adopted by the registered social service provider to ensure racism within the organisation of the social service provider is identified, confronted and not tolerated and that instances of racism are addressed with appropriate consequences; and
   4. the registered social service provider actively supports and facilitates participation and inclusion within its organisation by Aboriginal persons and the families of Aboriginal persons; and
   5. all of the registered social service provider’s policies, procedures, systems and processes together create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal persons and the families of Aboriginal persons.

### Actions, useful documents and success indicators

Table 6: Aboriginal cultural safety

| Actions | Documents and other evidence | Indicators of success |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Leaders and staff respect each Aboriginal service user’s cultural identity and lived experience * Leaders and staff support Aboriginal service users to express their cultural rights * Staff receive information, education or training on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to Aboriginal people’s wellbeing and safety * Leaders put in place systems and processes to make sure racism is identified and addressed with appropriate consequences * Leaders and staff actively support Aboriginal people and their families to take part and be included * Leaders and staff put in place and maintain practices to ensure a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal service users and their families | * Intake forms and initial assessments that include scope to identify Aboriginal service user cultural needs and preferences * Support, case or service plans that address Aboriginal service users’ ongoing cultural needs and preferences * Policies, processes and practices that show the provider’s commitment to creating a culturally safe environment that respects each Aboriginal service user’s cultural identity and experience * Policies and processes for responding to racism, including potential consequences * Policies and processes on participation and including Aboriginal people and their families * Records of staff information, education and training on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to Aboriginal people’s wellbeing and safety * Code of conduct that includes acceptable and unacceptable conduct and staff behaviour | * Aboriginal service users’ cultural identity and lived experience are respected * Aboriginal service users feel safe to express their cultural needs and enjoy their cultural rights * Staff can provide culturally safe services * Racism is not tolerated – it is addressed promptly and with fitting consequences * The provider actively supports Aboriginal service users and their families to take part |

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| To receive this document in another format, email the [Social Services Regulator](mailto:enquiries@ssr.vic.gov.au) [enquiries@ssr.vic.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@ssr.vic.gov.au)  Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.  © State of Victoria, Australia, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, April 2024.  This guidance is general in nature and the list of compliance indicators is not exhaustive. Some social service providers may adopt a different approach to meeting the Social Services Standards. If so, they may be asked to show how their approach complies with the service requirements and achieves the outcomes of the Standards.  This information sheet provides a brief overview of the safe service delivery standard. It helps social service providers meet the service requirements of the Standard by identifying actions, documents and other evidence.  In this document, ‘leaders’ means individuals who are responsible for decision making or people management in a social service provider, including but not limited to ‘key personnel’.[[7]](#footnote-7) ‘Staff’ has the same meaning as ‘service worker’[[8]](#footnote-8) and includes volunteers. ‘Aboriginal’ refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. ‘Indigenous’ or ‘Koori/Koorie’ is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.  ISBN 978-1-76130-497-2 (online/PDF/Word)  Available at [Social Services Regulator’s Social Services Standards webpage](https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-social-services-standards) https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator-social-services-standards |

1. The service requirements are outlined in Schedule 1 of the *Social Services Regulations 2023*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See **Service requirement (clause 7)** in Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See **Service requirement (clause 8)** in Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See **Service requirement (clause 9)** in Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See **Service requirement (clause 10)** in Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See **Service requirement (clause 11)** in Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. ‘Key personnel’ is defined in the Social Services Regulations 2023 and includes a member of the group of people responsible for the executive decisions of the social service provider as well as other prescribed roles. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. ‘Service worker’ is defined in the Regulations as an individual employed or engaged by a social service provider to deliver a social service, including as a volunteer. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)