

## Child Link Policy

The purpose of this policy is to support Victorian government schools to access and use Child Link safely and appropriately and to promote student wellbeing and safety, in line with the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS).

## Summary

- Child Link is a key enabler of the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) with the complementary aim of improving wellbeing and safety outcomes for children and young people.
- Child Link is a digital tool that displays information about a child to authorised key professionals who have responsibility for child wellbeing and safety. In a school, this is for the children enrolled in that school.
- Child Link takes information from existing systems across Victorian Government and combines them to create a single entry of information about a child or young person's:
  - participation in key early childhood and education services
  - key family relationships
  - any Child Protection Order history.
- This information enables authorised staff in schools to better support student wellbeing and safety.
- Child Link is updated regularly to ensure that information displayed is based on the most recent information received. It is read-only and is not a case management system.
- Principals and nominated school staff have specific requirements and responsibilities they must meet to access Child Link. This includes the completion of mandatory training, and following the requirements in this policy and guidelines (refer to the [Guidance tab](#)).

## Details

By providing a snapshot of information about a student, Child Link helps authorised school professionals to:

- collaborate with other services and professionals working with the child and their family
- identify as early as possible any needs, issues and vulnerabilities that may be present and make more informed decisions about the wellbeing, safety and support needs of a child in their school.

## Information on Child Link

An entry is created in Child Link for every child (from birth to 18 years of age), who was born in Victoria, based on receipt of a copy of a birth notice for the child.

If the department has not received a copy of a birth notice for the child, including those who were born in Victoria or move to Victoria after birth, an entry for the child is created in Child Link when the earliest of the following occurs:

- when the child has first contact with a relevant service, including a:
  - Maternal and Child Health Service
  - supported playgroup
  - funded kindergarten (at enrolment)
  - registered school (at enrolment)
  - school nurse program
  - Student Support Service provided by the Department of Education
- the child is allocated a Victorian student number
- the child is registered for home schooling by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA)
- when a Child Protection Order (CPO) is made in respect of the child.

Child Link will show limited information about a child and their family, including:

- the child's name(s), date and place of birth, and sex
- the name(s) of the child's siblings
- the name(s) and relationship to the child of persons who have parental responsibility and/or day-to-day care of the child
- whether the child is identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- the child's participation and engagement in government-funded childhood services from birth to the age of 18, and the contact details of those services
- if the child or their sibling has a past or current Child Protection Order and is, or has been, in out of home care.

Child Link does not display a child's address information or contact details for the child or the child's family. Child Link is not a case management system and does not contain any case notes, professional opinions, or detailed health records. The information on Child Link cannot be directly edited or amended by professionals who use Child Link (refer to the section below on 'Missing or incorrect information in Child Link').

## Child Information Sharing Scheme and Child Link

### ***Sharing within the department***

Users may share information displayed on Child Link with other staff in their school for the purpose of providing education and care and related services to children enrolled at the school and monitoring and planning services provided to those children. Staff may also share information displayed on Child Link in accordance with the [Child Information Sharing Scheme](#), which may include sharing information with other Victorian government school staff and with department staff who may need to know in order to support the wellbeing or safety of a child or group of children.

For example, a student wellbeing coordinator may share relevant information about a student's service engagement history and current care arrangements to better equip the student's teachers to implement a new behaviour management plan for the student.

### **Sharing outside the department**

Schools, as information sharing entities, can request and share information displayed on Child Link with other prescribed organisations under the [Child Information Sharing Scheme](#) to promote a child's wellbeing or safety. For example, a Student Transitions Coordinator uses Child Link to gather further information about their new year 7 students and notices that 2 students have a previous Child Protection Order. The school contacts Child Protection to request more information about the orders that were in place to ensure the students are well supported at school.

Schools must respond to all requests for information under the Child Information Sharing Scheme and share all relevant information that meets the requirements for sharing.

For example, a teacher is concerned about a sudden change in the attendance and behaviour of one of their students. The teacher notices on Child Link that the child has a sibling enrolled in a local kindergarten program and uses the service contact information on Child Link to telephone the kindergarten and request information about the sibling's attendance and behaviour to inform their decision making and understanding of the child and family's circumstances.

The Child Information Sharing Scheme and Child Link complement existing obligations and frameworks. They do not replace current requirements (such as [Child Safe Standards](#), [mandatory reporting](#), and [reportable conduct](#)) to share information. In many cases, existing obligations work together with the Child Information Sharing Scheme and Child Link and will enhance collaboration between services.

Schools should continue to share information as appropriate in accordance with other relevant laws, such as when making a mandatory report or when sharing information with external services under existing arrangements and mechanisms. The Child Information Sharing Scheme and Child Link do not limit these existing permissions and obligations.

## Safety, security and consent

Security and privacy are core to the design of Child Link and strict safeguards are in place to protect information. Information recorded on Child Link is only accessible by authorised professionals as per the relevant legislation. No consent from the child or the child's family members is required for information to be displayed on Child Link. Please refer to [Using the information on Child Link to promote student wellbeing and safety](#) for information regarding the appropriate use and disclosure of information displayed.

## Access to child link

Authorised professionals who have responsibility for child wellbeing and safety must complete training before being permitted to access Child Link. Authorised professionals include key staff in the department's regions supporting child wellbeing and safety,

government and non-government schools, early childhood teachers, Maternal and Child Health nurses and Child Protection practitioners.

Nominated school Users must enrol in appropriate training on the [Information Sharing and MARAM Online Learning System](#), and are required to complete both Information Sharing training and Child Link training. If Users have already completed Information Sharing training, they can enrol in 'Child Link User Training – All workforces'. However, if they have not completed this training they need to enrol in the combined training: 'Info Sharing + Child Link – Education'.

Most Users of Child Link will only have access to information about children within their school or service, and those children's siblings.

## Safety, security and consent

When a student enrolls in a Victorian government school, including international students, that student's information will become available on Child Link to the school's nominated Child Link Users. Child Link will not display information about whether a student is an international student. However, an international student may have less information on Child Link as they will not have engaged in services like local government Maternal and Child Health centres or an early learning centre.

The [Guidance tab](#) provides detailed guidance for Victorian government schools on using Child Link including:

- roles and responsibilities of school principals as Child Link Authorisers
- roles and responsibilities of school staff as Child Link Users
- using the information on Child Link to promote student wellbeing and safety
- complaints handling for Child Link
- information management and security for Child Link

## Related Policies

- [Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes](#)
- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Complaints – Parents](#)
- [Enrolment](#)
- [Health Care Needs](#)
- [Privacy and Information Sharing](#)
- [Records Management – School Records](#)
- [Requests for Information about Students](#)
- [Schools' privacy policy](#)
- [Selective Entry and Other Specialism Schools and Programs](#)

## Relevant legislations

- [Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act \(2006\)](#)
- [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)

- [Child Wellbeing and Safety \(Information Sharing\) Regulations 2018 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Children's Services Act 1996 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Children's Services Regulations 2020 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Child Information Sharing Scheme Ministerial Guidelines](#)
- [Child Link Secretary's Guidelines \(PDF\)](#)
- [Family Violence Protection Act 2008 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Family Violence Protection \(Information Sharing and Risk Management\) Regulations 2018 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Health Records Act 2001 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 \(Vic\)](#)

## Policy review and approval

Policy last reviewed	14th August 2024
Approved by	Principal
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