Implementing or Improving a Voluntary Safety Reporting System (VSRS) at the State Level
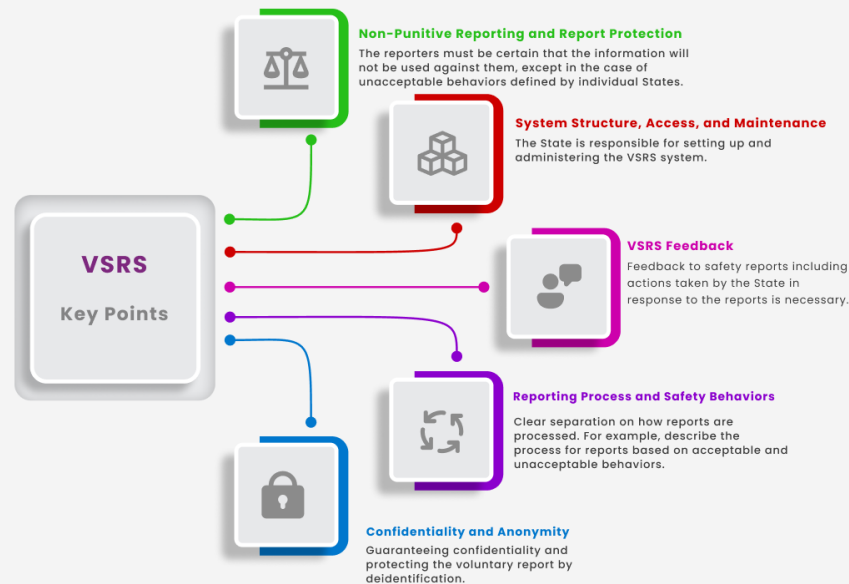
What is a VSRS?

A Voluntary Safety Reporting Systems or VSRS is integral to a well-functioning State Safety Program (SSP). A VSRS provides an opportunity for both individuals and organisations to report hazards, safety-related issues, concerns, and incidents that may otherwise remain unreported. These reports go beyond mandatory reporting and tend to illuminate latent conditions and new safety issues not previously specified in mandatory reporting requirements.

ICAO Annex 19 states, "*5.1.3 States shall establish a voluntary safety reporting system (VSRS) to collect safety data and safety information not captured by mandatory safety reporting systems.*"

A Voluntary Safety Reporting System (VSRS) is integral to a **well-functioning** State Safety Program

VSRS Key Points

Non-Punitive Reporting and Report Protection
The reporters must be certain that the information will not be used against them, except in the case of unacceptable behaviors defined by individual States.

System Structure, Access, and Maintenance
The State is responsible for setting up and administering the VSRS system.

VSRS Feedback
Feedback to safety reports including actions taken by the State in response to the reports is necessary.

Reporting Process and Safety Behaviors
Clear separation on how reports are processed. For example, describe the process for reports based on acceptable and unacceptable behaviors.

Confidentiality and Anonymity
Guaranteeing confidentiality and protecting the voluntary report by deidentification.

BEST PRACTICES / LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Confidentiality and Trust**
   Reporters must be certain that the information will not be used against them; otherwise, they will be reluctant to report their mistakes.

2. **Non-Punitive Reporting**
   The reporter must be protected against legal, administrative, or disciplinary sanctions, except in the case of gross negligence, willful violations, or criminal activity.

3. **Accessible Reporting**
   The systematic approach to safety management requires that voluntary reporting be targeted at all sectors of aviation and members of the public.

4. **Independent Processing**
   The aim, wherever possible, should be to establish and maintain an independent VSRS process.

9. **Data Quality**
   The data quality checking process plays a crucial role in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the reported information submitted to the VSRS. This mechanism helps to maintain the integrity of the data, ensures transparency, and enhances the overall effectiveness of the reporting system.

5. **Feedback and Acknowledgment**
   To encourage further submission of reports, the State should clearly acknowledge receipt and where possible provide periodic status updates and a closure/conclusion to the reporter.

6. **Promotion and Engagement**
   To encourage effective VSRS participation, all participants should be familiar with the process and its deliverables.

7. **Collective Safety Data Processing and Analysis**
   The analysis of collated safety data is a critical component of a successful VSRS. Accomplishing this effectively will lead to positive safety outcomes.

8. **VSRS Oversight and Continuous Improvement**
   Oversight of the VSRS system is an essential component of its continued effectiveness. Conducting audits of the system and its outputs as well as monitoring its overall performance will ensure that it remains effective.

After observing an occurrence, regardless of intentional or unintentional behavior, participants in a Just Culture feel comfortable to report potential safety issues without fear of retribution. In this way, the entire system can **learn** from the experience of the individual.

Ideally, a voluntary reporting system should **complement** the existing mandatory reporting systems