

Appendix D: Risk Management, Providing a safe environment for children and young people

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The protection and promotion of children's wellbeing is the responsibility of all adults. Adults who are involved in child related roles/direct contact with children within the Diocese, parish, agency, or entity of the Diocese are responsible for creating a harmonious and nurturing environment.
- 1.2. Diocesan, parish, agency, or entity activities that involve child related roles/direct contact with children may include the following (*This list and these examples are not intended to be exhaustive*):
 - Activities organised or conducted at parish, agency, or entity level, be they on Church land or facilities or elsewhere, including associated communications over and use of the internet and telephone. These may include children's liturgies, youth group meetings, preparations for sacraments, and altar service.
 - Activities organised or conducted at a diocesan level, be they on Church land or facilities, or elsewhere, including associated communications over and use of the internet and telephones. These may include retreats, youth group meetings and pilgrimages.
- 1.3. Use of parish or diocesan facilities, land, or property:
 - Parishes agencies and entities are an important part of the local communities because they provide a location for community members to engage in a range of activities run by community organisations, local groups, or private providers.

2. Providing a safe environment – Matters for consideration

2.1. Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is a formal and structured approach to identifying and managing risks within fields such as OHS (Occupational Health and Safety) and Child Safety. The Diocese is committed to ensuring that:

- Child risk management processes are implemented to better equip the Diocese, parishes, agencies, and entities to prevent, detect, reduce and or eliminate potential child safety risks.

The Parish Child Safety Officers within the Diocese, parishes, agencies, and entities are best placed to identify and assess the risks to children within their context and are required to undertake child safety risk management in relation to:

- The overall operation of the Diocese, parish, agency, or entity e.g., ensure the recruitment process is followed for employees and volunteers (see Appendix C) including appropriate training, WWCC, Police Checks etc. for employees and volunteers prior to working with children.
- Assessing what are the characteristics of children taking part in parish activities that may increase the risk of abuse or harm: including
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds
 - Culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
 - With a disability
 - Sexual orientation, intersex status, or gender identity
 - History of trauma, abuse, or neglect
 - History of drug or alcohol dependence
 - Mental or physical health issues
- Day to day activities of the Diocese, parish, agency, or entity (e.g., Mass, sacramental programs, youth groups, children's liturgy)
- Stand-alone events e.g., fete, working bee, excursions, fund raising.

2.2. Planning/risk assessment

When planning an activity, consider the possible risks associated with the activity and how likely those risks are to eventuate. Consider what actions you can take or how you can structure the activity to minimise those risks and, if a situation should arise, to manage it effectively.

Consider each circumstance on its merits. See sample risk assessment at <https://www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au/login>). Authorised personnel can contact the Safeguarding Co-ordinator of the Diocese for details regarding the username and password.

2.2.1. Effective Risk Assessment involves the following:

- A keyway to manage risk management is through a risk register, which is a central record of all identified child safety risks and an assessment of each risk. It will also record the control measures identified and implemented to control each risk.
- A Parish child safe risk register can be a standalone document or be integrated with its other risk management requirements such as Occupational Health and Safety and financial management. The risk register can be a hard copy document, a spreadsheet, or a database system, but the most effective format is a table providing a great deal of information in just a few pages.
- A risk register provides an effective means of understanding child safety risks and threats and responding to problems as they arise. It assists with the decision-making process and enables parishes to handle risk in the most appropriate way. It should be a standing agenda item on the Parish Pastoral Council/Parish Child Safety meetings and be available to employees, volunteers, and contractors at all times.

2.2.2. In developing the Risk Register, the following may assist:

- One person may be nominated to lead the development and monitoring of the risk register.
- The development may include consultation with the parish pastoral council, employees, volunteer representatives, parents, and children.
- All parish activities should be considered to identify if child safety risks may exist.

Identify the parishes safety risk:

- What are the concerns or hot spots?
- What could go wrong?
- List these in a register, in the appropriate categories.

Identify appropriate risk mitigation measures or internal controls.

- What strategies, practices, or procedures are already in place to control the risk?
- What additional controls need to be put in place to reduce the risk further?
- List all of these in the appropriate column.

2.2.3. Use the Risk Register to help train employees and volunteers, and to assist in planning and reviewing parish activities.

2.2.4. Review the Risk Register annually to add any additional identified risks, delete those no longer relevant and to update the controls in place.

2.3. Managing High risk individuals

A parish, agency or entity may become aware that a person (high risk individual) involved in their parish, agency or entity has been charged with or is currently being investigated by Police for a sexual offence or convicted of serious offences that suggest the person poses a risk to others (e.g.,

children, vulnerable persons, parishioners). The Safeguarding Co-ordinator of the Diocese is to be notified and will assist with managing the risk. See Guidelines for Managing High Risk Individuals.

<https://www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au/safeguarding-and-professional-standards>

2.4. Risk assessment following an allegation

The Safeguarding Co-ordinator of the Diocese is to be contacted to assist with:

- 2.4.1. Conducting a risk assessment to ensure the safety of children and young people.
- 2.4.2. Updating the risk assessment during the investigation through to the end of the investigation.
- 2.4.3. Final decision of what action, if any, needs to be taken regarding the allegation.
- 2.4.4. Update relevant personnel/parents/children the progress and outcome of the investigation.

If the matter falls under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, (see **Appendix E No. 8**) contact the Safeguarding Co-ordinator of the Diocese on 0438 951 010 who will assist with the reporting process.

2.5. Some useful strategies to mitigate or reduce risk:

Ensure that children in your care are appropriately supervised at all times.

2.5.1. Adult/children ratio

Plan all activities on the basis that more than one adult will be present at all times. Consider how many adults will be required to properly care for the children at the activity, taking into account the children's ages, the nature and location of the activity, and any children with special requirements.

2.5.2. Physical Environment

Ensure that the physical environment is safe, taking into account the age and developmental level of children involved in your activities. For instance, can younger children safely be contained in an area? Are there any obvious hazards such as sharp edges, poisonous or hazardous substances, water hazards or similar? Take steps to manage any risks you identify.

2.5.3. Taking photos of children

The Diocese recognises that taking photos and recording children's milestones within parish life and at Church activities are important. However, some families have legal and safety issues which could put a child at risk if an image is made public or posted online. Before taking or making public any images of children ensure you have the parent or guardian's consent. A sample Consent to Use Child's Image form (Part D) of the consent/incident/complaints form can be located at

<https://www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au/safeguarding-and-professional-standards>

2.5.4. Collection of children

At the conclusion of activities, release children only into the care of a parent/guardian or the person with the express permission of the parent or guardian. A sample Emergency Contact form (Part B) of the consent/incident/complaints form can be located at <https://www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au/safeguarding-and-professional-standards> and used to record who may (and may not) collect the child.

For older children over the age of 16 years where a parent/guardian consents to the child leaving the activity unsupervised, ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for them to return home. If you are in any doubt about to whom you may release the child, or whether his or her arrangements for leaving are safe and appropriate, you should always check with the child's parent/guardian.

If you are taking a child home at the end of an activity, ensure that a parent/guardian has given consent (whether oral or written) and that, as a general rule, you are not alone with the child.

3. Other elements of risk for children to be considered:

3.1. Medical conditions

3.1.1. The paragraphs below constitute general guidelines about the process you should follow if you are called upon to care for a child who is at particular risk due to a medical condition. This process will assist in creating an environment where medical conditions may be effectively planned for and managed. These paragraphs are not intended to replace professional or medical advice for specific circumstances, but to prompt those caring for a child with a medical condition to seek guidance from the child's parents/guardians and from appropriate authorities, and to put in place an appropriate individual management plan.

3.1.2. You should always ask parents/guardians to document any medical conditions. A sample Confidential Medical Conditions Form (Part C) can be located at reporting information consent/incident/complaints form keep completed forms accessible throughout the activity.

<https://www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au/safeguarding-and-professional-standards>

3.1.3. If a child has a condition that requires particular care, an appropriate individual management action plan should be prepared and implemented. You will need to consider:

- Are you able to put in place arrangements to minimise or remove the risk to that child, such as ensuring that substances that can cause allergies (for example, nuts and nut products) are not at, or brought, to the activity? Speak to the child's parents and seek medical guidance about what arrangements are suitable for the condition.
- Are you (or another adult who will be available throughout the activity) appropriately qualified, willing, and competent to properly care for the child, and to deal with an emergency situation should it arise? For instance, if you are caring for a child at risk of anaphylaxis, have you put in place an emergency anaphylaxis action plan and are you or at least one other adult trained in the administration of an EpiPen (or similar device)?
- If not, you will need to consider how to make appropriate arrangements for the child's care. You will need to discuss this with the child's parents/guardians and may need to seek professional guidance. Practical solutions may be found, for instance:
 - If you are caring for a child at risk of anaphylaxis, a parent/guardian might agree to remain with the child during the activity.
 - Adopt a no-sharing-of-food policy and a nut-free policy particularly where there are children at risk.
 - Engage appropriate carers who regularly care for children at risk and ensure they have undertaken appropriate training.
 - Employees and volunteers are required to undertake the Essentials of Safeguarding on-line training.
 - Employees and volunteers who have child specific activities as part of their role are required to undertake on-line comprehensive training.
- When you have formulated an individual management plan, it is advisable to write it down and keep it accessible throughout your activity. Ensure that the child's parents are satisfied with the plan and that all other adults who may be called on to supervise the child are aware of the plan.

3.1.4. If you have any questions about making appropriate and safe arrangements for children with medical conditions or allergies, please contact the Safeguarding Co-ordinator of the

Diocese. Further information about some particular conditions can be located at: www.allergy.org.au and www.asthma.org.au.

3.2. Food hygiene

3.2.1. If your activity will involve eating or sharing food, ensure that appropriate food hygiene is maintained, including, for example, keeping food refrigerated where necessary and adults and children washing hands before handling food. If any child in your group has a food allergy or intolerance you will need to put in place arrangements (as discussed in paragraph 3.1.4) to prevent the child coming into contact with the food. Further information can be located at: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/food-safety>

3.3. Sun protection

3.3.1. Consider whether sun protection will be necessary and, if so, make appropriate arrangements. Sunscreen and a hat should be worn by adults and children when exposed to the sun during daylight savings periods (or in tropical environments, all year round).

3.4. Use of the internet

3.4.1. All parish or diocesan internet services (and particularly those which may be used by children or young people) should have appropriate filtering devices in place. If using services provided by other organisations, ensure that filtering devices are in place.

3.4.2. Educate children in safe and responsible internet practices. The same principles that apply to relationships and conduct generally apply to online situations; for instance, children should never arrange to meet someone they have met online in a chat room or social networking site and must not access sites containing pornographic material. Make it clear that behaviour that is unacceptable or unsafe offline is also unacceptable or unsafe online.

Please see, <https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/online-safety-guide>

3.4.3. As with any unlawful behaviour, any illegal activities conducted over the internet or through use of a computer should be reported to your immediate manager/head of entity and the Safeguarding Co-ordinator of the Diocese.

3.4.4. Further information is available regarding email and internet use at <https://www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au/item/1495>

3.5. Use of parish or diocesan facilities, land, or property

3.5.1. Community groups or private providers (e.g., judo/music/dance classes, other religious organisations etc.) that have direct contact (or likely contact) with children and young people are required to:

- Be provided with a copy of the Safeguarding Policy for Children and Young People (or summary) to set expectations for the care and safety of children and young people.
- Demonstrate/confirm that those involved (e.g., employees, volunteers) have a current and valid Working with Children Check.
- Provide a copy of their child safety policy to the parish, agency, or entity consistent with the requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards.
- Be briefed about onsite child safety.

3.5.2. Using a diocesan parish, agency, or entity facility on a one-off-basis such as an organisation, or members of the general public:

- These groups are not required to comply with the diocesan/parish Safeguarding Policy for Children and Young People. However, usage or hire agreements need to reflect that the hirers are responsible and should take all steps to ensure that children and young people are safe.

Examples of scenarios that would fall under this provision and be exempt from compliance with 3.5.1 are:

- A family has hired the church hall to celebrate a special occasion (e.g., birthday, christening).
- Government Electoral organisation uses the facility for one day to run a polling booth.

Refer to <https://www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au/login> for information on Hall Hire Agreements.

4. Contacts

[Safeguarding Co-ordinator of the Diocese](#)

[Phone: 0438 951 010](#)

[Email: chilsafety@sandhurst.catholic.org.au](mailto:chilsafety@sandhurst.catholic.org.au)