

Policy and Procedures

for the protection
of children

– Parishes

June 2010



The Anglican Church of Australia
– Diocese of Brisbane



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– Diocese of Brisbane**

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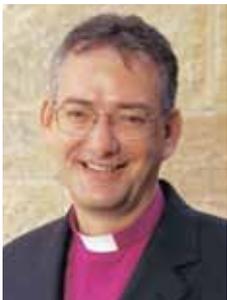
Message from the Archbishop

Church workers are entrusted with the privilege of being servants and leaders in the ministry of the Church. This privilege carries a significant responsibility to ensure that children in the Church are safe and protected from harm.

Our calling by God to share in Christian ministry obliges the Church to take great care in the selection of all workers who are to be entrusted with the care of children and young people. The wider community also rightly expects this.

The Policy and Procedures for the protection of children – Parishes is focussed primarily on protecting children from harm and therefore complements and supports other policies which have been implemented in the Diocese of Brisbane. The Policy outlines the responsibilities of the Diocese and is consistent with the mission of the Church in social justice and community care.

I commend the Policy and Procedures and ask that you do your utmost to ensure that our Church is, and is seen to be, a safe place for all.



The Most Revd Dr Phillip Aspinall
Archbishop of Brisbane

February 2010

Policy statement

The Diocese of Brisbane is committed to ensuring that all children and vulnerable persons who come into contact with the Church will be protected. We are committed to the principle that children and vulnerable persons must be protected and kept safe.

The Diocese has implemented a range of relevant policies and procedures which specifically address the safety of children and vulnerable people and the development of a safe environment within the Church.

This Policy will be applied to all behaviours to support the Diocese's commitment to promoting and striving to provide a safe, supportive and ethical environment for children.

For the purpose of this Policy, a child is any person aged under 18 years. For convenience, the term 'young person' is not used in the Policy.

Additional resources

Documents

- Professional Standards Canon
- Protocol for Dealing with Complaints
- Faithfulness in Service
 - a national code for personal behaviour and the practice of pastoral ministry by clergy and church workers
- Child Protection Risk Management Plan
- Safe Ministry Check
 - a process for screening and selection of Clergy and lay workers

Forms

- Form 1 – Consent Form
- Form 2 – Medical Information Form
- Form 3 – First Aid Treatment Form
- Form 4 – Accident and Incident Report
- Form 5 – Indemnity Form

All the above documents are available from the Office of Professional Standards and may be downloaded from the Diocesan website – www.anglicanbrisbane.org.au/professionalstandards



Requirements

Legal requirements

- The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act requires all persons who are employed or work voluntarily in certain child-related employment situations or who conduct child-related businesses to be screened through the Working with Children Check. The Check is a detailed national check of a person's criminal history including any charges or convictions. It is a requirement under the Act that all such persons apply for and obtain a positive Suitability Notice from the Commission for Children and Young People; and all clergy and volunteers must have a Suitability Notice before commencing in any such position. Exemptions may apply if a person is also a registered teacher or a police officer.
- The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) has determined that, where a criminal record is relevant to a particular position, non-selection of a person because he/she has a criminal history is not discriminatory. The HREOC Act does not cover volunteers except where the voluntary work is related to training or work experience leading directly to employment.

Diocesan requirements

- Acknowledging the legal obligations, the Archbishop-in-Council also requires that all clergy and lay persons engaged in a paid or unpaid capacity within the Diocese, and who are working with children, hold positive Suitability Notices. Exemptions may apply if a person is a registered teacher or a police officer.
- Archbishop-in-Council requires that all parishes comply with this Protection Policy. Regular monitoring and other auditing procedures, external and internal to the parish, will be set in place to facilitate this. Oversight of this process is the responsibility of the Office of the Director of Professional Standards.
- Parishes are to comply with any requirement to obtain and maintain relevant records of internal approvals and other information as required in this Policy.
- Reporting of information as defined in the Professional Standards Canon is mandatory for all workers and other persons who fall within the scope of this Policy. A 'worker' includes any person who is or who at any relevant time was a member of the clergy; a person employed by a Church body; or a person holding a position or performing a function with the actual or apparent authority of a Church authority or Church body
- The Diocesan Council or its delegate – in consultation with parishes – will review this Policy every two years.





Principles

All church workers share in the responsibility to promote and strive to provide a safe environment for children in all parishes in the Diocese. This responsibility is placed upon them by the Gospel teachings of Jesus and the law.

This Policy is based on the following principles:

Protection of children

- The Anglican Diocese of Brisbane will take all appropriate measures to protect children from all forms of abuse.
- Parishes will cooperate with the relevant state authorities in matters relevant to the protection of children.
- Abusive acts by anyone in a position of authority in relation to a child are a breach of trust and professional misconduct – in addition to any breach of criminal law.
- Any sexual behaviour between an adult worker and a child is always sexual abuse.

Rights of children

- All workers have a responsibility to care for children who come under their care and to promote their best interests and wellbeing.
- All children have rights which include the right to privacy, safety, and respect.
- Children are expected to show respect to workers and other children and to comply with safe practices.

Reporting abuse

- Child sexual abuse is a serious criminal offence and will always be reported to the police.
- Behaviour between a child and an adult and between one child and another that can be reasonably considered to indicate abuse or an unacceptable risk of abuse must be reported in accordance with the processes outlined in pages 15-16.
- Following the reporting of any information, any worker who has access to such information has an obligation to observe appropriate confidentiality.
- Where, on the basis of all information available, it is believed that there is an unacceptable risk of harm being done, a worker will not be permitted to continue to work in his/her position.
- In every preventive or protective action relating to abuse, the total wellbeing and best interests of the child is the primary concern.
- The complainant and respondent will be kept informed of progress in resolving any complaint.
- All workers – including the respondent – involved in situations where abuse is disclosed or suspected must be treated in accordance with the principles of natural justice, and with dignity, sensitivity and respect.
- Disciplinary action will be taken against anyone who found to have abused a child.

General principles

- The principles of openness and transparency require this Policy to be readily available to all persons involved in the life of the Church.
- The value of the family unit is to be respected but not to the detriment of the wellbeing and best interests of the child.



Obligations

Christian Obligations

Employees must respect the Gospel values and ethos of the Anglican Church.

Children are a gift from the Lord;
they are a real blessing.

Psalm 127: V 3-5

If anyone should cause one of these little ones to lose faith in me, it would be better for that person to have a large millstone tied around his neck and be drowned in the deep sea. How terrible for the world that there are things that will make people lose their faith! Such things will always happen – but how terrible for the one who causes them.

Matthew 18:6-7

Legal Obligations

Workers are bound by legal obligations as prescribed by common law and legislation.

Professional Obligations

All workers are expected to conduct themselves with the professionalism implied by their position, training and their employment contract (written or verbal). Workers are also expected to behave at all times in a manner supportive of the best interests of a child.

Behavioural Obligations

Behaviour of a sexual, physical or psychological nature, which exploits the special position of trust and authority between a worker and a child is a breach of this Policy.

Such behaviours may include:

- Transporting a child without seeking the consent of a parent or caregiver or without informing an appropriate senior person in the parish;
- Seeking to visit a child at his/her home without the consent or knowledge of the parent or caregiver and/or an appropriate senior person in the parish;
- Inviting a child home unaccompanied without the consent of a parent or caregiver or without informing an appropriate senior person in the parish;
- Sending or receiving correspondence of an inappropriate nature;
- Inappropriate giving of gifts;
- Physical or emotional aggression, violence or bullying;
- Sexual exhibitionism;
- Development of an intimate relationship, initiated by either party;
- Exposure of a child to pornographic material in any medium;
- Inappropriate discussion of matters of sexual behaviour;
- Obscene language, especially of a sexual nature;
- Gestures or actions of a suggestive or obscene nature;
- Jokes of a sexual nature told in the presence of child;
- Repeatedly seeking to be alone with a child; and
- Detaining a child in a locked facility or a facility that does not have immediate access to relevant workers.

Failure by the child to reject inappropriate conduct never implies consent.



Responsibilities

Rectors and Priests-in-Charge must:

- Be conversant with this Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children and the Diocesan Protocol for Dealing with Complaints;
- Ensure that this Policy is adhered to in all parish activities and behaviours;
- Initiate practices to promote and provide a safe environment for children;
- Positively support this policy in relation to the behaviour of any other person that undermines the intentions of this Policy;
- Be conversant with the Diocesan Safe Ministry Check and any legislative employment screening requirements for those persons who are or will be working with children;
- Comply with the Safe Ministry Check and relevant legislative screening requirements for all such workers;
- Ensure through selection, appointment and training that each worker for whom they are responsible understands and fulfils the requirements of this Policy;
- Ensure that workers working with children know that they must refrain from any behaviour which could lead to children being harmed;
- Establish and publicise processes for a child to report to a nominated person behaviour that the child considers is inappropriate; and
- Report any information or allegation of sexual misconduct, including from an anonymous source, against any worker in accordance with Section 1.1 of the Protocol for Dealing with Complaints.

Workers must:

- Ensure they are conversant and comply with this Policy;
- Ensure that their behaviour neither encourages nor supports any behaviour by another person that undermines the purpose of this Policy;
- Report any information or allegation against a worker to the Director of Professional Standards;
- Maintain strict confidentiality; and
- Practise safe behaviours.

Children must:

- Consider the rights and safety of others;
- Demonstrate respect for their peers and for the workers;
- Demonstrate respect for safe practices including following reasonable directions and practices; and
- Where they are concerned for their safety or the safety of others, seek assistance from an appropriate person as designated by the Rector/Priest-in-Charge.

For further information regarding the screening and selection of workers, please refer to the **Safe Ministry Check**



Duty of care

A worker assuming the responsibility for a group accepts a 'duty to take reasonable care'. This duty may generally be described as the standard that exceeds that which a 'careful parent' would exercise.

- A worker cannot completely transfer his/her duty of care to any outside provider.
- A worker has a duty to be reasonably informed as to the safety or danger of any activities undertaken.
- Some activities are potentially more dangerous than others and require that the workers have a higher level of skill and experience.
- Workers involved in adventurous activities must be qualified in that particular activity or directly involve a person with the appropriate expertise.
- Adventurous activities include – rope activities; abseiling; rock climbing; snorkelling; etc.

Insurance

The Diocese holds the following types of insurance cover:

- Public Liability Insurance.
- Voluntary workers/Volunteers.
- Professional Indemnity – Public and Products.
This insurance covers personal injury or loss of property. All voluntary workers are covered under this insurance.
- Employed workers.

Essentials for outdoor activities:

- Remember: the duty of care is higher when taking children and young people out of a familiar predictable environment into foreign, often potentially dangerous, territory.
- Never take children or young people into desert terrain or the mountains unless you are very familiar with, and knowledgeable about, the first aid treatment for heatstroke and hypothermia. The body loses heat very quickly from an uncovered head, or the feet.
- Never lead children or young people into an outdoor area 'cold' – prior detailed reconnaissance is necessary.
- External communications with emergency services is a necessary requirement. What equipment will be used for such communication? What is its range? Who will carry it at all times?
- Consider the how, when, and where of emergency evacuation.
- Basic minimum standards of protective clothing and equipment must be known well before departure.
- The equipment and the clothing of every individual must be carefully checked by the party leaders prior to departure, and if necessary, inadequately dressed or ill-equipped participants may not be able to participate in the activity.
- Where the activity involves orienteering experiences every leader must have advanced skills in compass use and map reading.
- Obtain up-to-date weather information before and during excursion.
- Know how shelter will be obtained if the weather worsens seriously; and be prepared to turn back if appropriate.
- Communicate dates, times, and prospective stage-points to external agencies; arrange a 'check-in' reporting system, with deadline times.



Self protection for workers and leaders

When any worker is working with children and young people, he/she should follow these practices:

Numbers and Gender Balance

- As far as practicable, two workers should be present at all activities.
- Take into account the ages, number, ability and gender mix of the children; and the venue, time, duration and nature of the activity in determining the extent of supervision required.
- Where the activity is of the 'adventure' type, then additional workers may be required and should include suitably qualified worker/s.
- Clearly distinguish between the different levels of responsibility between workers and ensure the differences are understood.
- Workers should avoid out of sight or potentially compromising situations with children and young people; e.g. one on one counselling with the door shut. Glass panels that allow full visibility into the room would be satisfactory.
- As far as possible, a gender balance between workers should be maintained.
- No person under the age of 18 years should be in a position of sole responsibility for any children or young people.
- No group which includes children or young people under the age of 16 should be left unattended at any time.

Inappropriate Advances:

- Children and young people can sometimes make suggestive comments to an adult. They may develop a 'crush' on an adult and they may act inappropriately. Sometimes inappropriate physical contact can happen accidentally.
- It is vital that the adult takes responsibility to:
 - Tell the child or young person that their language or behaviour is unacceptable, and inform the Rector/Priest-in-Charge about the incident, however embarrassing this may be.
 - Record the incident. This may be a necessary safeguard if accusations are made later. The worker, with their leader or Rector/Priest-in-Charge, should decide on what measures will be taken to help the child or young person and prevent a re-occurrence.
- Ensure that no activity includes:
 - secret initiation rites and ceremonies
 - nudity or engagement in sexual conduct
 - the use of availability of prohibited materials (for example, illicit drugs).



Self protection (CONTINUED)

Checklist for self protection

Workers and leaders are required to always:

- Behave in a manner consistent with your position – be a positive role model.
- Follow the guidelines and procedures in this document.
- Treat all children with respect and be aware of their reactions to your behaviour.
- Allow children to determine the level of physical contact they have with you provided that it is consistent with the section 'Appropriate Touch or Inappropriate Touch' on page 17.
- Alert your team leader to situations which require a worker of the opposite gender.
- Report all concerns, issues and problems to your team leader as soon as possible.

Workers and leaders should not:

- Engage in rough physical games with children in their care.
- Use any physical means to manage or discipline a child other than appropriate restraints to prevent injury.
- Hold, kiss, cuddle or touch a child in an inappropriate way.
- Make any suggestive comments to a child.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child is able to do for him/herself – for example, changing clothes, putting on sunscreen.
- Enter sleeping accommodation of opposite gender except in an emergency.
- Spend time alone with a child without another adult being in sight.
- Take a child to his/her home, in his/her car, or a place where no other worker is present.

Safe environment

The provision of an environment that is safe for children where they are cared for and ministered to free from harm is necessary at all times.

At all times, sensible measures must be observed by everyone having contact with children to safeguard their physical, spiritual and emotional wellbeing.

Because we are the Church, we can be lulled into a false sense of security thinking our church workers will never be guilty of harm. Taking measures to ensure children within our community are adequately supervised and have been provided with safe premises, grounds and equipment will minimise possible harm.

Health and Safety:

- There must, as far as practicable, be access to a telephone (preferably a mobile, if within range).
- Adults should be aware of fire procedures. Fire extinguishers must be checked regularly and fire drills carried out, especially when using other premises. Emergency exits must be clearly marked and never locked shut.
- Children with infectious illnesses should not attend an activity; (an exception exists in the case of HIV/AIDS where appropriate protective measures are in place).
- Smoking should not be permitted in areas where there are children.
- Those having children in their care must not use alcohol and/or recreational or illicit drugs.
- Children should not be able to leave the premises unsupervised or alone.
- Children should not be allowed to walk to or from any activity along dark or badly lit paths.
- Parents must sign a consent form before children are taken off-site for activities. (See Form 3 in Form Pack)
- A First Aid kit should be available on any premises used by children or young people. An accident book should be kept with the kit and all accidents recorded in it.
- When taking children off-site, a detailed program, list of attendees and list of contacts should be left with someone in the parish.



Safe environment (CONTINUED)

Administration:

- A register must be kept and be available at all group meetings. As well as attendances, it should include up to date information on parents' contact numbers and any specific medical information on the children or young people. (See Form 4 in Form Pack).
- Activities planned to take place away from church premises must be documented to ensure that appropriate insurance cover is available.

Emergency Plan:

In the case of an accident:

- Remain calm.
- Ensure the wellbeing of the other group members.
- Deal immediately with any injuries, if qualified.
- Obtain necessary assistance.
- Contact members of the group, if appropriate.
- Contact the parents, as appropriate.

First Aid:

The parish/faith community or agency working with children should provide first aid supplies and equipment. The location of the first aid facilities should be made known to all workers. At least one worker present should have a current first aid certificate and all workers should have some knowledge of basic first aid.

HIV/AIDS:

Good hygiene should ALWAYS be practised. Disposable latex gloves and a disposable apron should always be used when dealing with broken skin, body fluids and faeces.

Confidentiality regarding a child's or young person's HIV status should always be maintained.

Camps and Adventure Activities:

- Careful planning is needed to avoid accidents and unfortunate incidents. An emergency plan for such instances needs to be in place.
- Parents need to be fully informed about activities and the name of the contact person. In all off-site activities, the contact person should have details of planned activities or travel routes and will liaise between the parents and the group.
- The off-site location should be visited ahead of any planned activity and a risk assessment and risk management plan undertaken. The plan should be retained and the Diocesan template used as a guide.
- Where it is planned that children take part in activities of risk (e.g. abseiling, rafting, climbing, etc), specific and prior written permission must be obtained from their parents/guardians. Qualified instructors must be accessed for these activities.
- At least one person in any group should have a current first-aid certificate.
- The group leader must be aware of the medical services available in proximity to any activities. This could include: doctors; clinics; hospitals; ambulance service; etc.
- The leader should be aware of the location of the nearest telephone or carry a mobile phone where possible. The ambulance number should be clearly displayed on the mobile telephone. The first-aid kit should be appropriately stocked for the venue and/or activity and checked regularly or immediately after use to replenish stock.
- In the case of a child or young person being injured, the workers must contact his/her parents as soon as possible.
- The doctor or the ambulance must be contacted before the parents if the situation is urgent.
- The parents must be kept informed at all times.
- A First Aid Treatment Form and/or Accident Incident Report will need to be completed for any injury/ treatment given or sustained during an activity. (See Form 5 and 6 in Form Pack).



Safe environment (CONTINUED)

Safety Factors:

Electrical – Ensure all mains-operated equipment is properly connected and correctly operated. Malfunctions should be reported promptly. All buildings should have safety switches. Power points that are accessible to small children should have safety plugs fitted when not in use.

Poisons – All household chemicals, medicines, cleaning and gardening products should be kept out of reach of children and in a safe and secure location. The telephone number of the Poisons Information Centre should be known to Workers and displayed on the First-Aid kits.

Playground Equipment – All playground equipment owned by the parish/faith community or agency relating to children should be checked regularly and comply with Australian Safety Standards.

Fire – A fire response and evacuation procedure should be formalised and all workers and children regularly made aware of it and fire drills conducted. Workers should be familiar with the layout of the buildings and the location of exits and fire extinguishers and know how to evacuate the premises. In the case of a fire, workers will move people away from danger and notify the fire brigade. All efforts to control the fire in a safe manner should be attempted, but the first responsibility is to the children.

Films, Computer and Video/DVD Equipment –

Workers should be aware of the ages of the children and abide by censorship standards.

Smoking/Drugs/Alcohol – Whilst caring for children and young people, all workers will:

- Refrain from smoking at all times while in the presence of children and young people.
- Refrain from smoking inside buildings, vehicles, tents and enclosures.
- Not be adversely affected or impaired by drugs and/or alcohol.

Equipment and Clothing – Equipment is to be checked to ensure that it is functional and safe for its intended use. Suitable clothing and footwear for the activity is to be worn by all participants.

Venue – Workers should be familiar with the venue so that they are aware of potential hazards and can prepare the risk assessment and management plan.

Emergency Services – The worker in charge or designated leader must be aware of the location of first aid/medical services in the area, police, local fire service, ambulance and any other emergency services. This information should be available to all group leaders.





Safe environment (CONTINUED)

Checklist for Safe Activities

Overall Activity

- What is the purpose of the activity?
- What resources are available?
- What am I going to do if an accident happens during this activity?
- What is my emergency plan?
- Are there specific guidelines for this activity?
- If the activity involves food, what plans do I have to maintain its freshness?
- What will I do if there is a change in the weather?
- If the activity involves transportation, how will I arrange this and how will I ensure the safety of the children? Do all the drivers meet the requirements as specified?
- If the activity is a physical activity, do I have appropriately trained people available?

Participants

- What is the size of the group? How many males/females?
- Is the activity appropriate for the ages and abilities of the participants?
- If there is a broad range of ages, have I taken steps to ensure that they can all participate safely?
- Are there any special needs – behavioural problems, medical conditions, food allergies?
- What will I do with the children who do not want to participate?
- Have I informed the parents and caregivers and obtained their permission in writing?
- How will I keep track of the participants?
- Have I considered the children's needs for food, drink, warmth, shelter?

Team members

- How many team members will be required for safety?
- Do I need both male and female workers?
- Have I prepared a briefing for workers and where necessary provided training for the team?
- Do I have a worker who is experienced in first-aid?

Equipment

- Is the activity equipment in safe working order?
- Is the equipment suitable for the activity? Am I using it for the purpose it was designed?
- Does the worker/s using and setting up the equipment have the right skills?
- Do I have first-aid equipment?
- Do I have spare items of clothing, food, drink, equipment?

Venue

- Is the venue suitable for the activity?
- Has the venue been checked in advance?
- Is there adequate space?
- Are there clearly defined boundaries to the area?
- Are there any hazards present; and if so, are they cleared?
- Is the food preparation area adequate and suitable?
- Is the venue secure?
- Is the structure of the venue (if indoor) safe?
- Are there fire extinguishers, safety exits?



Transport

The following steps must be taken before the transportation of group members on any excursion or outing.

Roadworthiness – Ensure that the transporting vehicle is roadworthy and is registered. Driving an un-roadworthy vehicle may be just as negligent as driving a roadworthy vehicle carelessly.

Liability for damage – Ensure that the driver/owner understands that, in the case of an accident or damage to the vehicle, the church/group/agency has no obligation to cover the cost of any damage or repairs. Comprehensively insured vehicles should be the first option but this is not always possible.

Competent drivers – Entrust the transportation of members only to competent drivers with an open licence and at least two years positive driving experience (that is, without any convictions for driving offences and without an accident history). Under no circumstances should children or young people be transported in a vehicle driven by a person with a learner's permit or provisional licence.

Use of private vehicles – Parents are to be informed about the transportation arrangements and given an opportunity to object if they so desire.

Seat belts – Ensure that each participant is wearing the seat belt provided in the vehicle. No person should be conveyed in a private vehicle unless a seat belt is available. At no time should group members be permitted to travel in a private vehicle in which seat belts are not available.

Public transport – In the case of an accident while on any form of public transport, the worker must have accurate records of names of participants with them for the information of the emergency services.

Bus safety – Standing in buses should not be permitted. If fitted, seat belts must be worn. It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that seat belts are worn. It is the responsibility of the worker to determine that the driver has an appropriate and current licence for the vehicle being driven.

Travel in hazardous areas – When travel may involve roads and conditions that would make some vehicles unsafe, the worker should be satisfied that the trip can be undertaken safely, that the driver is reliable and experienced in the conditions, that the vehicle is mechanically sound and properly equipped for the conditions.

Checklist for Transport

- Does the driver have sufficient driving experience – at least two years?
- Does the driver have a good driving record – no speeding tickets, no traffic fines, and no serious driving offences?
- Does the driver have the right type of current and unendorsed licence for the type of vehicle he/she will be driving?
- Is the vehicle fully registered, comprehensively insured, roadworthy and SAFE?
- Does the number of passengers match the number of seatbelts?
- If the route includes travel on dirt or rough roads, are the driver's skills appropriate?
- Does the vehicle have enough – petrol, oil, water? Does it have safe tyres and working lights?
- If a long trip is planned, are two-hourly breaks for the driver scheduled? Should driver change-overs be planned?
- Is the vehicle towing a trailer or caravan? Is the driver skilled and experienced in towing?
- Is the trailer safe? Do the lights and brakes work?
- Do the children know how to behave well in the vehicle?
- Have all parents/caregivers given written permission for their children to travel in the vehicle?
- Does the Rector/Priest-in-Charge know where the driver and passengers are going, what time they will be there and how to contact them during the trip and on arrival?
- Is there an appropriate balance of gender and ages?



Indicators of harm

The impact of harm is not always easy to see. Behavioural changes can be warning signs and workers need to look beyond the behaviour for explanations.

Recognising signs of harm in a child does not mean that harm is definitely happening – the signs may reflect other issues.

There are three indicators of harm of children which may be observed by workers. These are verbal disclosures, physical signs or injuries, and behavioural indicators.

Verbal disclosures

- Indirect hints – ‘I don't like my baby sitter because he always wants to play when I want to sleep’.
- Disguised disclosures – ‘I know someone who has been touched in a bad way’; ‘What would happen if a girl told her mother that her father had hit her but the mother didn't believe her?’
- With conditions – ‘I have a problem, but if I tell you about it you have to promise not to tell anyone else.’ ‘Can I tell you a secret?’

Physical signs

- Injuries, especially if found on parts of the body where it is unlikely a child would hurt herself/himself or where the nature of the injury itself is of concern;
- Poor hygiene; untreated physical problems; poor muscle tone; frequent inadequate or inappropriate clothing for weather; consistent lack of parental supervision; constant hunger, tiredness or listlessness;
- Acting out – sexual gratification by self-stimulation, sexual knowledge beyond what is normally appropriate for the age of the child, excessive interest in bodily functions of other children, verbal references to sexual material.

Behavioural indicators

- Emotional problems e.g. extremely anxious or depressed; severe mood swings;
- Truancy or habitual lateness for school;
- Developmental lags or poor school performance;
- Expressing violent or sexual behaviour in some way that is outside the boundaries of normal behaviour of children and young people;
- Over-compliance with instructions;
- Change in performance or behaviours;
- Underachieving.

For further information, please refer to **Faithfulness in Service**



Indicators of harm (CONTINUED)

Being aware

Workers should be aware of the following in relation to their own and their colleagues' behaviour:

- Harm may be perpetrated by a worker when stress, tiredness, a lack of skills, information and support combine to make the pressures of caring for children overwhelming.
- Given the right circumstances, anyone has the potential to harm a child.
- Given the right circumstances, skills and resources, most people who cause harm can stop the behaviour.
- Significant mistreatment that may result in harm could include: physical harm and excessive punishment; emotional harm; emotional deprivation; physical neglect and or inadequate supervision; sexual harm and exploitation.
- Harm is not always easy to see – behavioural changes in a child can be a warning sign. Workers need to look beyond the behaviour for explanations.

Identifying harm

Workers in relevant state authorities are specifically trained to identify harm. However, they often have to rely on people close to children spotting the signs that something is wrong.

Professional Workers use the following terms to distinguish different kinds of harm:

- Neglect – where children and young people do not receive important aspects of care.
- Physical Harm – where children and young people receive non-accidental injury or physical hurt.
- Sexual Harm – where adults seek gratification by using a child or young person.
- Emotional Harm – where children are harmed by a persistent lack of love and affection, or threats, taunting etc. All harm involves some emotional ill-treatment. Using words aggressively and disrespectfully, which injures self-esteem, may also constitute harm.





What to do when...

When a person tells you they are being or have been harmed:

Being in a position where someone discloses abuse to you may be distressing and difficult. The person may approach you because you are known to them and he/she believes that you are to be trusted. It is a sign of trust that a person would tell you something so personal.

The person is telling you about the abuse because he/she wants it to stop – even if he/she may also tell you not to tell anyone else.

Always take the disclosure seriously! Very few persons are untruthful about allegations of abuse.

Disclosures can be about:

- abuse which is happening in the present – the disclosure may be from the victim or someone who knows about it
- abuse which happened in the past to the person who is disclosing it to you
- abuse which happened in the past to someone other than the person disclosing it to you.

How to respond appropriately to a disclosure:

When a person tells you of harm which has been done to them –

- stay calm
- listen carefully
- allow the person to continue at his/her own pace
- reassure the person that he/she has done the right thing
- tell them they are not to blame for the abuse
- tell them that you will do what you can to help
- report the abuse.

Do not –

- dismiss the concerns
- panic
- ask for more information
- promise not to tell anyone or keep it a secret
- make negative comments about the accused person
- make assumptions or speculate
- disclose details to anyone except the person to whom you report the matter
- under any circumstances inform the person to whom the allegations refer.





What to do when... (CONTINUED)

Each type of abuse and the 'location' where it took place requires a different response.

It is important that the information from the disclosure is communicated to the right person.

There are three options:

- if the abuse is continuing and is within the person's family – contact the Department of Child Safety;
- if the abuse is continuing and is outside the family – contact the police;
- if the abuse is no longer continuing – contact the police.

In all cases, if the alleged abuser is in the Church – please contact the Director of Professional Standards.

It is important to talk the matter through with your Rector/Priest-in-Charge. You may also contact the Director for advice and support.

If the allegations are about your Rector/Priest-in-Charge, contact the Director of Professional Standards directly.

If the person does not want the police informed, tell them that you are obliged to under Diocesan policy but the police will not take action unless the person wants them to.

How to respond to observing an 'indicator of harm':

If you believe you have observed an indicator of harm in relation to a child, you should:

- gently ask the child what caused the injury or caused the behaviour
- if the reason does not appear reasonable, speak to your Rector/Priest-in-Charge or person in charge to obtain a second opinion
- if you are uncertain, keep a watch on the child and let the Rector/Priest-in-Charge know
- if there is no harm but the child is upset, offer support in the normal way
- if you both consider harm is being caused, contact the appropriate agency – this could be the police or Child Safety
- if the harm is being caused by someone in the Church, also contact the Director of Professional Standards.

If you are unsure how to proceed at anytime, contact the Director of Professional Standards.





Appropriate touch or inappropriate touch?

- Hugging from the side, a comforting arm around the shoulder, or a 'good on you' pat on the shoulder are appropriate between workers and children and are important for a child's development.
- Physical touch should be age appropriate. For example, it is generally appropriate for a four- year old child to sit on a worker's lap; but it is not appropriate for a teenager and youth worker to behave this way.
- Touching should be initiated by the child or young person. It should be a response to the child's need for comforting, encouragement, or affection. It should NOT be based upon the adult's emotional needs.
- Touching and affection should only be given when in the presence of other children and workers.
- If a child is hurt or feeling ill and needs to be examined, ensure that another person of the same sex as the child is present in the room while you are carrying out the examination. Leave the examination of his/her private parts to a health professional. Don't force a child to remove clothing for an examination.
- Touching will not be misconstrued when two adults are present and the touching is open to observation. This is important if a worker is required to change a baby or help a child change clothes or use the toilet.
- Appropriate touch will not give the impression or appearance of wrongdoing.
- Behavior of all workers must foster trust at all times; it should be above reproach.
- A child's preference not to be touched should be respected.
- All Church workers are responsible to protect children under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others; and must discuss inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by other workers with the Rector/ Priest-in-Charge.
- Use common sense and good judgment to guide you in protecting the personal space of the children in your care.
- Develop a habit of asking permission from children before touching. If a child is hurt, ask if they would like a comforting hug or not.
- In physical education, physically demonstrating how to throw a ball or javelin or adjusting a harness when abseiling could be reasonable behavior. However, always ask permission from the child before performing the demonstration or equipment check; or ask another student to assist with the demonstration or adjustment.
- In all things, respect the integrity of the child.



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