

Q&A

SAFEGUARDING RISK MANAGEMENT WORKSHOPS

May 2022

Q. Are parish personnel assisting in a parish event required to understand their reporting requirements and responsibilities? What is the best way to communicate this information to them?

- A.** As part of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's Safeguarding Framework Standard 5, 'Robust Human Resource Management', and the new Victorian Child Safe Standard 6, it is an expectation that all clergy, employees and volunteers at a parish be inducted into their roles. Through this induction process, reporting requirements should be thoroughly discussed to ensure compliance with legal and archdiocesan obligations. The PSU have created a [safeguarding induction PowerPoint resource](#) for parishes, which addresses and outlines reporting and other safeguarding requirements for those who perform a role at a parish.

While a good induction process will inform volunteers and employees of their reporting requirements upon their commencement at the parish, it is important to revisit these requirements and general safeguarding expectations from time to time. In particular, if the parish is conducting a high-risk or new event, briefing sessions could be conducted by knowledgeable safeguarding staff or volunteers.

The PSU has a succinct A4 poster that outlines the process for [reporting abuse](#). This poster can be handed out and used in conjunction with the discussion of reporting requirements. Other approaches may be more effective or practical for your parish in communicating this information, such as holding a separate meeting about safeguarding for event staff or hosting an after-Mass discussion, to name a couple.

Resources:

- [Safeguarding e-learning videos](#)
- [Induction session \(PowerPoint\)](#)
- ['Reporting abuse or safety-related misconduct' \(PDF\)](#)
- ['Reporting abuse and safety-related misconduct' \(web post\)](#)

Q. What are the Working with Children Check (WWCC) requirements for those involved in events? When is a WWCC required and when is it not required?

- A.** Under the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, all clergy, employees and volunteers require a WWCC. For volunteers, there are rare exceptions—for example, if a person is engaged in a volunteer role on a one-off basis (totalling no more than five calendar days per year as a volunteer), then they will not require a WWCC. A more detailed explanation of WWCC exemptions is outlined in our [WWCC](#) pdf.

Parishes and safeguarding committees are required to undertake a risk assessment to evaluate the possible risk associated with short-term or one-off roles, to determine WWCC (and/or criminal history

record-check) requirements and to identify strategies to reduce risk to children and young people. Activities that are reasonably deemed to be high risk include activities such as home visiting, overnight stays, camps and overseas trips. Those performing roles that involve any of these activities will require both a criminal history record check and a WWCC. The PSU can assist you in determining your approach to short-term or one-off volunteering or roles.

Resource:

- ['Working with Children Check requirements' \(information sheet\)](#)

Q. Are there any archdiocesan safeguarding resources that parishes can provide to parents?

- A.** The Archdiocese, in collaboration with the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth, has developed the [Protecting God's Children Parent Resource: A Catholic Parent's Guide to Keeping Their Kids Safe](#), to help facilitate child-safety discussions through a Catholic lens for parents and their children. A [suggested reading list](#) is also included.

The PSU has also created [child-friendly safeguarding resources](#) that parents can use to inform their children of their rights and responsibilities, and of the responsibilities of adults in the parish and wider community.

Resources:

- ['Involving parents and guardians in promoting child safety' \(web post\)](#)
- [Protecting God's children resource \(PDF\)](#)
- [Protecting God's children suggested reading list \(PDF\)](#)
- ['Empowering children and young people' \(web post\)](#)

Q. Can parishes access a comprehensive list of potential risks for events or other activities?

- A.** Safeguarding areas of risk that are common to all parishes and that should be considered when planning an event include:
- recruitment
 - selection and training
 - visitor processes
 - safe physical and online environments
 - responding to abuse and/or misconduct.

Within each area of risk, potential risk-management strategies can be implemented. For example, implementing a robust and thorough selection and recruitment strategy will increase the likelihood of suitable employees and volunteers delivering appropriate services to children and young people. In the ['Child safety risk management'](#) resource, other potential risks are also identified, along with a detailed description of the four dimensions of risk

that can contribute to abuse: situational, vulnerability, propensity and institutional risk.

Finally, CCI has provided an [event management checklist](#) and [fact sheet](#) for event risk-management.

Recruitment, selection and training

- Volunteer processes
- Reference checks
- WWCC/Police Checks
- Interviews
- Role descriptions
- Induction
- Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding Policy
- Supervision
- Probation period (staff)
- Safeguarding Training

Visitor Processes

- Risk assessments
- Visitor processes e.g. sign in/out sheets
- Supervision levels
- Contractor arrangements
- Third party use agreements

Safe Physical and Online Environments

- Risk assessments
- Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding Policy
- Electronic Communications/Social Media Policies
- Supervision and monitoring of programs
- Fire safety/Emergency procedures
- First Aid kits, First aid officers.
- Security
- Record keeping/privacy policies
- Video/photography consent forms

Safe Programs

- Risk assessments
- Code of conduct
- Enrolment and registration process
- Sign in/out sheets
- Consent/Permission forms to participate
- Supervision of children
- Video/Photography consent forms
- Ratios of leaders:children
- Safeguarding training
- Identification
- Emergency contact information
- Dietary requirements and allergies
- Transportation of children
- Excursions/Camps
- Oversight of program

Responding to abuse and/or misconduct

- Safeguarding training and refresher training
- Safeguarding Policy
- Responding to disclosures information sheet
- Awareness of abuse and possible indicators
- Knowledge about reporting processes
- Reporting Child Safety Abuse and/or Misconduct Policy
- Risk management processes
- Record keeping/Privacy policies
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints and grievance procedures

While these resources can all assist in identifying risks in your activities, they should not be considered a substitute for a proper risk-management process. As part of this process, parishes should clearly establish the context of the activity, and communicate and consult with those participating in it. Completing this component of the risk-management process will ensure your safeguarding committee is informed of the parish program's features and unique aspects, allowing it to identify risks unique to the parish activity that might otherwise be overlooked in the resources above.

Resources:

- ['Child safety risk management' \(information sheet\)](#)
- ['Event management checklist' \(CCI risk support resource\)](#)
- ['Event management fact sheet' \(CCI risk support resource\)](#)

Q. What should clergy, employees or volunteers do if they are visiting a home as part of a service and outreach program and the individual they are visiting does not answer the door?

A. Before conducting a home visit to a parishioner, it would be useful to have their contact number on hand and the number of someone close to them—friend, family, partner or carer—who could assist if the parishioner fails to answer the door. Prior to visiting their home, you could also discuss with the parishioner what they would like you to do if there is no response. Remember, though, that the more information gathered by the parish on the individual, the more pressing and important it is to consider the privacy of the individual and their information.

If you have arranged to conduct an outreach visit to an individual parishioner in their home and the individual does not answer the door and you have not gathered any contact numbers prior to the visit, then you should call Victoria Police and request a wellness check.

Ideally you might use a lanyard as a form of identification for volunteers or staff conducting outreach visits. The front of the lanyard could contain identification details, and on the back there could be an outline of emergency procedures. This is a practical way to assure your parish staff are aware of how to handle difficult circumstances if they occur.

Q. What should parish personnel do if the 'never alone' rule cannot be followed when visiting vulnerable adults?

A. The 'never alone' rule outlined in the [Code of Conduct](#) states:

Clergy, employees and volunteers should avoid one-to-one, unsupervised situations with children and young people. Activities and/or discussions with children and young people are to be conducted in view of others.

The rule aims to protect children and young people from potential abuse or harm that might go unseen, and also aims to protect parish personnel from the kinds of misunderstandings or misinterpretations of their behaviour that might occur without another adult present. Although not currently in our CAM policy, the PSU strongly recommends extending this rule to vulnerable adults for the same reasons, with the additional consideration of parish personnel's physical safety when alone with another adult.

However, there may be times when the 'never alone' rule cannot be followed for visiting vulnerable adults. In these circumstances, parishes should consider ways to mitigate this risk. For example, if a priest is visiting a patient in hospital, they might consider leaving the door open, which provides visibility to hospital personnel. Further, the PSU also recommends documenting when personnel will be visiting vulnerable adults alone and discussing and documenting after the visit if the personnel experienced or discussed anything that was abnormal.

Resources:

- ['Safe personnel' \(web post\)](#)
- [Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct and Declaration \(PDF template\)](#)

Q. Our parish organises events such as afternoon teas hosted in private homes. What public liability coverage is there to mitigate any injuries or accidents that might occur during such events?

A. As a general guide—remembering that each scenario needs to be assessed individually in the event of a claim—the parish public-liability insurance will only extend to risks that the parish introduces to the private home as the event organiser (for example, if attendees, as part of the parish, were to bring food into the individual's home and there is food poisoning). But the homeowner hosting the event as the 'venue owner' will be responsible for providing a safe space for attendees. Usually homeowners will have some form of home insurance that includes public-liability coverage, but this is not always the case and individual policies will vary in terms of coverage.

For further enquiries, please contact Catholic Church Insurance (CCI) on 1300 655 003.

Q. Is it a legal requirement to have first aid equipment and/or personnel for service and outreach programs?

A. It depends. At a minimum, first aid equipment should be on hand, either provided by the venue or the parish organisers. A risk assessment should be undertaken to understand the potential health and safety risks for the activity, and this assessment should include the extent of the first-aid provisions. Remember that consultation is a valuable component of the risk-management process. For outreach programs, this may involve consulting with the owners of the organisation or establishment you are operating from and determining what first-aid provisions are required of them and the parish. For example, when operating a soup kitchen, manual handling risks such as hot soup, slips, trips, falls, fire and electrical equipment should be identified and first-aid provisions considered to address these risks.

Q. What is the recommendation if there is a fire at a fete? Does there need to be a fire extinguisher or fire blanket on-hand? Is it a legal requirement?

A. Again there is no general 'legal requirement', but under the OHS Act, a risk assessment needs to be undertaken to determine whether these provisions are needed for each scenario. Some variables in these instances may include how many people are attending, what equipment is being used, whether gas is being used for a barbecue, and any other hazards that might increase the risk of a fire eventuating. Note that council-run venues already have fire equipment for community groups to use.

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