

Q&A

SAFEGUARDING RISK MANAGEMENT WEBINAR

24 August 2021

Q. The scope and size of this process is quite large, as well as being somewhat difficult to comprehend. For parish volunteers who have limited skills/experience in this area what can be done?

A. Parishes are encouraged to reach out to our Safeguarding Officer team for advice, support and guidance through this process. The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's website contains a section on [Safe Programs Activities and Events](#). Here you will find information sheets and templates. There are templates for consent forms, permission forms, role boundaries, safe program guidelines, third party hire agreements, contractor information and registers and of course risk assessment templates.

As you work through the risk assessment process and use the templates available, please note that these can be modified to suit your parish's needs.

As highlighted by our panellists in the webinar, the important first step is to start the conversation around risk management. This can be done with parish leadership, safeguarding committee members, those working directly with children and young people, children and families etc. You may also consider networking with other parishes who are on this journey as well.

Please remember that risk management is an ongoing process and risks assessments can be continually improved and refined.

Whilst it is important to work through the risk analysis process of identifying the likelihood, consequences and risk rating, as you monitor and review your risk assessment, you may find that it changes to better suit the context of the program, group, event etc.

To further support you, we also have available on our website an e-learning video module series around [Risk Management Fundamentals](#) which you may find useful.

Q. Can you explain the importance of having a process in place to capture incidents or near misses and how or where people can go to report an incident or concern?

A. As part of any event planning or services that are provided within a parish, there should be a reporting process in place to capture instances when people may have a concern when it comes to the safety of children. A culture of reporting helps minimise risk and assists to manage this important area of risk. Not only this, but reporting processes can help to refine and improve policy. If an incident has occurred due to a policy failure or oversight, this can be rectified by reflecting on what has occurred and determining what policy changes, if any, could prevent this from occurring in the future.

If your parish is dealing with a person/s who have been charged with, or convicted of serious sexual, violent or drug offences and/or other offences that could pose a risk to others, we request that you contact the PSU to support you in undertaking a formal risk assessment. In these instances of [managing a person/s who may pose a risk to children and young people](#) who attend your parish, the PSU will work closely with you to implement an individually tailored safety plan using the risk management principles.

Q. One of the issues I have relates to consequences. If there is any likelihood of a child being harmed, however rare, the consequences are catastrophic. Is this the right way of looking at this?

A. Sadly, harm to a child can have catastrophic, far reaching and ongoing consequences that extend into adulthood.

The best way to look at this is to consider all of the things you have in place to reduce the likelihood and impact of the child being harmed. If it is still catastrophic, then perhaps there are more processes that can be looked at to bring the rating down.

Q. Is there an overall way of measuring and assessing risks across the Archdiocese as well as allowing parishes to input their own particularities?

A. According to the CAM Safeguarding Children and Young People Framework, the [Risk Management Strategy](#) details processes specifically focused on child safety risks. This strategy is consistent for all CAM parishes, agencies and entities and has been adapted from *Managing Risk in Catholic Organisations* (Catholic Church Insurance n.d.). This is also aligned with the national standard for risk management, AS/NZS ISO 31000: 2009 *Risk management – principles and guidelines*.

Using the templates provided, parishes can input information specific to their parish.

Q. Where do faith, prayer and the Spirit fit into these processes?

"The Church loves all her children like a loving mother, but cares for all and protects with a special affection those who are smallest and defenceless. This is the duty that Christ himself entrusted to the entire Christian community as a whole. Aware of this, the Church is especially vigilant in protecting children and vulnerable adults." – Pope Francis 2016 *As a Loving Mother*
Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter 'As a loving mother,' reinforces the duty of the entire Christian community to care for and protect children and vulnerable adults.

see overleaf>>

In this, the year of St Joseph it may be helpful to reflect as Pope Francis does in his Apostolic Letter, [Patris Corde](#) (meaning 'With a Father's Heart'), as to how we may also protect children as St Joseph protected both Jesus and Mary his Mother.

Risk management is merely a tool to fulfil our safeguarding duty. When truly embraced it becomes an integral part of how a parish runs and serves its people – it becomes part of delivering the many programs, services, events and activities that support a child's growth and development within the church.

The Catholic Church has a mission-driven moral and legal responsibility to create nurturing environments where children and young people are respected, where their voices are heard, and where they feel safe and are safe.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's parishes, agencies and entities employ a risk management approach that systematically identifies and assesses risk associated with programs, activities and events involving children and young people to minimise opportunities for harm to occur.

Q. How many people would be a good number to have on a Safeguarding Committee?

In terms of an appropriate number of Safeguarding Committee members, there is no size limit. However, a recommended number would be between 4-8 people inclusive of the Parish Priest who is head of entity. For those parishes who may be smaller or have a limited number of volunteers, often it may be the Parish Priest and a parish staff member who assume the role of the Safeguarding Committee. Similarly, often Parish Pastoral Councils may assume the role of Safeguarding Committee.

Q. Any advice for those parishioners who are affronted to be asked to get a WWCC card and refuse to? These are long standing, hard-working parishioners.

- A. In accordance with the Archdiocese's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, all clergy, employees and volunteers must have a current WWCC. All clergy, employees and volunteers over the age of 18 (with the exception of short-term or one-off volunteers) are required to maintain a current WWCC throughout their involvement in parishes, agencies and entities.

As we know, clergy, employees and volunteers in parish roles represent the Archdiocese and hold a position of trust in our communities. The very nature of a volunteer's role within a parish is fluid, and we often see people rotating through different roles. This could easily result in a situation where an unsuitable adult is placed into a volunteering role with direct contact with children without the requisite check. This could place children at risk and the parish at risk of serious penalties for non-compliance with the WWCC legislation.

The blanket approach of the Archdiocese to WWCCs, ensures that irrespective of whether a volunteer's role involves direct, indirect or no contact with children and young people, all of our people have the necessary checks in place. It also serves to ensure that we all stand united in creating safe environments for children and young people and demonstrates our commitment to safeguarding.

Q. What is the requirement for only using CAM email addresses for groups and events run by the parish?

- A. In accordance with the [Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct](#) that is required of all CAM clergy, staff and volunteers, 'private' communication channels (e.g. personal email accounts, personal social media account) should not be used to communicate with children and young people within the parish for parish purposes. Setting up and utilising a parish email account is just one strategy to put into place. For assistance with this please contact the CAM IT Team on servicedesk@cam.org.au. Further strategies for the use of electronic communication including social media can be found [here](#).

For more information & enquiries, please contact our Safeguarding Officers:

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