

Overseeing Safe People, Places and Programs –

A guide for the Management Committee, Board or Elders

Purpose

The Management Committee, Board or Elders of the affiliated church is responsible for the oversight of all activities with children and vulnerable people within the church, and will oversee a local structure which is appropriate for the congregation size, taking into account availability of suitable leaders, local need and demographic. The Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (the Act) and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011 (the Regulation) has certain requirements relating to these activities. Overseeing safe people, places and programs is a **guide to assist** with the implementation of the policy and is intended to support affiliated churches working through their obligations under the Act.

Adopting the policy annually

To comply with the Act, each affiliated church is required to annually formally adopt (or reaffirm) the Churches of Christ in Qld Safe People, Places and Programs Policy, and to record a statement of commitment in church board meeting minutes.

Here is some suggested wording:

“TheChurch of Christ is committed to providing safe places where people are cared for, nurtured and sustained and commits itself to the care, protection and safety of all people, particularly those who are vulnerable. We commit to ongoing compliance with requirements of the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011, and adopt the Churches of Christ in Qld, Queensland Safe People, Places and Programs Policy. We will ensure the implementation of procedures and resources to assist our congregation to meet and demonstrate its responsibilities under the Act.”

This meets the requirements of the Act to have a statement of commitment to the safety and protection of children, and a child and youth risk management strategy which is reviewed annually.

In addition, you must ensure that the approved processes are adhered to in the conduct of all activities and ministries within your influence and control.

Blue cards

The Management Committee, Board or Elders will ensure that all people working or volunteering with children, or making decisions involving activities mainly directed at or mainly involving children, including the Management Committee, Board or Elders hold a current and valid blue card, unless a particular legal exemption applies.

Affiliated Churches not conducting any activities specifically for or with children should formally minute the decision so that it can be articulated if required.

Here is some suggested wording for a statement of no child-related activity:

“The Management Committee, Board/Elders resolve that they will not conduct specific ministry with children’s activities until further notice. Accordingly, no church board member will be under statutory obligation to hold a blue card for the purpose of their office.”

This decision should be reviewed regularly so that opportunities to minister to your community are not missed. Attending Safe Church Awareness workshops and other trainings will assist all churches to create safe environments and meet legislative obligations.

For more information on blue cards see <https://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au/>

Selecting and supporting leaders and helpers

The Management Committee, Board or Elders must ensure that people who work with children are screened, trained, and supported to provide the ministries they have been asked to do.

Screening of people **includes** working with children checks (blue cards), interviews and independent referee checks. Training and induction applicable to duties is to be undertaken prior to commencement of duties. Safe Church Awareness training should be undertaken as soon as practical and an annual refresher thereafter.

Leaders and helpers should be encouraged to regularly attend a worship service within the congregation and to practice self-care.

Delegations of authority

The Management Committee, Board or Elders may formally delegate responsibility for various duties required to ensure compliance, for example to screen and appoint leaders and helpers, assess and approve activities and programs, and maintain registers and records.

All such delegations should:

- be to individuals who have been screened and are appropriately skilled to complete the responsibility
- be in writing and acknowledged by the person receiving the delegation (copies of delegation and acknowledgement to be filed)

Assessing and approving activities and programs

The Management Committee, Board or Elders is responsible for the prior approval, oversight and documentation of all activities, and must ensure appropriate reporting of incidents and accidents.

Activity leaders are required to document the planned activities (including risk management processes) making particular note of any high risk activity. These activities and risk management plans must be assessed and approved prior to the activity being undertaken, and the activity granted written permission to proceed.

Prior endorsement of activities provides confirmation of proper processes and approvals in the event of an incident or injury and any subsequent insurance or legal action. Certain activities, particularly those that are considered high risk, may not be covered automatically under the church's insurance program.

The Churches of Christ in Qld Insurance team can provide assistance and guidance in relation to insurance requirements, risk management and/or high risk activities.

Transport:

The Management Committee, Board or Elders have a duty of care to ensure that individuals who are asked to provide transport as part of an organised church activity maintain a high standard of safety and care.

Drivers must use a registered, insured and roadworthy vehicle. They must hold a current and appropriate open driver's licence for the type of vehicle they are driving, and maintain a zero blood alcohol level so that activities involving children are drug, alcohol and cigarette free. Drivers must complete a Driver information form and be subject to the screening processes which apply if they are required to transport children. No fewer than two leaders must be present for all transportation of children. Learner drivers and red provisional drivers are not considered appropriate to transport children. Where there is no alternative, green provisional drivers may be considered by the Management Committee, Board or Elders. The Management Committee, Board or Elders should consider the maturity, ability and experience of the driver on a case-by case basis.

Registers and records

All records must be collected, used and stored in accordance with the Privacy Policy of the affiliated church. Templates and tools are provided to assist with this function.

Records about people:

- **Attendees:**
 - Permissions and personal information about all children attending activities and programs must be completed, prior to the event. This provides details to inform the planning of activities to ensure appropriateness, access to emergency contact details of parents/care givers of all participants, and parent/care giver permissions including photos/images. Attendee information form templates are provided. Completed forms should be kept on file, and parents are to inform leaders about changes to attendee information e.g. new allergies.
 - Access to emergency contact details of parents/care givers of all participants must be available to appropriate persons for all activities at the time of the activity.
 - An attendance list is to be kept for all activities for children. Where appropriate, especially in the case of younger children, parents should be required to sign children in and out of the activity. Where transport of children is required, the attendance list must be checked to ensure that all people are accounted for prior to leaving a venue.
- **Workers and volunteers:**
 - All records about a worker or volunteer will be kept in the relevant personnel file. The worker or volunteer should retain a copy of any documentation.
 - Leaders and helpers appointments and training records may be required to be made available to Churches of Christ in Qld and/or statutory authority for audit and/or investigation purposes.
 - A Register of Workers (Blue Card Register) must be kept and blue card details recorded in accordance with the requirements of the regulating body, Blue Card Services.
- **Concerns and complaints about people:**
 - The documents to be kept and shared in the event of suspected or known grooming behaviour, harm or abuse to children are available at www.cofc.com.au/church-resources

Records about activities and programs:

- Approval of activities and programs should be kept and made available to Churches of Christ in Qld and/or statutory authority for audit and/or investigation purposes.

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Records about incidents, accidents, abuse and harm:

- An incident register should be maintained and kept indefinitely, and all known incidents recorded as soon as possible after the occurrence.
- All records and reports concerning suspected or known grooming behaviour, harm or abuse of children should be kept indefinitely.

Sharing of records:

- Unless otherwise required by law or policy, no records are to be shared with any person or organisation.
- Copies of reports relating to suspected or known grooming behaviour, harm or abuse of children are to be shared with statutory authorities and the authorised Churches of Christ in Qld representative.
- Copies of reports relating to personal injury, property damage, incidents and accidents are to be shared with statutory authorities and the Churches of Christ in Qld Insurance representative.

Property and equipment

Church property and equipment is to be maintained to a standard acceptable for the safe conduct of activities. Regular maintenance and cleaning are to be carried out, and hazards promptly rectified.

Responding to incidents and emergencies

An emergency response plan must be prepared by the Management Committee, Board or Elders, outlining protocols in the event of an emergency or critical incident, including evacuation plans and the names and phone numbers of key contact persons. The plan must be made available to all people involved in the conduct of activities. In the event of an emergency or critical incident, either on-site or offsite, the protocols must be followed.

A fully stocked and current first aid kit must be readily available for all activities. All activities require the presence of a leader or helper with a current first aid certificate. All first aid treatment must be documented on an incident report form.

It is advisable to keep emergency contact numbers and the Poisons Information hotline number (131 126) with the first aid kit.

Reporting requirements

Each affiliated church is included in annual reporting which allows us to:

- demonstrate compliance with legislation to statutory authorities
- evaluate the effectiveness of policy, processes and tools, and make changes if needed
- identify areas of excellence and areas where additional support is needed
- complete the statutory obligation for annual review of the child and youth risk management strategy.

As part of the annual review **all affiliated churches** should submit a copy of their statement of commitment (adopting the Safe People, Places and Programs policy).

Congregations conducting activities for children should also submit:

- Register of workers
- Summary of activities/programs conducted throughout the year.

Congregations not conducting activities for children should submit:

- Statement of no child-related activity

Where to find support
<p>Church Support Hotline</p> <p>t: 1800 193 438 e: churchsupport@cofcqld.com.au</p>
<p>Church Safety Consultant</p> <p>t: (07) 3327 1677 bonnie.seip@cofcqld.com.au</p>
<p>Risk and Insurance Coordinator</p> <p>t: (07) 3327 1645 david.smith@cofcqld.com.au</p>
<p>Church Resources</p> <p>www.cofc.com.au/church-resources</p>
Local Church
Minister
Chairman of elders/governance group

