



Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

Policy Statement

The Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide values the dignity of all God's children and takes seriously our role in safeguarding their wellbeing and protection both within the Church environment and communities in which they are raised. The Archdiocese strives to maintain a child safe culture which recognises the welfare and safety of children and young people as paramount. Cultural responsiveness is essential in our interactions and supports the needs of children from all diverse backgrounds.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide will always act in the best interest of the child or young person as demonstrated by our Commitment Statement for Safeguarding Our Children and Young People which integrates the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child as the foundation for child protection.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide an overarching policy framework which guides and gives structure for Catholic Church agencies, schools, parishes and communities to develop and implement procedures and policies which establish and maintain child safe environments.

Principles

The Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide seeks to:

1. Ensure all children and young people are protected and kept safe from harm and risk of harm through:
 - Legislative requirements
 - Professional duty of care
 - Pastoral care
2. Promote safeguarding children and young people as everyone's responsibility
3. Build a culture which prioritises and maintains safe environments for all through policy compliance and review for continuous improvement
4. Provide children and young people with opportunities to be heard and participate in the life of the Church
5. Acknowledge and respond to the particular needs of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including children with disability and children of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage
6. Communicate our commitment of being a Child Safe Organisation with zero tolerance to any form of child abuse and or neglect
7. Plan for safe, open and supportive environments and identify any areas of risk
8. Deliver relevant safeguarding training, education programs and provide guidance to those with roles which engage children and young people
9. Develop and implement protective systems and safe transparent practices which are both preventative and responsive
10. Raise, report and respond appropriately to all disclosures of abuse, signs, indicators and/or concerns of inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people

Scope

This policy applies to all Archdiocesan clergy, religious, employees and volunteers.

Responsibilities

All Catholic Church agencies, schools, parishes and communities are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of procedures and practices which demonstrate a safe environment for all and work collaboratively to ensure effective achievement of a Child Safe Organisation.

All Archdiocesan clergy, religious, employees and volunteers are responsible for:

- Helping to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children and promoting respectful relationships to support the dignity of each child
- Holding a current Department of Human Services child related clearance or Working With Children Check approved by the Screening and Verification Authority
- Participating in mandatory notification training and relevant education which assists to safeguard children and young people
- Reporting and responding in culturally appropriate ways to children and young people who disclose or show signs that they are experiencing harm
- Adhering to codes of conducts and Best Practice Guidelines which establish standards of behaviour and practices, including the principles of this policy

General Definitions¹ in accordance with the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*:

Anyone under the age of 18 is classified as a 'child or young person'.

'At Risk' A child or young person is considered to be at risk if the child or young person has suffered harm, is likely to suffer harm, or is likely to be removed from the State for the purpose of an unlawful medical procedure, to be married or take part in an illegal activity. A child or young person will be taken at risk if their parent or guardian are unable or unwilling to care for them, or if the child or young person is persistently absent from school without explanation, homeless or at no fixed address.

Harm Physical harm or psychological harm, whether caused by an act or omission, includes such harm caused by sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect.

Following are types of abuse-related trauma:

Sexual Abuse Any sexual activity or behaviour that is imposed on a child or young person by someone else. Sexual abuse occurs when someone in a position of power uses that power to involve the child or young person in sexual activity.

Grooming When a person tries to form a bond or a friendship with a child, to gain their trust and create opportunities to start, maintain and hide their sexual abuse of the victim.

Physical Abuse The child has suffered or is at significant risk of suffering serious physical trauma or inflicted injury due to the actions of their caregiver. An injury is considered 'inflicted' if it was alleged to be caused wilfully or as a result of punishment.

Psychological/Emotional Harm The child's social, emotional, or cognitive development is impaired or seriously at risk as a direct result of persistent caregiver behaviour or attitude towards the child, whereby the child's self-esteem and social competence are undermined or eroded over time. This includes the witnessing of domestic and family violence, hearing it or being exposed to the consequences of emotions post violence.

Neglect Characterised by serious, ongoing failure to provide for a child's basic needs, to the extent that the child's development, safety and well-being are at risk.

¹*Safe Environments for Children and Young People – Through their eyes, Government of South Australia, Department of Human Services*

Review

This policy will be reviewed initially in the first 12 months then every three years and monitored through the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide Child Protection Council.

Legislation

Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 and the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016

Supporting Documents:

- Commitment Statement – Safeguarding Our Children and Young People
- National Catholic Safeguarding Standards
- Safe Environments for All Framework
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- Working with Children Checks Screening Policy
- Procedure for Mandatory Notification Responsibilities
- Best Practice Guidelines for Interacting with Children and Young People
- Archdiocesan Code of Conduct
- Centacare Children and Young People Safety Policy
- Catholic Education South Australia, Child Protection Procedures
- National Committee for Professional Standards, Integrity in the Service of the Church
- National Committee for Professional Standards, Integrity in Ministry
- National Response Protocols

+ Pat O'Regan

+ Patrick O'Regan Archbishop of Adelaide

