

ABOUT CHILDRENS MINISTRY

A guide for Parish Leaders to consider safety and care

Get the first five right before you start

INTRODUCTION

This topic guide is to assist Parish Leaders to understand the **minimum** requirements for consideration of safety and care when establishing or reviewing children's ministry. The guide will assist you to identify the key steps and documentation to complete and maintain. All Parish leaders are encouraged to consider their unique environment and program activities; undertake risk assessments and develop plans to minimise harm.

1 CHILD SAFE AND SAFE CHURCH POLICIES

There are two key Diocesan policies which act as the framework for our considerations in relation to children's ministry:

- 1) [Child Safe Policy](#) – outlines how we empower and protect children, guide our volunteers and staff to create a safe and caring space. All volunteers involved with children's ministry will need to meet minimum requirements, which includes holding a current working with children's card.
- 2) [Safe Church Policy](#) - outlines our commitment to minimise risk of harm and abuse to vulnerable people, which includes children and the various ways we do this. There is a requirement for Parish Councils to approve written ministry plans annually

Reviewing these policies can be a useful place to start to understand the minimum requirements for all children's ministry; such as Leaders must have been screened, be currently lay authorised and trained in children ministry requirements; risk assessments and safety plans must be considered.

2 APPROVAL OF MINISTRY

[Approval of Ministry](#) written accountability template tool designed as a checklist to work through the compliance and risk management. This forms the basis for review and approval by Parish Council.

The approval process also requires consider of a safe environment – a [Housekeeping and Risk Assessment Checklist](#) has been provided to assist this assessment. Please add additional considerations unique to your program.

3 CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRY REGISTRATION FORM

The [Children and Youth Ministry Registration Form](#) is to be completed when a child or young person joins a children's youth ministry program and should be renewed at beginning of each year or when there has been a change in a child's requirements.

4 SIGN IN/SIGN OUT

It is essential that a record is maintained of the arrival/pick-up of children from church or Parish activities. The [Sign in/Signout](#) template is expected to be used and retained.

5 REPORTING

Bendigo Diocese requires Parishes to promote our independent professional standards company, Kooyoora who handle complaints of abuse or harm. The Parish should ensure parents and program participants are aware of this mechanism. A [poster](#) is provided for this purpose.

All adults involved with running children's ministry must understand the mandatory Victorian reporting requirements in Victoria. Please see the [Reportable Conduct Information Sheet](#).

If an incident or injury occurs at anytime in a Parish this should be reported to the Registrar using the [Injury /Incident form](#). Please maintain a copy and store securely.

Work towards the following as soon as practicable

6 SAFE COMMUNICATION

Empowering participation of children in church activities is encouraged. Developing a plan for communicating with children is helpful. Safety and privacy of individuals is a key consideration. The Diocesan [Communication Policy](#) and [Electronic Communication guidelines](#) will assist in thinking through and adopting safe communication approaches.

7 APPROVED DRIVER APPLICATION

For children's safety, please advise volunteers that two adults need to be present at all times, including if transporting children by car. If parishioners are to be driving other parishioners or their children around an [approved driver application](#) should be completed.

8 SAFE STORAGE OF INFORMATION

[Privacy Policy](#) – provides guidance on requirements for collecting, handling and storing of individual personal and sensitive information. Information gathered such as Children and Youth Ministry Registration forms, Approved Driver applications are examples of personal and sensitive information and protocols should be in place at a Parish level to protect individual's information.

If there is a suspicion or evidence of unauthorised access to personal information, there is a process for Parishes to follow – please see the [Notifiable Data Breaches – Parish Guide](#)

9 REVIEW AND EVALUATION

[Child Safe Standards Self-Audit tool](#) to help Parishes assess if they are compliant with seven Victorian child safe standards for their children's ministry. It is recommended that Parishes use this tool to identify gaps, prioritise and develop plans to improve over time.

For further information or support please email reception@bendigoanglican.org.au or call 5443 4711.