



Why is this important?

Retaining records of abuse incidents is very important. Good records assist decision-making and may later help in clarifying events and actions taken at the time. The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards require complete and accurate records be created and maintained for all child abuse and safeguarding related incidents, complaints, responses and decisions.

What should we be doing?

Retain & Secure Records

Create and retain complete and accurate records for all safeguarding incidents. Information that may need to be retained includes (but is not limited to):

- Written notes
- Reports
- Letters/memos
- Diaries
- Work calendar
- Text messages
- Social media posts
- Emails
- Photographs/videos
- Security footage
- Call history
- Drawings

Records of all abuse incidents and complaints must be retained for a minimum 50 years (NCSS) or as legally required (whichever is longer).

Records should be stored in a safe and secure location with controlled access.

Wherever possible, Archdiocesan information management systems should be used to retain records.

IMPORTANT - Do not amend, destroy or dispose of records unless legally authorised to do so.

Sharing Information

While information/records relating to abuse incidents are confidential and must be handled with sensitivity, information may need to be shared to discharge duty of care and legal reporting obligations.

Where possible, seek consent from a person before sharing their personal information. This may not be reasonable or practical, for example, where a person is at serious risk of harm or when reporting an offender to authorities.

Personal information should only be shared in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles (*Privacy Act 1988*) which also sets out situations where it is permitted to share that information (section 16A(1)) including:

- where it is necessary to lessen or prevent a serious threat to the life, health or safety of another person, or
- there is reason to suspect that unlawful activity, or misconduct of a serious nature, has or is occurring.

Information/records should only be shared with Archdiocesan personnel who have delegated responsibility and on a 'need to know' basis (e.g. Local Safeguarding Representative, Parish Priest, Manager, Safeguarding Service, Legal, Governance & Risk Office).

All reasonable cooperation should be afforded to authorities seeking information/records in relation to abuse incidents. Information/records can and should be shared where legally required (e.g. where a court subpoena or warrant is produced).

It is best practice to seek advice before sharing information/records. The Legal, Governance & Risk Office can provide advice and assistance (Ph: 3324 3575).

Document all information that has been shared, with whom and for what purpose.