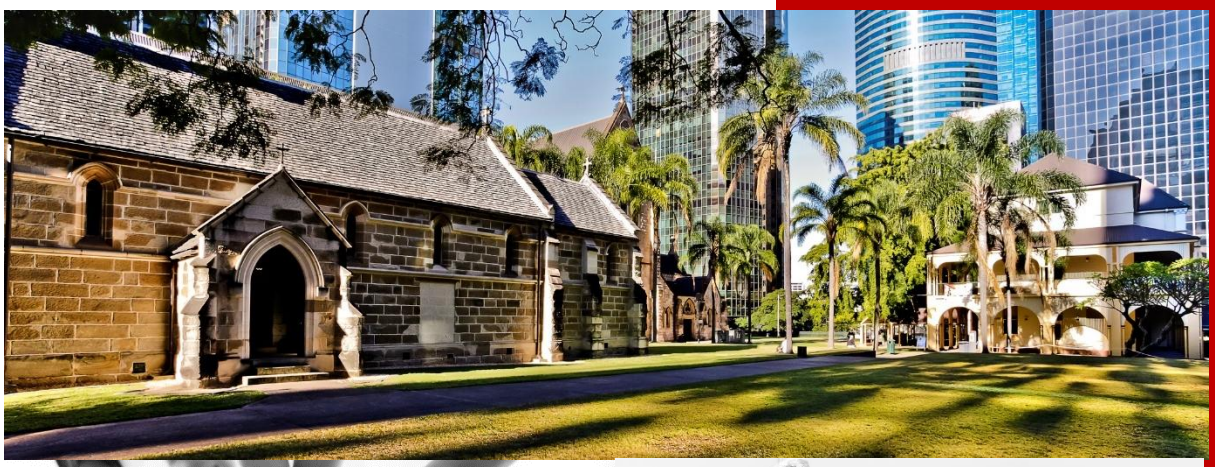
Safeguarding Handbook



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.

Apostolic letter issued 'motu proprio' by the Supreme Pontiff Francis 4 June 2016

ARCHDIOCESE
OF BRISBANE

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement of Abuse Victims & Survivors 3
Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians 3
Safeguarding Prayer 4
Introduction 5
What is Safeguarding? 5
Why is Safeguarding important? 5
Human Rights & Safeguarding 5
Who is a child? 6
Who is an adult-at-risk? 6
What is abuse? 6
Safeguarding Principles & Standards 6
Safeguarding in the Archdiocese 8
Archdiocesan Safeguarding Commitment 8
Archdiocesan Safeguarding Principles 8
Safeguarding Audits 8
Duty of Care 9
Archdiocesan Safeguarding Governance 9
Safeguarding Governance in Parishes & Ministries 10
Safeguarding Responsibilities 10
Volunteer Local Safeguarding Representatives 10
Code of Conduct 11
Worker Screening 11
Safeguarding Training 12
The Effects of Abuse 12
Abuse Risk Factors 13
Abuse Perpetrators 13
Grooming 14
The Grooming Process 14
Grooming Behaviours 15
Safeguarding Risks 15
Risk Management 15
Handling Safeguarding Concerns & Abuse Incidents 17
Receiving an Abuse Disclosure 18
Trauma-Informed Practice 19
Making a Record 19
Reporting 19
Reporting Obligations 20
Information Sharing 22
Safeguarding Contacts 23
Safe Practice Guides 24
Resources 25

CONTENT WARNING

Topics discussed in this Handbook may be confronting or triggering for some individuals.

The information contained in this Handbook is designed to provide a general understanding of the approach adopted by the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane in respect to safeguarding and associated obligations. It is a reference only and is not designed to be, nor should it be regarded, as legal advice. The information in this Handbook is not a substitute for statutory requirements under any relevant State or Commonwealth legislation.

ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

Office for Safeguarding Services

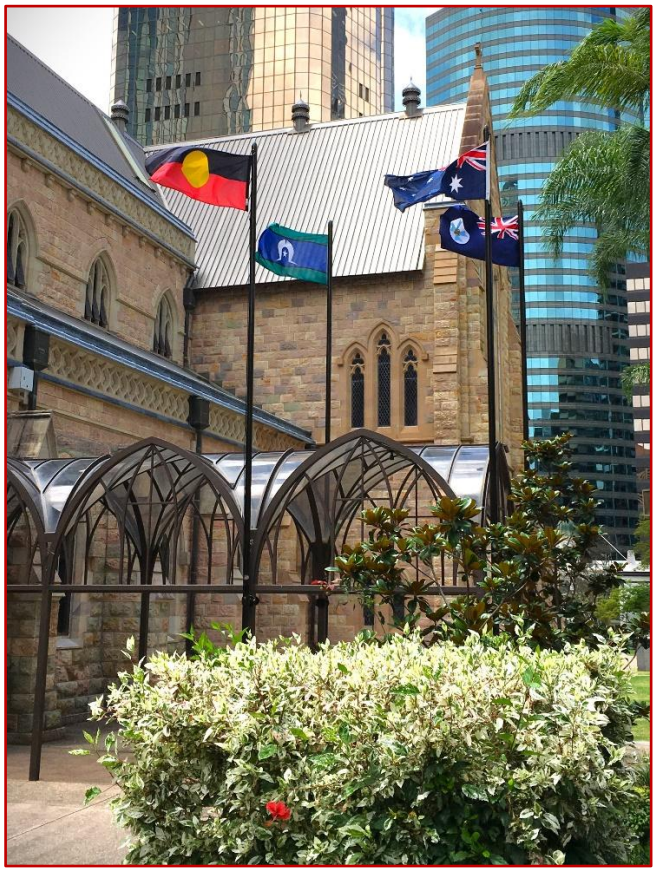
Acknowledgement of Abuse Victims & Survivors

The Archdiocese of Brisbane acknowledges the past failure of the Catholic Church to protect children and vulnerable adults, and the lifelong trauma of abuse victims, survivors and their families.

Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

The Archdiocese of Brisbane acknowledges the occupation and care of the land, waterways and sea by Traditional Custodians and their continual cultural connection to Country as expressed through their history, music, language, songs, art and dancing.

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as having the oldest continuing cultures on the planet.



Safeguarding Prayer

Lord Jesus

May we welcome the kingdom of God anew into our hearts and lives,

Embracing discipleship and openness to others.

You call us to walk with integrity in the service of others. May our service be filled with kindness, and respect for all God's people, giving special protection to children and the vulnerable.

May we seek the truth, listen to those wounded by abuse, and choose to act with compassion and justice.

Give us the strength, to walk humbly and faithfully, and to love one another as we are so loved by You.

Amen.

Introduction

Sadly, abuse occurs, and it is often the most vulnerable people who are victims. Abuse can occur in any organisation, including those that have the best interests of children and the vulnerable at heart.

Good safeguarding practices, that are accepted as a shared responsibility, can reduce the risks of abuse occurring.

This Handbook brings together the key safeguarding information for parishes and ministries. It is aimed at those who have a key role in delivering activities and ministries, particularly for children and adults-at-risk.

The Handbook is not an exhaustive reference but is designed to support the day-to-day safeguarding work of parishes and ministries. Where applicable, it signposts more detailed guidance or resources that can be accessed as required.

The Handbook is complemented by a range of safeguarding resources that can be found on the safeguarding webpages of the Archdiocesan public website at https://brisbanecatholic.org.au/safeguarding/.

This icon is used throughout this Handbook to signify important information or key messages.

This icon signifies helpful resources which can be found in the appendices of the Handbook.

What is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding is implementing measures to minimise abuse risks that may be associated with an organisation's activities and services.

Prevention
Response
Reporting

Fundamentally, safeguarding is concerned with the prevention of abuse and harm so that people can fully participate in, and benefit from an organisation's programmes and services. However, it may also involve taking action to protect a person who is identified as at risk of abuse and harm. In this sense, safeguarding can be both proactive and reactive.

The core functions of safeguarding are prevention, response and reporting.

Why is Safeguarding important?

Organisations that work with children and vulnerable adults have moral and legal obligations to protect them from abuse and harm.

The community expects that children and vulnerable adults will be safe while under the care and supervision of an organisation.

People who experience abuse can be deeply affected- it can have life-long consequences.

Incidents can also damage an organisation's reputation and affect its ability to achieve its goals and mission.

Human Rights & Safeguarding

Respect for human rights is fundamental to any discussion of safeguarding.

Human rights are inherent to all human beings. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets out rights for every human being, regardless of their race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.

Everyone has the right to live free from abuse and other degrading treatment. Safeguarding is important to upholding those rights, particularly in organisations that work with children and vulnerable adults.

The United Nations Conventions on the rights of children and people with disabilities recognise that these people need additional rights and protections to help them grow and develop to their full potential, including special protections from abuse and exploitation.

An organisation that prioritises human rights and safeguarding, is more likely to understand and respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns and abuse risks.

Poster – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (NAPCAN).

Who is a child?

By law, a 'child' is any person under 18 years of age (see section 8 of the Queensland *Child Protection Act 1999*). This includes 'teenagers' or 'young people' under 18 years of age (13-17 years).

'CHILD'

Any person under 18 years of age.

Young children are naïve, trusting and are mostly dependent on adults for their sustenance and care. Teenagers can be impressionable and sometimes participate in risky behaviour.

This makes children especially susceptible to abuse and exploitation. Therefore, they are provided with additional legal protections and safeguards.

Who is an adult-at-risk?

An 'adult' is any person who is 18 years of age or older.

An 'adult-at-risk' is a person 18 years of age or older who is in need of care and support, is unable to properly protect themselves, and is at greater risk of abuse and harm. The vulnerability may be permanent, temporary, or transient.

'ADULT-AT-RISK'
A person 18 years of age or older who is in need of care and support, is unable to properly protect themselves, and is at greater risk of abuse

Adults-at-risk may include for example, some older people, some people with a disability, a person suffering a mental illness, the homeless, refugees, and people suffering grief.

What is abuse?

Abuse is the serious mistreatment of a person which causes, or is likely to cause them harm.

'ABUSE'
Serious mistreatment of a person which causes, or is likely to cause them harm.

Abuse can be deliberate or occur through negligence. It can occur face-to-face or online.

Abuse can also occur through a single act. The act does not need to be repeated to amount to abuse.

The most recognised types of abuse are:

- physical abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- psychological/emotional abuse; and
- neglect.

Domestic and Family Violence is abuse that occurs in the context of intimate or family relationships. Children exposed to domestic and family violence can experience harmful levels of stress and trauma.

Spiritual or religious abuse can also occur in churches and faith-based organisations.

Fact Sheet - Types & Signs of Abuse.

Safeguarding Principles & Standards

The following Principles and Standards inform safeguarding in the Archdiocese:

Universal Safeguarding Guidelines Framework

The Universal Safeguarding Guidelines Framework was developed by the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. The Framework sets out safeguarding principles which serve as a model to shape safeguarding standards across the church internationally.

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

The National Principles provide a nationally consistent approach to embedding child safe cultures within organisations that engage with children. The Principles were developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission and have been endorsed by all Commonwealth, State and Territory governments.

Queensland Child Safe Standards

The *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* establishes a set of Child Safe Standards for Queensland that are mandatory for organisations that work with children, including Religious Bodies. The Act also introduces a Reportable Conduct Scheme for the reporting, investigation, and oversight of allegations of child abuse within organisations that work with children. The Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme satisfy the intent of recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse.

National Catholic Safeguarding Standards

The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards have been developed to give effect to the commitment by all Catholic Church entities to ensure the safety of all who encounter the Church, with a focus on children and adults-at-risk. The Standards are aligned with the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. The Standards represent best safeguarding practice for Church entities to apply in parishes, schools, welfare services and other ministries and services. The Standards are:

Standard 1 - Committed leadership, governance and culture.

Standard 2 - Children and adults are safe, informed and participate.

Standard 3 - Partnering with families, carers and communities.

Standard 4 - Equity is promoted and diversity is respected.

Standard 5 - Robust human resource management.

Standard 6 - Effective complaints management.

Standard 7 - Ongoing education and training.

Standard 8 - Safe physical and online environments.

Standard 9 - Continuous improvement.

Standard 10 - Policies and procedures support the safety of children and adults.

The Archdiocese has adopted the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. The Standards apply to all agencies, parishes, ministries and services under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop.

Safeguarding in the Archdiocese

The Archdiocese recognises the inherent dignity and rights of all people, regardless of their age, gender, race, religious beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background. Everyone involved in Archdiocesan activities, ministries and services has the right to protection from abuse, exploitation and harm. As such, safeguarding is part of the Archdiocese's primary duty of care.

All Archdiocesan workers including clergy, religious, employees and volunteers, and all Archdiocesan partners and third-party service providers share responsibility for safeguarding.

Archdiocesan Safeguarding Commitment

The Archdiocese has *zero tolerance* for all forms of abuse and is committed to promoting and protecting the welfare and human rights of everyone involved in, or affected by, Archdiocesan activities, ministries and services.

Zero tolerance for all forms of abuse.

The safety and wellbeing of children and adults-at-risk is paramount.

Poster - Archdiocesan Safeguarding Commitment.

Archdiocesan Safeguarding Principles

The following principles guide safeguarding practice in the Archdiocese:

Prevention- The primary aim of safeguarding is to prevent abuse and harm.

Protection- The safety and wellbeing of children and adults that may be at increased risk of abuse and harm is paramount.

Shared Responsibility- Safeguarding is a collective responsibility at all levels of the Archdiocese and its agencies, parishes, ministries and services. It is best accomplished by all Archdiocesan workers, partners and third-party service providers working in partnership and collaboration.

Empowerment- Those involved in, or affected by Archdiocesan activities, ministries and services are empowered to express their views on safeguarding policies, procedures and practices. The views of children and adults-at-risk are taken seriously and, where developmentally appropriate, they or their guardian participate in decision-making processes affecting them.

Risk Management- Risks of abuse and harm associated with Archdiocesan activities, ministries and services are actively identified and managed. Both physical and online environments are managed to minimise the opportunity for abuse and harm to occur.

Responsiveness- All suspicions, disclosures, complaints and incidents of abuse and harm are responded to promptly and effectively.

People-centred- A pastoral and trauma-informed approach is adopted in all interactions with individuals affected by abuse and harm.

Accountability – All Archdiocesan workers maintain proper personal, professional and pastoral boundaries in their interactions and relationships with others, especially children and adults-at-risk, and are accountable for their actions, inactions and decisions.

Safeguarding Audits

The Archdiocese is committed to compliance with the Safeguarding Framework and continually improving its safeguarding practices.

The Office for Safeguarding Services regularly undertakes audits of parishes and ministries, and commissions an external safeguarding audit annually. The findings of external audits are reported to the Archbishop and published on the Archdiocesan website.

Compliance with the Safeguarding Framework and associated safeguarding policies, procedures and practices is overviewed by the Archdiocesan Ministries and Services Council and the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Serious non-compliance with safeguarding policies, procedures and practices is reported to the Vicar General and may be grounds for disciplinary action.

Duty of Care

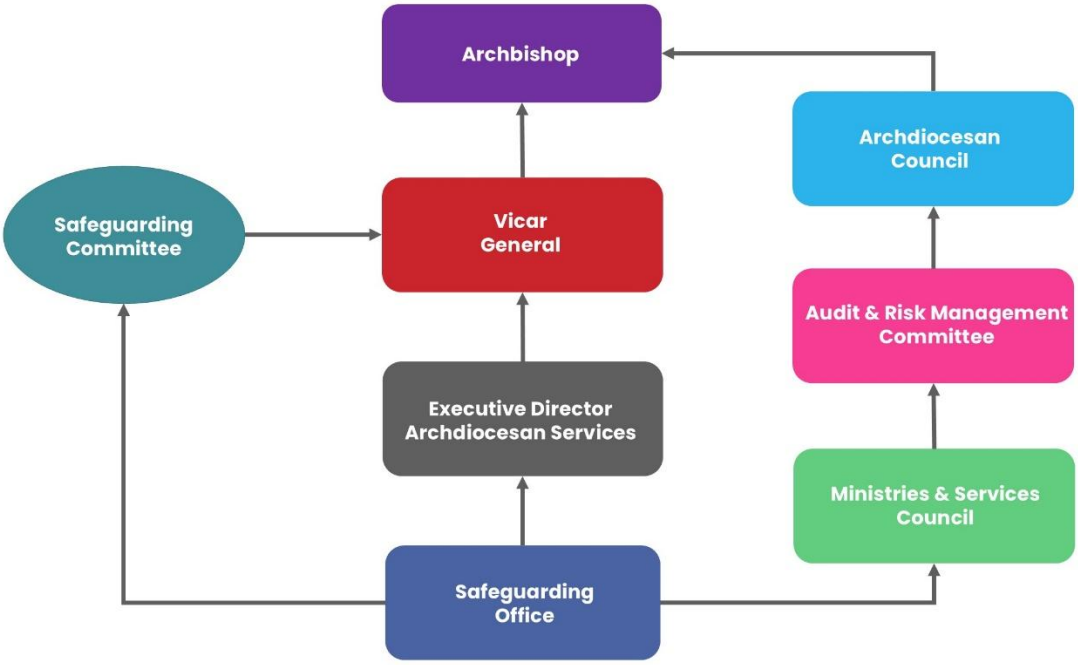
Duty of care is a civil legal principle that applies to all individuals and organisations. It is also known as the law of negligence. It creates a legal obligation to take reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable harm to others. When a duty of care is breached it means that someone has done something, or failed to do something, which caused injury to another person. That person is said to have breached their duty of care and can be legally liable for that injury and associated loss.

Implementing adequate safeguarding measures and ensuring workers, including volunteers, follow safeguarding policies and procedures can help to satisfy duty of care.

All Archdiocesan workers have a duty of care when working for the Archdiocese, including those in a vocation, employees and volunteers.

Archdiocesan Safeguarding Governance

The Archbishop is the canon law and civil steward of the Archdiocese and as such has collective and ultimate responsibility for safeguarding within the Archdiocese. However, the Archdiocese has established administrative groups to support and advise the Archbishop on safeguarding. The below chart depicts the safeguarding governance arrangements within the Archdiocese.



Safeguarding Governance in Parishes & Ministries

Under canon law, a Parish Priest is responsible for leadership and managing the affairs of the parish community, including implementation and compliance with safeguarding policies, procedures and practices.

The Parish Priest should be assisted by the Parish Pastoral Council or other competent leadership group to overview safeguarding implementation and compliance. Some parishes or ministries may establish a dedicated Safeguarding Committee for this purpose.

The role of the Pastoral Council, in respect to safeguarding, should be to:

- Demonstrate leadership and promote good safeguarding practices within the parish.
- Overview implementation and compliance with Archdiocesan safeguarding policies, procedures and practices.
- Support and advise the Parish Priest in respect to implementation and compliance with Archdiocesan safeguarding policies, procedures and practices.
- Overview, monitor and manage safeguarding risks associated with parish activities, ministries and services.
- Recommend appointments to the Local Safeguarding Representative role.
- Support and advise the Parish Priest in respect to safeguarding concerns and suspected abuse incidents.

Safeguarding should be a standing agenda item for Pastoral Council meetings. The Council should receive regular reports from the Local Safeguarding Representative on safeguarding issues.

Safeguarding Responsibilities

Safeguarding is a collective responsibility. Everyone must comply with safeguarding policies, procedures and practices and model behaviours that support a safe culture. Everyone has a role to play in safeguarding.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Leaders are responsible for actively promoting a culture of safeguarding and ensuring that sufficient resources are provided to implement and comply with safeguarding policies, procedures and practices.

Local Safeguarding Representatives are responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation and compliance with safeguarding policies, procedures and practices. They may also be responsible for responding to and handling safeguarding concerns and abuse incidents.

Employees, volunteers and contractors are responsible for implementing and complying with safeguarding policies, procedures and practices within the activities, ministries and services they are responsible for.

Children and vulnerable adults can help by following safeguarding rules and raising concerns (where they have capacity to do so).

Parents, carers and guardians play a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable adults by supporting safeguarding practices and raising concerns.

Volunteer Local Safeguarding Representatives

Volunteer Local Safeguarding Representatives are important members of the safeguarding cohort within the Archdiocese. They assist in promoting safeguarding, maintaining safe environments, and achieving compliance with safeguarding policies, procedures and practices.

Parishes and ministries that work with children or adults-at-risk should appoint a Local Safeguarding Representative. As a key volunteer role, the appointment of a Local Safeguarding Representative should be overviewed and endorsed by the relevant leadership group (e.g. Pastoral Council).

Position Description – Volunteer Local Safeguarding Representative.

Code of Conduct

How workers behave can influence how an organisation is perceived and affect its ability to achieve its objectives or mission. Many organisations set out worker behaviour standards in a Code of Conduct.

The purpose of a Code of Conduct is to link worker behaviour with the values and mission of the organisation, guide their behaviour, and assist them in decision-making.

Safe Behaviour Code

The Archdiocese has a Safe Behaviour Code which sets out the behaviours expected of all Archdiocesan workers when interacting with children and adults-at-risk. The Code applies to clergy, religious, employees, contractors and volunteers and must be signed by all Archdiocesan workers.

There is no circumstance under which it is acceptable for an Archdiocesan worker to deliberately breach expected standards of behaviour, particularly towards children and adults-at-risk.

Breaches will be addressed and may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal and reporting to Church and statutory authorities.

Archdiocesan Safe Behaviour Code.

Integrity in our Common Mission Code of Conduct

Integrity in our Common Mission is the national Code of Conduct for individuals exercising pastoral ministry in the Dioceses of the Catholic Church in Australia. This includes bishops, priests, deacons, seminarians, religious and lay men and women who exercise a pastoral ministry in the name of a Diocese, its parishes, ministries, services or agencies. The pastoral ministry may be by appointment or a voluntary role.

The objectives of the Code of Conduct are to support those who exercise pastoral ministry to:

- be visibly accountable as witnesses and ministers of the Church's mission;
- protect children and adults from abuse;
- respond appropriately to instances of abuse and professional misconduct; and
- care for themselves and one another.

Any person performing pastoral work at the request of, or under the ultimate supervision of, a diocesan bishop must comply with the national Code of Conduct.

Breaches of behaviour standards will be addressed and may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal and reporting to Church and statutory authorities.

Worker Screening

Worker screening is a key measure for safeguarding people from abuse and harm. Screening helps to ensure that workers do not pose a risk to the safety and well-being of the people they work or interact with, particularly children and adults-at-risk. Legal worker screening checks include:

- National criminal history checks;
- Working with children (Blue Card) checks;
- Disability worker (Yellow Card) checks; and
- National Disability Insurance Scheme worker screening checks.

Other screening checks adopted by the Archdiocese include (but are not limited to):

- Referee checks;

- Child-safe interview questions;
- a Restricted Person Declaration *(Working with Children (Risk management & Screening) Act 2000)*;
- a Prior Conduct Declaration;
- a Good Standing Declaration (visiting clergy); and
- Australian Catholic Ministries Register checks (visiting clergy).

Parishes and ministries are responsible for ensuring that all workers (clergy, religious, employees, contractors and volunteers) are appropriately screened before commencing work.

Refer to the Archdiocesan Criminal History Screening Policy and associated procedure and the Volunteer Safeguarding Accreditation Requirements standard.

Volunteer Safeguarding Accreditation Requirements Matrix.

Safeguarding Training

It is vital that all Archdiocesan workers understand their safeguarding responsibilities and are equipped with the knowledge and skills to safeguard others and respond to incidents. The completion of safeguarding training is a requirement under the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.

All Archdiocesan workers are required to complete safeguarding training.

All Archdiocesan workers undertake an induction as part of the onboarding process which includes key safeguarding information. Workers are also required to complete Safeguarding Training on commencement, and every two (2) years thereafter.

All visiting clergy and religious are also required to complete Safeguarding Training before commencing work/ministry within the Archdiocese.

The Effects of Abuse

Abuse can cause serious and lasting trauma. Trauma can result from a single adverse event or repeated events that threaten to overwhelm a person's ability to cope. Some other common effects include:

- low self esteem;
- increased fear, guilt and self-blame;
- mental health disorders (e.g. anxiety, post-traumatic stress, depression);
- self-harming or suicidal thoughts;
- learning disorders;
- violent and aggressive behaviour;
- drug and alcohol abuse/dependency;
- difficulty forming relationships with others; and
- trust and intimacy issues.

Abuse can cause serious and lasting trauma.

Many people who experience abuse show remarkable resilience. However, many are left struggling day to day with their health, wellbeing, emotions, relationships, and sense of self and identity. It's important to note that individuals will be affected differently by abuse, irrespective of the severity of the abuse suffered. It's best to avoid assumptions about how people are affected by abuse.

Fact Sheet - Trauma and its Impacts (Blue Knot Foundation).

Abuse Risk Factors

Children

Children and young people, particularly the very young, may be especially vulnerable to abuse. Generally, this is because they have little life experience, can be naïve and gullible, and are highly dependent upon adults for their care and development. Some factors that may make children more vulnerable to abuse include:

- their age and developmental stage (e.g. being a young child or teenager);
- an impairment or disability;
- fractured family circumstances;
- poor parental supervision;
- low self-esteem;
- social isolation; and
- a poor understanding of sexual behaviour.

Adults

Any adult may become vulnerable at any time in their life due to many different circumstances. However, those with higher care and support needs are generally considered at increased risk of abuse. Some factors that may make adults more vulnerable to abuse include:

- a disability (particularly an intellectual disability);
- a physical incapacity;
- a cognitive impairment (such as dementia);
- communication difficulties;
- residing in a shared living situation;
- a low attachment with family;
- social isolation;
- a high reliance on care givers for critical support or personal care;
- a highly dependent care giver (often financially dependent); and
- having a care giver with alcohol or substance abuse problems.

One factor alone does not necessarily make a person vulnerable to abuse, but a combination of risk factors is likely to increase their vulnerability.

Abuse Perpetrators

Unfortunately, a considerable amount of abuse goes undisclosed making it difficult to develop an accurate picture of who may commit abuse. False beliefs about abuse perpetrators can also hinder safeguarding efforts. Understanding more about who might perpetrate abuse can help prevent, detect, and stop abuse.

The reality is, there is no typical profile of an abuse perpetrator. They come from all backgrounds and can be male or female, adult or child. However, there are some statistically consistent characteristics.

Most abuse is perpetrated by someone close to the victim, such as a parent or carer. However, abuse can be perpetrated by others who are known to the victim, and who have some level of responsibility for, or influence over them. This is not surprising given that these people have the most access to, and close contact with the victims, and can exercise control over them. While perpetrators are most likely known to the victim, abuse by someone unknown to the victim or a stranger, can occur and should not be discounted.

Abuse perpetrators are most likely known to and trusted by the victim.

Abuse perpetrators are often highly trusted by the victim, their family and carers. They may also be in a position of authority, such as a teacher, coach, or religious leader.

It is also likely that the perpetrator is a person who has regular contact with the victim, and who is typically not closely monitored during these interactions.

Children with Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Unfortunately, some children may develop harmful sexual behaviours and those who work with children should be able to distinguish between healthy and harmful sexual behaviours.

Developmentally appropriate sexual behaviour in young children is usually curious and playful, and involves children of a similar age and ability. It is not aggressive and does not cause harm.

Harmful sexual behaviour by children is developmentally inappropriate or sexually coercive, aggressive or predatory towards others.

Examples of harmful sexual behaviour by children include:

- simulating aggressive sexual activity in play;
- excessive or public masturbation;
- frequent inappropriate nudity or exposing genitals to others; and
- sexual behaviour towards much younger, or less able children.

(Final Report: Volume 10, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017)

Grooming

Grooming is the deliberate process of conditioning a child, and those responsible for the child's care and wellbeing, to create an opportunity for sexual contact with the child.

Grooming is mostly associated with the sexual abuse of children, but it may also apply to the sexual abuse of vulnerable adults.

Having an awareness of the grooming process and behaviours can reduce opportunities for it to occur.

The Grooming Process

The grooming process is likely to involve the following steps:

- When grooming a child, the perpetrator will seek to gain the child's trust despite intending to later betray it.
- They may also seek to gain the trust of protective adults, colleagues and the organisation to get unsupervised access to a child.
- They may give the child gifts or preferential treatment to establish what appears to the child to be a 'special' relationship.
- They may encourage the child to meet with them alone or outside the organisation where they can't be seen.
- They may contact the child on their personal devices where their contact is less likely to be monitored.
- They may test the child's tolerance for physical touching with the intention of normalising this kind of contact.
- They may encourage the child to break rules, such as smoke cigarettes, so the child becomes reluctant to tell anyone what they've been doing.
- They may show the child pornography in an attempt to reduce the child's sexual inhibitions.
- They may test the child's willingness to keep secrets and may also make threats to ensure that secrecy.
- They may convince the child that even if they disclose what is happening, no one will believe them.

The purpose of grooming is always the same - to remove the child from the supervision of caring or protective adults, and make them less likely to report abuse.

Grooming Behaviours

Some grooming behaviours include:

- Forming a 'special relationship' with a child.
- Finding reasons to be alone regularly with a child.
- Giving a child special privileges, gifts, money.
- Being overly familiar with a child.
- Touching a child unnecessarily and repeatedly.
- Sharing and keeping intimate secrets with a child.
- Being sexually suggestive with a child.
- Exposing a child to nudity or pornography.

'Grooming' is the process of conditioning a child for sexual contact.

Safeguarding Risks

A safeguarding risk is any situation or circumstance that creates a hazard or opportunity for abuse and harm to occur.

Safeguarding risks can arise at the operational and organisational levels. They are often identified too late, causing organisations to respond to incidents rather than preventing abuse and harm from occurring.

Operational Safeguarding Risks

Some operational safeguarding risks include:

- A lack of or inadequate safeguarding policies and procedures.
- A lack of safeguarding training for staff and volunteers.
- Complacent risk management practices.
- Inadequate supervision/monitoring of activities and services.
- Participation of unsuitable/unsafe individuals in activities and services.
- Not responding to safeguarding concerns and incidents.

How, when, where and with whom activities are conducted can create safeguarding risks.

Organisational Safeguarding Risks

Some organisational safeguarding risks include:

- A high-level of authoritative leadership.
- Poor leadership in safeguarding.
- A poor safeguarding culture.
- A tendency to ignore or downplay concerns and incidents.
- A tendency to prioritise the organisation's reputation when incidents occur.
- Failing to satisfy legal, regulatory and industry obligations/standards relevant to safeguarding.

Risk Management

Effective risk management is critical to preventing abuse and harm. How, when, where, and with whom activities, ministries and services are conducted can create abuse risks. Taking action to manage reasonably foreseeable risks of abuse is of paramount importance and goes to satisfying duty of care.

All workers (including volunteers) are responsible and accountable for managing risks of abuse in so far as is reasonably practicable, within their area of responsibility. Parishes, ministries and service are expected to assess all activities for abuse risks, especially those involving children and adults-at-risk. This includes risks present in the physical and online environments.

RISK MANAGEMENT
1. *Identify Risks*
2. *Evaluate Risks*
3. *Implement Controls*
4. *Review Controls*

The Archdiocese has adopted the standard risk management process to systematically manage risks. The risk management process involves:

1. Identifying potential abuse risks.
2. Evaluating and rating those risks (Likelihood + Consequences = Risk Rating).
3. Implementing appropriate controls (safeguarding measures) to remove or reduce those risks.
4. Reviewing the effectiveness of the controls.

Risk Assessment Template.

High-risk Activities & Special Events

High-risk or special events, due to their nature, require special planning to ensure that appropriate risk control measures are implemented to protect children and adults-at-risk. What is deemed to be a high-risk or special event will be dependent on the nature of the event, activities undertaken, people involved and the location or environment.

Parishes and ministries are responsible for determining which events are classified as high-risk or a special event. The following factors (individually or in combination) are likely to increase the level of risk associated with an event to high-risk:

- The involvement of external people.
- The involvement of external organisations/entities (including religious entities).
- The involvement of a large number of people.
- Accommodating children and adults-at-risk overnight or for longer periods of time.
- Using an external venue or destination.
- Transporting children or adults-at-risk.
- One-to-one interactions between adults and children or adults-at-risk.
- Physical contact activities/interactions.
- Online activities/interactions.
- Hazards presented by the physical environment.
- Physically hazardous activities.
- Emotionally/psychologically hazardous activities.

* Not an exhaustive list of factors.

Examples of high-risk or special events involving children or adults-at-risk include (but are not limited to):

- Parish fetes.
- Excursions.
- Overnight camps/retreats.
- Refugee accommodation.
- Private home visits.
- Billeting.
- Personal/private one-to-one counselling.
- Pilgrimages.

- Jumping castles.
- Bush walks.
- Rock climbing.
- Ropes courses.
- Water-based activities.
- Horse riding.

Full risk management plans must be prepared and approved for high-risk activities or special events. Risk assessments and risk management plans are to be documented and retained.

Safeguarding Risk Inventory.

Handling Safeguarding Concerns & Abuse Incidents

The Archdiocese has moral, ethical and legal duties to respond effectively to all safeguarding concerns and abuse incidents. Incidents may arise in a number of ways including through personal observation, a disclosure by a victim, an account from a concerned party, a formal complaint or claim, or an anonymous report. A prompt and effective response may stop abuse from occurring or prevent further harm.

The following points are a guide to responding to and handling safeguarding concerns and abuse incidents:

- Act promptly on all concerns and incidents. Quick action may stop abuse from occurring or prevent further harm.
- Prioritise the safety and well-being of anyone who may be at risk of harm.
- If necessary, take appropriate action to protect someone who is at immediate risk, such as removing them from the situation.
- If someone is at immediate risk of serious harm, call the police or dial triple zero '000' emergency.
- Report all concerns and incidents as soon as possible to a senior worker (e.g. Parish Priest), or the volunteer Local Safeguarding Representative and the Office for Safeguarding Services.
- Report all suspected child abuse incidents directly to the Office for Safeguarding Services without delay.
- Follow Archdiocesan reporting protocols.
- Comply with all legal reporting requirements.
- Make a written record of the concern or incident as soon as possible and while the details are best remembered.
- Do not handle safeguarding concerns and abuse incidents alone. Consult with your volunteer Local Safeguarding Representative or the Office for Safeguarding Services as soon as possible.

Do not seek to handle safeguarding concerns and abuse incidents alone.

Quick Guide - Handling Safeguarding Concerns & Abuse Incidents.

CRIME

Crime- Fail to Protect a Child from a Sexual Offence
(Queensland *Criminal Code Act 1899*- Section 229BB)

In Queensland, it is a crime, to fail to protect a child from a sexual offence, in an organisational setting.

If an adult, in a position of power or responsibility in an organisation, knows there is a significant risk, that a child under the care or supervision of the organisation, will be sexually abused by an adult who is associated with the organisation, they must take action to reduce, or remove the risk.

Failing to take action under these circumstances, is a crime.

The law also states, it does not matter that information about the sexual abuse risk, was gained during, or in connection with, a religious confession.

Examples of child sexual offences include:

- Sexual intercourse with a child under 16 years.
- Indecent treatment of a child under 16 years (e.g. sexual fondling, touching).
- Grooming a child for sexual activity (including online).
- Exposing a child to pornography.
- Making child exploitation material (e.g. child pornography, sexual videos or photos).

Receiving an Abuse Disclosure

Making a disclosure is about seeking help. Disclosing abuse may be very challenging for victims and survivors. Some barriers to making a disclosure include:

- being unsure how best to share the information;
- experiencing language difficulties;
- lacking confidence that the disclosure will be taken seriously;
- fearing the consequences of speaking up;
- feeling conflicted or embarrassed; and
- fearing re-traumatisation.

How a disclosure is received can affect a victim or survivor deeply, and impact their recovery and healing. All abuse victims and survivors should be treated with dignity and respect, and given the opportunity to share their story. It is important to avoid any reaction that may cause further distress or trauma.

How a disclosure is received can affect a victim or survivor deeply.

The following steps are a guide for receiving an abuse disclosure from a child. Similar steps may be appropriate when receiving a disclosure from an adult.

- Use a location that is private yet visible, or within clear line of sight of another adult (not isolated).
- If possible, and agreeable to the child, ask another adult to be present.
- Reassure the child that it's okay for them to disclose and they have done the right thing.
- Give full attention, listen, be patient and remain calm.
- Let the child speak freely and avoid interrupting.
- Avoid 'questioning' the child or pursuing sensitive details they may not feel comfortable discussing.
- If needed, clarify your understanding of key issues using open questions or prompts (e.g. What happened then? Tell me more about .....).
- Monitor the child for signs of emotional distress or trauma and discontinue the conversation if they are not coping.
- Explain next steps, including the need to share the information with others. Explain that the disclosure cannot be kept secret.
- Address any immediate safety concerns, stay close and provide a sense of security.
- Document the disclosure as soon as possible. Use the child's own words. Do not censor, elaborate or include personal opinions or speculations.

(Adapted from 'Responding to children and young people's disclosures of abuse', Australian Institute of Family Studies, March 2015)

Do not promise absolute confidentiality or to keep an abuse disclosure secret.

Trauma-Informed Practice

Trauma-informed practice is an approach that recognises the effects of trauma and seeks to avoid retraumatising individuals who have experienced abuse.

DO NO FURTHER HARM.

The core principle of trauma-informed practice is to 'do no further harm'. This principle recognises that what is said or done to help and support abuse victims and survivors may trigger memories of abuse, be distressing, and cause them unintended harm.

Trauma-informed practice aims to promote trust, safety, and empowerment by being sensitive to an abuse victim or survivor's experience, being respectful and non-judgemental, listening, and maintaining boundaries. Helping the person feel safe and empowered is the essence of a trauma-informed practice.

Fact Sheet - Trauma-Informed Care (Sacred Heart Mission).
Support Services.

Making a Record

It is very important that a written record be made of all safeguarding concerns and abuse incidents. It is best to make a record as soon as possible while the details are best remembered. Using the established Safeguarding Incident Report form is the best way to document concerns and incidents. A written record should (at a minimum) include the following key information:

- the nature of the concern or incident.
- the time, date, and place of the concern or incident.
- the people involved.
- a description of what happened.
- what action was taken in response, and
- whether there are any ongoing risks or concerns.

Document all safeguarding concerns and abuse incidents.

The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards require that all records of safeguarding concerns and abuse incidents be retained for a minimum of 50 years or in accordance with legislation, whichever is the longer.

It is best practice to record concerns or incidents in Archdiocesan information systems such as the Safeguarding Incident Database where the information is secure and backed up regularly. Hardcopy records should be stored in a safe and secure location with controlled access.

Do not alter, amend or destroy records unless legally authorised to do so.

Safeguarding Incident Report form.

Reporting

Sharing information about safeguarding concerns and abuse incidents is essential for protecting children and adults-at-risk. If you think something is wrong – report it.

Follow established reporting protocols and report all concerns and incidents as soon as possible.

If you think something is wrong – report it.

Never promise absolute confidentiality or to keep an incident secret.

Contact police immediately if anyone is at risk of serious and imminent harm or dial triple zero '000' emergency.

Comply with legal reporting requirements. In some circumstances, failure to report may constitute a criminal offence.

Reporting Obligations

CRIME

Crime - Fail to Report a Suspected Child Sexual Offence

(Queensland *Criminal Code Act 1899*- Section 229BC)

In Queensland, it is a crime for an adult to fail to report a suspected child sexual offence to the police.

If an adult reasonably believes that a child is being or has been the victim of sexual abuse by another adult, they are required to report it to the police- unless they have a reasonable excuse not to.

A report must be made even if the abuse happened a long time ago.

The law also states that it does not matter that information about a child sexual offence is gained during or in connection with a religious confession. It must be reported to the police.

For this law, a 'child' means a person under 16 or a person under 18 with an impairment of the mind.

Examples of child sexual offences include:

- Sexual intercourse with a child under 16 years.
- Indecent treatment of a child under 16 years (e.g. sexual fondling, touching).
- Grooming a child for sexual activity (including online).
- Exposing a child to pornography.
- Making child exploitation material (e.g. child pornography, sexual videos or photos).

Mandatory Reporters - Queensland *Child Protection Act 1999*

Under the Queensland Child Protection Act, people in specific occupations are required to make a report to authorities if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered or is at unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse, and may not have a parent able and willing to protect them. These people are known as 'mandatory reporters'. They are:

- Teachers;
- Doctors;
- Registered Nurses;
- Police Officers;
- Child Advocates operating under the Public Guardian Act; and
- Early Childhood Education and Care professionals.

Papal Decree - Vos Estis Lux Mundi

Vos Estis Lux Mundi is a Vatican Decree which establishes a requirement to report sexual abuse by priests and members of religious orders. Under the decree, sexual abuse includes:

- sexual acts involving force, violence, threats, or an abuse of authority;
- sexual acts with a child under 18 years of age or a vulnerable adult; and
- producing, possessing, or sharing child pornography.

Sexual abuse by priests and members of religious orders must be reported to the Archbishop who is required to make a report to the police, and the Vatican.

Reportable Conduct Allegations & Convictions

Under the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024*, organisations that work with children are required to report concerns about misconduct of workers towards children (reportable conduct allegations and convictions) to the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Importantly, reportable conduct may be one act or a series of acts (s26(3)). Reportable conduct does not need to have occurred during the course of the worker performing work for the reporting entity (s27(2)). For example, it may occur while the worker is off duty or out of hours.

Reportable conduct may include allegations or convictions related to former workers of a reporting entity, where the conduct occurred during a period when the worker was performing work for the reporting entity (s32).

A reportable allegation means an allegation or other information that leads a person to form a reasonable belief that a worker has committed reportable conduct or engaged in misconduct that may involve reportable conduct (s27). A reasonable belief does not mean it *needs* to be proven, only that a fair-minded and ordinary person, with the same information, would believe the conduct may have occurred.

'Reportable conduct' includes:

- a child sexual offence
- sexual misconduct committed in relation to, or in the presence of a child
- ill-treatment of a child
- significant neglect of a child
- physical violence in relation to or in the presence of a child
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child

What conduct is not reportable?

The Act (s26(4)) provides that reportable conduct does not include behaviour that is reasonable for the discipline, management or care of a child. This is informed by the characteristics of a child, including the age, developmental stage and health of the child as well as any code of conduct or professional standard that applies to the conduct. For example, the following are not considered to be reportable:

- reasonable behaviour management consistent with codes of conduct that needs to be explicitly outlined for individual reporting entities to allow for contextual interpretation of thresholds
- accidents or incidents where no neglect or recklessness is involved
- trivial incidents with no risk of significant harm, for example, a worker briefly raises their voice to get attention without targeting a child or causing distress
- reasonable management or care of a child, particularly in circumstances where the child may have a disability or high-needs and be subject to restrictive practices or positive behaviour support.

Who can an allegation be made about?

The Reportable Conduct Scheme applies to all workers of a reporting entity. The term 'worker' is broadly defined to capture individuals who perform work of any kind for the reporting entity, and includes:

- an employee
- a volunteer
- an approved carer and member of an approved carer's household under the Child Protection Act 1999, schedule 3
- a contractor, subcontractor or consultant
- an individual supplied by a provider of labour hire services
- an executive officer or another person concerned with the reporting entity's management
- a trainee or person undertaking work experience for the reporting entity

- a minister of religion, religious leader or officer of a religious body
- an individual operating as a sole trader
- an honorary officer of the department administering the Child Protection Act 1999
- a former worker (see detail below).

This is not an exhaustive list and there may be other individuals who may be regarded as a 'worker' noting the diversity of reporting entities required to comply with the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

A worker includes someone who is under 18-years-of-age, if they are performing work for a reporting entity.

Reportable Conduct Scheme Procedure

A worker who becomes aware of a reportable allegation or reportable conviction about another worker must notify, as soon as practicable, to the head of the reporting entity, or to the Commission if the matter relates to the head.

As soon as the head of a reporting entity or their delegate becomes aware of a reportable allegation or reportable conviction, they must act promptly, systematically and in accordance with reporting requirements under the Act. This includes making an initial notification to the Commission, assessing and managing risk and planning for the investigation that will follow.

The Guide for Queensland's Reportable Conduct Scheme is available via the Queensland Family & Child Commission website- https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/childsafe/resources.

Information Sharing

Archdiocesan workers are expected to take responsibility for sharing information which may be critical to preventing abuse and harm, satisfying duty of care, and meeting legal reporting obligations.

Information about safeguarding concerns and abuse incidents should only be shared with other Archdiocesan workers who have delegated authority on a confidential 'need to know' basis. The information must be shared in a secure way.

Workers should also be mindful of legal requirements in relation to the disclosure of personal and sensitive information about a person (Australian Privacy Principles). Generally, personal and sensitive information is protected and cannot be disclosed. However, this is not a barrier to sharing information if an exception applies or is otherwise permitted including:

- where an individual has consented to the disclosure of their personal or sensitive information;
- where an individual would reasonably expect their personal or sensitive information to be disclosed for a given purpose;
- to lessen or prevent a serious threat to the life, health or safety of another person;
- to take action in relation to suspected unlawful activity or serious misconduct; and
- for enforcement-related activities, such as a police investigation.

(Australian Privacy Principles Guidelines Chapter 6 – Use or disclosure of personal information, Version 1.1, July 2019)

Workers are also expected to cooperate and share information with the police or other statutory authorities, where legally required or where a legal order can be produced, such as a warrant or subpoena.

A record must be made of any information shared, with whom, and for what purpose.

If in doubt about whether to share information, seek advice from the Office for Safeguarding Services or the Office of Safety, Risk & Governance before sharing the information.

Safeguarding Contacts

Office for Safeguarding Services

Phone: 07 3324 3752

Email: safeguarding@bne.catholic.net.au

Online: Safeguarding Incident Report Form

Office of Safety, Risk & Governance

Phone: 07 3324 3575

Email: legal@bne.catholic.net.au

Professional Standards Office Queensland

Phone: 07 3324 3070 or 1800 337 928

Email: psoqld@catholic.net.au

Online: psoqld.catholic.net.au

Responds to misconduct concerns involving Church Personnel and advises individuals on rights and Church response pathways.

STOPline Service

Phone: 1300 304 550

Email: AOB@stopline.com

Online: bnecatholic.stoplinereport.com

Information can be shared anonymously.

The STOPline service is an independent whistle blower service which operates around the clock. The service receives information and reports about serious misconduct by Archdiocesan workers, including safeguarding concerns and abuse incidents. Information can be shared anonymously.

Do not contact the STOPline service where a person is at risk of serious and imminent harm. Contact the police or dial triple zero '000' emergency.

Poster – Contacts Office for Safeguarding Services.

Poster – STOPline Service.

Key Safeguarding Contacts.

STOPline

Phone: **1300 304 550**

Email: **AOB@stopline.com.au**

Online Report: **bnecatholic.stoplinereport.com**

Information can be provided anonymously.

Safe Practice Guides

The Office for Safeguarding Services has developed a library of Safe Practice Guides which address a range of specific safeguarding topics and issues.

The guides can be found online at https://brisbanecatholic.org.au/safeguarding/safe-practice-guides/.

- Appointing a Local Safeguarding Representative
- Assessing Abuse Risks
- Creating Culturally Safe Environments
- Creating Safe Environments
- Engaging Children on Safeguarding
- Engaging Safely Online
- Engaging with Families & Communities on Safeguarding
- Keeping Records of Safeguarding & Abuse Incidents
- Maintaining Personal Boundaries
- Managing the Participation of Persons of Concern
- Providing Safe Transport
- Receiving an Abuse Disclosure
- Responding to Abuse Incidents
- Safe Photography & Video Recording
- Safeguarding Adults
- Safeguarding Due Diligence Checks
- Safeguarding Training
- Working Safely with Children & Adults-at-Risk

Resources

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (NAPCAN)
- Fact Sheet- Types & Signs of Abuse
- Archdiocesan Safeguarding Commitment
- Position Description – Volunteer Local Safeguarding Representative
- Safe Behaviour Code
- Volunteer Safeguarding Accreditation Requirements Matrix
- Fact Sheet- Trauma and its Impacts (Blue Knot Foundation)
- Risk Assessment Template
- Safeguarding Risk Inventory
- Quick Guide- Handling Safeguarding Concerns & Abuse Incidents
- Fact Sheet- Trauma-Informed Care (Sacred Heart Mission)
- Support Services
- Safeguarding Incident Report form
- Office for Safeguarding Services contacts
- STOPline Service contacts
- Key Safeguarding Contacts

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.