

Code of Conduct for Working with Children and Adults at Risk

Introduction

The diocese, together with our community, is committed to creating and upholding a safe and supportive environment for both Children and Adults at Risk.

This Code of Conduct seeks to raise awareness amongst people working with Children and/or Adults at Risk in the diocese about their obligations under child protection legislation, and to assist them to create a safe environment for Children and Adults at Risk who engage with the Catholic Church. This Code should be read in conjunction with the Diocesan ***Safeguarding Policy***, which is embodied in the safeguarding training, policies, protocols, and fact sheets relevant to Child and Adults at Risk related work within the Diocese.

Sexual abuse within Catholic Church contexts has caused deep concern within the diocese, the entire Church, and the broader community. This Code of Conduct provides those working with Children and/or Adults at Risk in the diocese with a better understanding of how to carry out the important pastoral work of the Catholic Church in a professional and supportive, way that both protects both Children and Adults at Risk from all forms of abuse and harm and contributes to their ongoing well-being. Recognition and awareness of the significant power imbalances that can occur within ministries and services, the privileged position of trust and the connection to spiritual abuse is key to protecting both Children and Adults at Risk in our communities. The Code of Conduct applies to, and must be signed by all Clergy, Religious Appointees, Employees, Volunteers, and contractors, who have, or are expected to have, a Child / Adult at Risk related role – i.e., **those required to hold a Working with Children Check (WWCC)**. Catechists who are SRE Teachers in NSW public schools are required to sign this Code of Conduct in conjunction with receiving an SRE-specific appendix and mandatory induction training from the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine to meet the NSW Department of Education requirements.

Compliance with Child protection legislation and the Diocese's Safeguarding Policy (The Policy)

1. At any time, prior or during my appointment to a Child and or Adults at Risk related role in the Diocese, I will provide the person employing, engaging or otherwise appointing me with any information that is relevant to determining whether I am suitable to work with Children/Adults at Risk, including undergoing a Working With Children Check where necessary (and a National Criminal History Check, if required by the Diocese).
2. I will complete all Safeguarding training, including initial and ongoing refresher training required for my role as set out in the ***Policy***.
3. I will always maintain appropriate boundaries with Children and Adults at Risk and will remain professional in my actions towards Children and Adults.
4. With the exception of information obtained under the seal of confession (if applicable), I will comply with my reporting obligations in the Policy if I reasonably suspect:
 - a. a Child is at risk of a Child Abuse Offence being committed against them;

- b. an Adult is at risk of an Abuse Offence being committed against them;
- c. a person has engaged in any Reportable Conduct with a Child;
- d. a person has engaged in any inappropriate conduct with a Child or Adult at Risk;
- e. a Child has suffered or is suffering neglect or child abuse including any physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual Act, sexual assault, sexual touching or grooming; and/or
- f. a Child is otherwise at Risk of Significant Harm, either in the diocese environment, at home or elsewhere.
- g. an Adult at Risk has suffered or is suffering neglect or abuse including any physical abuse, sexual act, sexual assault, sexual touching, psychological abuse, financial abuse, spiritual abuse and/or is at risk of harm from others to others or to themselves.

I note that it is not my responsibility to investigate or resolve any suspicions I may have, but simply to report my suspicion to the appropriate authority.

- 5. I will report these matters to my Parish Priest / Agency Head (whichever is applicable) as well as to the Safeguarding Office and, where appropriate, to the relevant State authorities (with assistance from the Safeguarding Office).
- 6. I acknowledge that I have a personal legal obligation to report all Reportable Crimes of which I become aware, and any information that I may have in relation to those offences, to NSW Police. As a matter of practice, I will notify my Parish Priest or Agency Head who will notify the Safeguarding Office. The Safeguarding Office will assist me to report to the NSW Police and will provide a copy of the police report so that I can ensure my personal legal obligation to report has been discharged.
- 7. I will comply with any investigations into Safeguarding Complaints.
- 8. I will immediately notify my supervisor if I am charged with any criminal offence.

Care, respect, and compassion

- 9. I will always treat Children and Adults at Risk with care, respect, and compassion even if they behave in a way that I find to be difficult or challenging.
- 10. Recognising that we believe all people to be “made in the image and likeness of God” (Gen 1: 27) I will respect the human dignity of all persons always treating them with equal respect and care. In keeping with the Church’s preferential option for the poor, I will give particular attention to the needs of more vulnerable people in the community.
- 11. I will take into account the needs of all Children and Adults at Risk, paying particular attention to Children and Adults who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, have a disability or illness, are elderly, come from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, are of diverse sexuality and Children/Adults at Risk with particular vulnerabilities, such as those who cannot live at home for whatever reason, are experiencing domestic violence, bereavement and relationship breakdowns.
- 12. I acknowledge that Children and Adults at Risk, like all human persons, have a need to be listened to and to feel heard. I will seek to actively listen to Children and Adults at Risk in my care and take their opinions and concerns seriously.

13. I will always use appropriate, respectful language, and not speak to Children or Adults at Risk in a sarcastic, derogatory, or offensive manner and recognise that use of this language could negatively affect the wellbeing of the Children and Adults at Risk I work with.
14. I acknowledge that I hold a position of authority and recognise the power imbalance that is inherent in this. I will not misuse this authority in any way which may negatively impact the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of the Children and/or Adults at Risk that I have contact with.
15. I will always treat Children and Adults at Risk in an equal and consistent way, and avoid favouritism, “special relationships” with certain Children or Adults or singling out of particular Children or Adults.
16. I will never provide gifts to one Child over another Child, and I will provide gifts to Children generally only where those gifts are appropriate given the age and circumstances of those Children, e.g., gifts that are inexpensive and inoffensive.
17. I will not engage in any activity with a Child or Adult that is likely to cause them physical, emotional, or psychological harm.
18. Except in the context of family gatherings with the permission of carers, I will not invite unaccompanied Children to my home, nor invite them to engage in activities or events that are not associated with the diocese or its parishes or agencies.

Proper supervision of Children and Adults at Risk

19. I will always diligently supervise all Children and/or Adults at Risk for whom I am responsible.
20. If I am responsible for organising activities involving Children or Adults at Risk, I will ensure the planned activities are appropriate to the age and needs of the Child/Adult at Risk, that the necessary risk assessment has been undertaken, and that it is adhered to in the conduct of the activities.
21. When supervising Children and/or Adults at Risk, I will take care to protect them from obvious dangers such as motor vehicles, and outdoor risks such as unsafe bodies of water, sun exposure or strangers.
22. I will not leave Children and/or Adults at Risk in my care unsupervised. I will be punctual for my appointments with Children/Adults. If I am unable to attend an activity with Children/Adults which I have agreed to supervise, I will communicate with the relevant supervisor in my parish or agency as soon as possible.

Disciplining Children

23. I acknowledge that in appropriate circumstances, discipline may be necessary to prevent future misbehaviour by Children, including misbehaviour that places the Child and others at risk.
24. If, in my judgment, it is necessary to discipline a Child, I will only do so in a reasonable manner that is proportionate to their misbehaviour and does not isolate or degrade the Child. I will always explain to the Child why he or she is being disciplined.
25. I will never use corporal punishment to discipline a Child.

Contact with Children and Adults at Risk

26. I will avoid situations where I would be alone with Children/Adults at Risk except in so far as it would normally be required as part of my role.
27. I will avoid physical contact with a Child/Adult at Risk except in so far as it would normally be required as part of my role (e.g., to administer the sacraments) or as circumstances might reasonably require (e.g., to protect a Child/Adult from harm or to comfort when distressed), or when greeting a Child/Adult appropriately (e.g., the popular Hi-5 or handshake).
28. I will not engage in any covert or overt sexual or intimate behaviours with any Child, Young Person or Adult at Risk; I will not engage in any sexual innuendo, sexual conversations, jokes or the display of such material.
29. I will not message, call, text, visit or otherwise contact a Child/Adult at Risk to the exclusion of their parent(s)/carer when organising, arranging, or engaging in church activities.
30. If I engage with a Child, Family or Adult whom I have contact with through my role in the church outside of that role (e.g., socially, in a business relationship, etc.), I do so in my individual capacity only and not as a representative of the Church.

Use of social media and other technology to communicate with Children and Adults at Risk

31. I will comply with that part of the Policy relating to the use of social media and other technology, which provides that amongst other things I must:
 - a. be respectful, polite and considerate in all communications with Children and Adults at Risk and communicate in a manner that is consistent with my role and responsibility within or in relation to the Diocese;
 - b. not invite or accept invitations from Children I have met through the Diocese as “friends” on my personal social media site, or otherwise interact with them on any sites;
 - c. not communicate on an individual (one on one) basis via technology or social media (including mobile phone, text messages or email) with any Child unless I have obtained the written consent of that Child’s parent or guardian and include the Child’s parent or guardian as a participant in the communication; and
 - d. not record or distribute any intimate images of a Child or Adult or any cyber bullying material targeted at a Child or Adult at Risk.

Use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs

32. I will comply with that part of the Policy relating to the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, which provides that:
 - a. I must never give or provide alcohol, tobacco or other drugs to Children (This rule does not apply when parents approve of their child receiving Holy Communion from the Chalice).
 - b. I must never perform work with Children or Adults at Risk when I am under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs, and will inform my supervisor if I am under the

influence of any prescription medication that may adversely affect my capacity to effectively supervise Children/Adults at Risk and keep them safe; and

- c. if I am supervising Children or Adults at Risk in any capacity, including general gatherings, at an overnight camp or excursion where Children/Adults at Risk are present, I will not consume alcohol or illicit drugs, or smoke tobacco during these events.

Medication

- 33. I will never administer any medication to any Child or Adult at Risk without their parent/guardian or carers consent.

Material involving Children and Adults at Risk

- 34. I will always obtain the permission of the Child/Adult and/or their parent or carer before taking or using the person's name or image in any report, website, or other publication.
- 35. In a school setting I will always seek the permission of the school before taking or using the Child's name or image in any report, website, or other publication.
- 36. I will not possess, distribute or produce any material that depicts or describes Children or Adults in an offensive way.

Please see the diocese's protocol and fact sheets on 'Behaviours to encourage and avoid', 'Use of technology and social media to communicate with Children and Adults at Risk' and 'Use of Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs' for a complete list of obligations.

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that:

- I have read and will comply with the Policy and this Code of Conduct.
- I understand the behaviours that are expected of me in my interactions with Children and Adults at Risk.
- I understand the behaviours that are not acceptable by the diocese, its parishes, and agencies, at any time.
- Serious breach of this Code will lead to termination of my work with Children and/or Adults at Risk within the Diocese.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____