



Coptic Orthodox Church Safe Parishes Policy

**Safe Services Focusing on Children &
Vulnerable People,
Ensuring Protection and Care for Everyone.**

What we will Cover!

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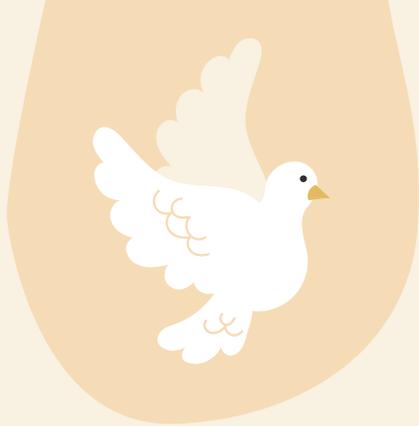
Under what Circumstances is it appropriate for a POC to Attend a Parish?

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Support & Tools





Introduction

Let God be in your life.

When you serve someone, say 'I am serving one of God's children, one of God's flock, one of God's people, one of God's creation. It is for the sake of God that I serve him, for the sake of love that I serve him, and not because of formalities'- H.H Pope Shenouda

Purpose & Objectives:



The purpose of a **Safe Parish Policy** is to create a secure and protected environment within a religious community – informed by the **10 Child Safe Standards**. These include:

1. Child safety is embedded in organisational governance and culture.
2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are considered.
5. People working with children are suitable and supported
6. Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused.
7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.
9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation makes children safe.

01

Requirements for Parishes

Roles & Responsibilities of the Parish Priest, Safe
Parish representative and Superintendent &
Selection and Screening of Servants



The Coptic Orthodox Church

Sydney Diocese Safe Parish Personnel

Responsible Parish Priest
Safe Parish Representative
Sunday School Superintendent



Safe Parishes Working Group

(Industry Professionals,
Office of the Guardian Members,
Board of Trustee Member)



Diocesan Priests

All priests that have contact with
Children



Coptic Church Escalations

Board of Trustees
Clerical Council
Safe Parishes Working Group



Diocesan Servants

All servants that have contact with Children



External Organisational Support

Office of the Guardian Members
Department of Justice
Community of Practice



Requirements for Parishes

Role & Responsibility of the Parish Priest

1. **Adhere** - Ensure compliance with the mandates of the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW) and other regulations.
2. **Collaborate** - Convene with the Safe Parish Representative to assess the church's adherence to the Coptic Orthodox Diocese policies.
3. **Supervise** - Oversee all fundamental health and safety matters, with a focus on identifying and mitigating potential hazards within church premises, particularly in spaces frequented by children and vulnerable individuals.
4. **Report** - Promptly report any suspicions or allegations to the appropriate authorities in accordance with established protocols.
5. **Execute** - Fulfil obligations as mandated by the Clerical Council in Service, encompassing standards for personal conduct, the practice of pastoral ministry throughout every facet of parish life.

Requirements for Parishes

Role and Responsibilities of the Safe Parish Representative (SPR)

1. **Adhere** - Ensure compliance with the mandates of the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW) and other regulations.
2. **Convene** - Regularly meet with the Responsible Parish Priest to assess and discuss the adherence to Coptic Orthodox Diocese policies within the church.
3. **Supervise** - Continuously monitor the physical environment for appropriateness and safety, maintaining records of all Working with Children Check (WWCC) clearances and completed training, as required by the Board of Trustees or the Safe Parishes Working Group for individuals engaged in service to children in the Parish.
4. **Report** - Promptly report any instances of abuse, whether observed firsthand, reported by another concerned individual, or disclosed by a child who indicates they are experiencing abuse.

Requirements for Parishes

Selection and Screening of Servants

What is a Working with Children Check (WWCC)?

It's a screening process overseen by the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian. It includes a criminal history check and a review of any findings of misconduct. The outcome can result in either a clearance to work with children for a five-year period or a prohibition.

What is the process for obtaining a WWCC?

The process consists of two primary steps:

- Workers or servants must initiate their application for a WWCC clearance.
- The Safe Parish Representative must validate that the workers or servants possess a valid WWCC clearance.

Who is exempt from requiring a WWCC?

- Servants under the age of 18.
- Servant's contact is only incidental to the work or service.
- Visiting speakers engaged for a single occasion, during which they will be in the presence of one or more adults.

02



Ministry with Children

Engagement & Communication

Engagement with Children

Appropriateness of Activities & Services

- Activities that could in any way emphasise gender, physical, intellectual, or ethnic differences should be assessed for their appropriateness

Physical Safety

- The suitability and safety of the space(s) is continually reviewed

Supervision of Activities & Services

The degree will vary on the nature & environment of the activity, the age and maturity of the children and size of the group.

Transportation

All forms of transport are registered, insured, safe and fitted with age-appropriate child restraints or safety devices (e.g., seat belts, life jackets).

Camps & Overnight stays

Segregated between males and females & privacy of all parties is to be respected, particularly when changing clothes, washing and toileting.

Parental Consent

A child should not engage in an activity without their parent/guardian's consent

Communication with Children

Above Reproach

Both in terms of the content and the way it is communicated.

Be Truthful

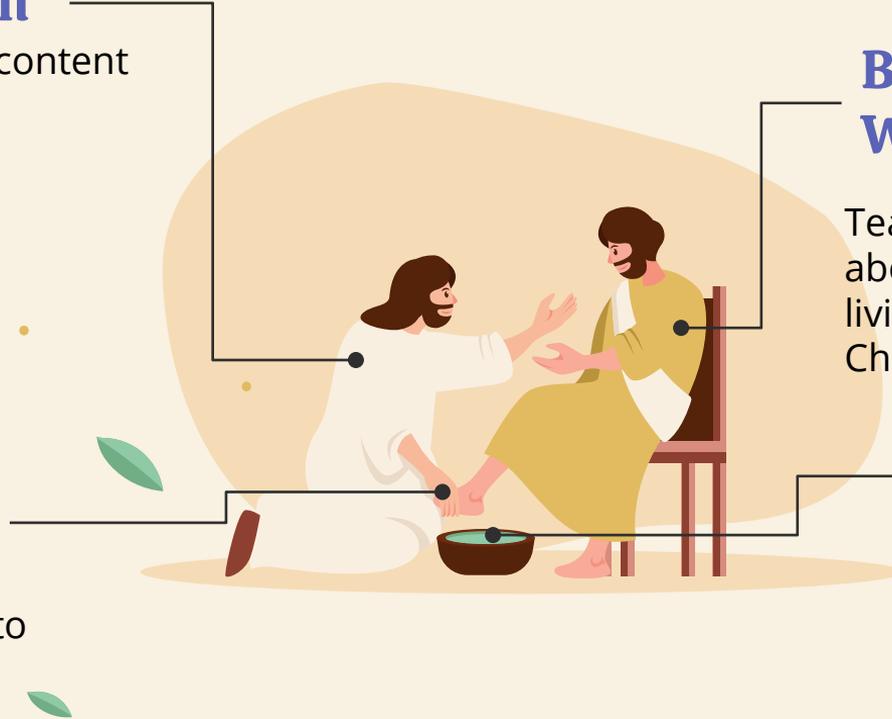
Never hide your identity or pretend to be someone else.

Build up the Church When Representing It

Teaching children and youth about our heritage and creating a living bond with our Lord Jesus Christ is our mission.

Safety in Numbers

Jesus's ministry is an example here.



Communications / Social Media

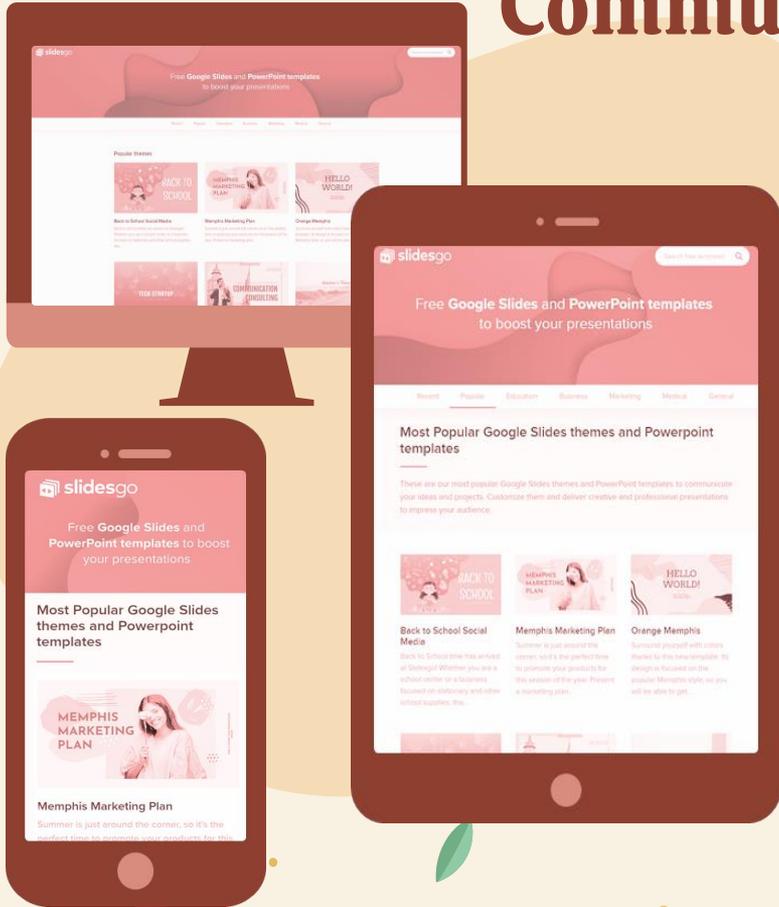
Know The Digital Terrain - Be aware of and comply with the terms of use, age restrictions, privacy options and controls for each site prior to using it in your service.

In Person Is Best - Face-to-face interactions are the best way to build relationships with youth.

Don't Initiate Social Media Friendships - There is a power imbalance that exists between servants/workers and the youth they serve.

Respect Others - Observe confidentiality and privacy in electronic communications.

Reporting Online Abuse - Remember laws regarding mandatory reporting of suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of children and youth apply equally to the digital world.



Online Environments



Maximise Transparency

Notify parents and guardians when and how you will be interacting online with their children

Communicate expectations and rules about online interactions and meetings



Photographs and Videos

No photos of children are to be taken without consent from a parent or guardian

Should only be used for the purposes for which that consent was given



Social Media & Electronic communication

Children or parents should be directed to the Parish's official social media account (not the individual leader's personal account)

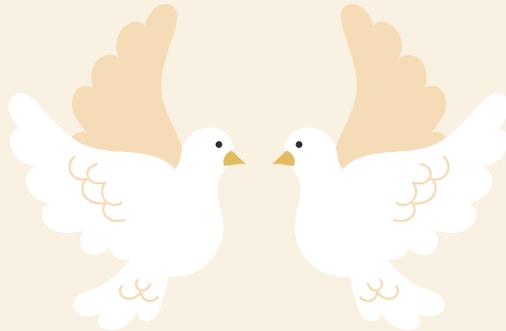
Accounts should be administered by two or more Servants, ideally at least one of each gender, to ensure greater transparency in communication and to moderate the content



03

Reporting Abuse

Reporting Obligations Regarding Child Abuse



Reporting Obligations Regarding Child Abuse

When to report

When a Child is **“at risk of significant harm”** - Concerns exist for the safety, welfare, or well-being of the Child in the following circumstances (some of these) :

1. The Child’s basic physical or psychological needs are not being met (neglect) or are at risk of not being met.
2. The parents or guardian have not arranged and are unable or unwilling to arrange for the Child to receive necessary medical care.
3. The Child has been, or is at risk of being, physically or sexually abused or ill- treated.

Mandatory Reporter Guide

This guide can be used when you observe indicators of abuse or receive a disclosure of abuse to determine if a report should be made [Mandatory Reporter Guide](#)

Time limits for reporting

Notice of an allegation must be reported to the NSW OCG within 7 days of it becoming known and an investigation report (or interim report, if the investigation is not complete) must be lodged with the NSW OCG no later than 30 calendar days.

Reporting Obligations Regarding Child Abuse

We have reporting obligations related to the safety, welfare and wellbeing of the children in their care. We are all required to report certain incidents, complaints and allegations, and these reports often need to be made to more than one agency.

Police Force NSW / QLD / NT

Make a report to police if the matter involves conduct towards a child that you suspect may be criminal in nature.

For emergencies call 000
For police assistance and general enquiries call 131 444

Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) (NSW)

Call the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111

Regional Intake Services (QLD) or The Child Safety After Hours Service Centre on 1800177135, outside business hours Regards

CARE Services (NT)

Child protection reporting line on 1800 700 250 (24/7).

Reportable Conduct Scheme (NSW)

Notify reportable allegations against staff, certain volunteers and contractors within 7 working days.

For advice and support contact 02 8219 3800

Coptic Orthodox Clerical Council

Every concerning matter is an opportunity for us organisation to strengthen its child safe practices and culture.

This includes assessing and reviewing relevant policies and procedures.

A Complaints Record Form is available to assist with your assessment of the incident – this should be completed prior to contact one of the above agencies/ departments.





Guidelines for Parishes Regarding Persons of Concern

Reporting Obligations Regarding
Child Abuse



Reporting Obligations Regarding Child Abuse

Persons of Concern - A POC is a person who has been convicted, accused, is reasonably suspected of child abuse or sexual abuse of an adult or some other violent or concerning conduct (including grooming).

Reconciliation

The church should be a community of grace and forgiveness and not to exclude but to welcome.



Responsibility

The POC must take responsibility for their past actions and recognise and take responsibility for the consequences.

Protection

This policy seeks to ensure that the POC's attendance does not compromise the safety of people in the parish or lead to an increased risk of people being abused



05

Making our Parish Safe

Safe Parishes Journey

Child Safe Standards & Safe Parish Policy

Finalised, endorsed & published circulation

June & Oct 2023

June 2023

Parish Reps

- Finalised,
- Roles & Responsibilities defined

July 2023

Responsible Personnel Register

Diocesan Priests
(maintained by SPWG)

Training (1)

- Personalised Training
(Responsible Personnel)

March 2024

Parish Servant Register (2)

Valid and verified WWC for all Servants Register (inc Priests) as required by OCG (maintained by Parish)

March 2024

Attestation of compliance

- Personalised Training (1)
- Servant Register (2)

March 2024

Consents Requirements Launch

- Communication
Photography and Video &
Activity Permission Forms

June 2024

Parish Register

Register for all attending Children maintained

December 2024



“Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God”

Luke 18:16.

- Our Lord Jesus Christ

Questions

Safe Parish Working Group Members

Fr Gabriel Yassa

Board of Trustee Representative and Working Group Lead

Safe Ministry Working Group

Fr Shenouda Mansour

Fr Salib Salib

Sharon Yassa

Fr Youseff Fanous

Theresa Britton

