

Questions asked during the Safe Parishes Briefing Sessions



1. Child Safe Standards & Safe Parish Policy

- **What should I consider when implementing the Policy and Child Safe Standards in my parish?**

Answer:

It is recommended that Servants consider how the standards are being implemented specifically in their own Parish and how to improve and develop child safe practices and culture, taking into consideration the demographics of the congregation. E.g., Predominately Arabic speaking etc. Support materials are available. Please reach out to the Safe Parish Working Group or email Safeparish@coptic.org.au

2. Activities and Camps

- **How many servants should I have present at activities or camps?**

Answer:

An important part of providing a safe environment is making sure there are enough Servants adequately supervise the activities taking place. The degree of supervision will vary depending on nature and environment of the activity, the age and maturity of the children and the size of the group. More importantly the venue, time, duration, and nature of the activity.

Please note that a junior leader (under the age of 18) does not count as a leader for the purposes of supervision. In the case of camps and similar activities, there should be at least one adult present who has first aid training.

- **Is it acceptable for servants sleep in the same cabin with Children of the same sex during overnight stays.**

Answer:

Overnight supervision and accommodation arrangements should ensure that no servant is placed in a position where there is potential for allegations of improper conduct.

Sleeping and washing arrangements should not place any Servants in a situation where the propriety of their behaviour could be questioned. Including male and female servants is a consideration for risk management on overnight supervision.

Presently the Diocese has made a risk assessment and decided that under no circumstances are servants to sleep with children unless the servant happens to be the parent or guardian of the child.

This should be assessed on a case-by-case basis (especially for children with special needs) and if so, the parent shares a room only with their own child.

For the removal of doubt, it is prohibited that a servant(parent) to sleep in the same room as other children, because there is still an element of risk/concern/vulnerability.

Servants not the parent of the child/children can sleep in a room next door or communicate with the children through the open door.

3. Transportation

- **Are bus drivers transporting children required to have a current and validated WWCC if they are both undertaking another service.**

Answer:

*Yes, Bus drivers are required to take children and **where possible** it is preferred that there is at least another servant over 18 travelling in the bus, to prevent situations where the bus driver is alone with a child.*

- **Is it acceptable for a servant to transport a child using their own vehicle?**

Answer:

Yes, a servant can use their personal vehicle to transport children to Parish planned activities. All motor vehicles and other forms of transport used are required to be registered, insured, safe and fitted with age-appropriate child restraints or safety devices (e.g., seat belts, life jackets).

Servants should avoid being alone with a child in a motor vehicle or driving a child home unaccompanied, even with parental permission. If such a situation is unavoidable, the leader should inform another leader of the trip and the reason for it.

4. WWC and Training

- **Who is required to obtain a Working with Children Check?**

Answer:

Working with Children Check is a prerequisite for anyone in paid or voluntary child-related services/work.

“Child-related Services” is:

- *Providing services for under 18’s;*

- *Where the work normally involves being face to face with children (we have extended to capture electronic communication and social media).*
- *Where contact is more than incidental to the work*

– **Who is exempt from requiring a current and valid WWCC?**

Answer:

- *Servants younger than 18 years old.*
- *Deacons (including Sub Deacons and lower in rank). (Full deacons will be required to obtain one).*
- *Servants in administrative, clerical, maintenance, or ancillary roles if the service does not ordinarily involve contact with children for extended periods (such as a parish secretary or caretaker)*
- *A visiting speaker or performer of a one-off occasion and in the presence of one or more adults.*

– **Are WWCC clearances portable?**

Answer:

WWCC clearances are portable within the period that they are valid. Once a person has obtained a clearance, they can quote the WWCC number to other Parishes for any other services they were not previously involved.

However, each Parish will still need to independently verify the WWCC number before allowing the servant to commence their ‘new service’.

– **We have a Creche in our Parish - We ask parents to attend Sunday school to help manage little ones. They do not undertake any other service. Do they do not need WWCC do they?**

Answer:

There is an exemption in the legislation for parent attending with their children to obtain a WWCC. However, given the robustness of our service, we are asking all servants to obtain a WWCC to prevent the need to ask servants to leave the class if their child on the odd occasion is not present or if they are required to attend any other service where their child is not present.

– **If I have completed training as part of my external profession, do I need to undertake any further training?**

Answer:

No, you do not need to complete additional training if your current training has not been completed longer than 3 years ago. Please also share evidence of completion to your Safe Parish Representative who will be required to maintain this record in the Safe Parish Register.

– **What training is available?**

Answer:

- *EPEC Education - have several Child Protection courses, with a mix of online and F2F options. CHCPRT025 Identify and report children and young people at risk. <https://www.epeceducation.com.au> (**Nationally recognised**)*
- *The National Council of Churches in Australia (of which the Coptic Church is a member) conducts training for the Safe Church Program. They also provide a mechanism for endorsement of Safe Church programs and the co-endorsement of workshop presenters. Details can be found here. <https://www.ncca.org.au/scp/scp-workshops> (**Nationally recognised**)*

5. Expectations of the Parish

– **What is required of the Parish and when?**

Answer:

March 2024

- *Completion of Personalised Training (Responsible Parish Priest, Sunday School Superintendent and Safe Parish Representative)*
- *All Parish Servants details updated and retained in the Safe Parish Register and WWC validated on the Office of the Children Guardian Portal.*
- *Parish Annual Compliance statement (template will be issued by the Safe Parish Working Group)*

June 2024

- *Consents Requirements Launch by Safe Parish Working Group of*
- *Electronic Communication, Photography and Videography Consent Forms*
- *Activity and Camp Consent Forms*

December 2024

- *Register maintained for all attending Children (all contact details and to include Allergies etc). Parishes are not mandated to using any one platform however HisVine is being developed to accommodate this additional requirement.*

6. I have questions and require support; whom do I ask?

Answer:

All questions are important and help us as a Diocese develop and address real issues. Never hesitate to ask. You can do this by contact any of the Safe Parish Working Group Members or by emailing safeparish@coptic.org.au

Relevant to QLD

<https://www.qld.gov.au/law/laws-regulated-industries-and-accountability/queensland-laws-and-regulations/regulated-industries-and-licensing/blue-card/organisations>

*We will have available on the Diocese Website **direct access** to the Child Safe Standards, Safe Parish Policy, Guidance documents, templates, and Register. Communication of the launch will be shared in the Diocese Safe Parish Personnel WhatsApp group.*