

Child Protection Checklist

What to do with an allegation of child abuse

1. Clarify exactly what the allegation is.

Do not undertake an investigation.

Only ascertain the gist of the allegation.

Do not minimise or disbelieve. Remember, belief is not proof.

What may seem incredible could be true.

Paedophile offenders are cunning, secretive and not immediately nor obviously identifiable.

Do not disclose allegations to the accused person at this initial stage.

Maintain confidentiality. Only disclose to those who need to know.

Assure the complainant and victim that timely action will be taken.

2. Contact Director, Professional Standards Unit (PSU)

On (02) **9265 1514**, 0408 21 8940 pgerber@sydney.anglican.asn.au who can advise on:

- a. risk assessment regarding children and the accused person;
- b. what must be reported, to whom and by whom; and
- c. an agreed plan of action, to protect the child and deal with the allegation.

3. Report allegation

Legally, clergy, paid church workers and in some cases lay people have reporting obligations.

Get advice from the Director PSU as to who, when and how.

Reports must be made to:

Dept of Community Services (DoCS) if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at current risk of harm because of

- a. Physical or sexual abuse or ill-treatment
- b. Serious psychological harm
- c. Neglect.

Police if there is knowledge which would assist authorities to apprehend or convict a person of a serious offence (not limited to child abuse).

N.B. A report to DoCS is a report to the Police for this purpose.

PSU contact person if allegations relate to clergy, lay volunteer, paid church worker or person holding a position in the Diocese.

4. Take action to protect any child at risk and to deal fairly with the accused person

If a child is at current risk of harm, immediate suspension or removal of a lay church worker from a position (with due process for employees) will be required.

For clergy or person holding a position in the Diocese this will require PSU and the Archbishop's action.

5. Arrange support for all persons concerned

Make provision for separate pastoral support for the person making the allegation or the alleged victim and the accused person.

Victims may require immediate specialist counselling or other support.

They also need on-going contact, support and process updates.

Family and friends of both the victim and the accused person (after notification) may need specialist counselling or other support.

Other members of the parish may also need specialist support.

6. Report any disciplinary action

This reporting obligation arises at the conclusion of the matter.

All disciplinary action involving allegations of child abuse, sexual misconduct in the presence of or involving children, acts of violence at work or violence in the presence of or directed at children must be reported to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP).

An unsubstantiated allegation, prematurely aborted action, warning, reprimand or removal as a result of such allegation must be reported.

No report is required where the allegation is found to be false, vexatious or misconceived.

The accused person must be notified of this report.

Get advice from the Director, PSU on this issue.

7. Keep a record of all allegations and actions

Confidentiality is essential.

Keep notes and dates of relevant conversations.

Record what conclusions, if any, were reached and what action was taken.

8. If in doubt, get advice

Experience suggests that child abuse manifests itself in many different ways.

The best protection against child abuse is prevention

For all those working with children in your parish:

1. Ensure that you know who they are
2. For new or unknown people, undertake reference or other checks
3. Obtain prohibited employment declarations from all who work with children
4. Obtain SRE engagement form from school scripture teachers
5. Screen new paid workers with Commission for Children and Young People
6. Provide regular child protection training to all

Conducting safe ministry to children:

1. Train, support and monitor children's workers
2. Keep details and a regular roll of children who attend ministry events
3. Define responsibilities and explicit behaviour expectations of leaders
4. Plan activities
5. Have a suitable gender balance of leaders
6. Provide adequate leader coverage and supervision at activities
7. Allow for shared, not individual leadership at activities
8. Maintain clear boundaries between ministry and a leader's private life
9. Respect the privacy of children
10. Develop an appropriate touching policy and practice

Contacts

Professional Standards Unit (PSU)

Director – (02) 9265 1514

Contact persons – (02) 9264 7106

Request protocol & other documents – (02) 9265 1604

Chaplain to victims – (02) 9265 1500

Department of Community Services (DoCS)

Mandatory reporting line – 133 627

Voluntary reporting line – 132 111

Facsimile reporting line – (02) 9716 2999

Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP)

Phone – (02) 9286 7220

Facsimile (for screening and reports) – (02) 9286 7201

TAMAR - Victims Support and Advocacy – (02) 9484 0174

- Boundaries & Ethics Training – (02) 9636 7937

Encompass Sex Offender Treatment Program – (02) 9716 1400

Resources

Child Protection Guidelines – *Diocesan Secretariat (02) 9265 1545*

Child Protection Essentials Training – *Youthworks (02) 8268 3344*

Child Sexual Abuse & the Churches (2nd Ed.) – *Parkinson (02) 8268 3344*

Behind Closed Doors Video & Workbook (TAMAR) – *Anglicare (02) 9895 8000*

Code of Conduct for Clergy – *PSU (02) 9265 1604*

Reporting Sexual Abuse – *PSU (02) 9265 1604*

Employment Relations Guidelines - *Diocesan Secretariat (02) 9265 1545*

NSW Working with Children Check Guidelines for Employers

CCYP (02) 9286 7220 www.kids.nsw.gov.au/check

Church Discipline Ordinance 2002

Tribunal Ordinance 1992

Offences Ordinance 1992

Relinquishment of Holy Orders Ordinance 1994

www.sydney.anglican.asn.au/synod/ords/adminord/index.html

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DEALING WITH CHILD ABUSE ALLEGATIONS IN THE CHURCH

Prepared by
the Professional Standards Unit
Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney
for the assistance of clergy and church workers
(May 2003)

This document is an initial checklist only. As a guideline it should not be solely relied upon for advice. Those responsible for protecting children and responding to allegations of child abuse should consult the resource materials and the relevant legislation and obtain professional advice in each situation and every individual case. Remember, **you are not on your own** in these matters.