Risk Assessment and Management

Understanding the risk environment

Risk assessment and management includes identifying, preventing and mitigating risks in the context of an organisation. It should consider specific risk related to services/programs, and also any particular vulnerabilities relevant children and young people who spend time in the organisation. For example, it would be appropriate for someone in children's ministry to have physical contact with a child who had just been injured in order to comfort and reassure them, but such physical contact would not be appropriate on an ongoing basis, nor would it be appropriate for a church leader to have this sort of physical contact with a child. In developing a risk management plan NCCA member churches should consider the following:[1]

- **Risk associated with the specific ministry and activities provided by the member church including:**
    - Particular circumstances that expose children and young people to risk;
    - Opportunities for unsupervised contact with children and young people. For example; through transportation, personal care or in a physical space out of the line of sight;
    - Parents/carers not being present with their children at church;
    - Concerns related to interactions between children and young people; and
    - Adult-to- child ratio within the specific setting.

- **Risk associated with specific roles including:**
    - Helping a child with physical care such as toileting;
    - Circumstances in which adults are able to develop a relationship of trust with a child/young person and/or person close to a child over a period of time; and
    - Roles which include greater levels of authority.

- **Risk related to increased vulnerability:**
    - Children and young people with a disability;
    - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people;
    - Children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
    - Children and young people who are unable to live with their families;
    - Children and young people who have been exposed to previous maltreatment.

- **The likelihood and consequences of each identified risk occurring including:**
    - If the risk is likely, possible or unlikely and the consequences of each identified risk. Use a risk matrix to plot the rating for each risk. See Risk Matrix below.

- **Any actions or safeguards needed to minimise the risk of harm to children and young people including:**
    - What can be done to stop the identified risk;
    - What action could be taken if the risk occurs;
    - Resources required;
    - Implications of risk mitigations/implications of not undertaking risk mitigations.

---

[1] Adapted from the Office of the NSW Children's Guardian Website, Risk Management.

Risk Assessment and Management

- **Monitoring Effectiveness:**
  - Maintaining records of risk assessments and risk management plans;
  - Reviewing effectiveness on regular basis;
  - Undertaking learning reviews when risk management plans are not implemented effectively, or when they fail to reduce risk.

Risk analysis

The matrix below is one tool which can help to identify risks and inform risk management planning. The matrix should be used in conjunction with other risk management tools and processes. It is also important to recognise that risk can be dynamic, and as such it is recommended that this tool is reviewed regularly and informed by the contributions of a range of stakeholders.

Child safety risk matrix

Likelihood of event occurring	Level of concern		
	Minor concern	Moderate concern	Significant concern
Likely	Low risk	High risk	High risk
Possible	Low risk	Medium risk	High risk
Unlikely	Low risk	Low risk	Medium risk

Table adapted from Commission for Children and Young People A Guide for Creating Child Safe Organisations, 2018

Risk rating guide

Risk Levels	
Low risk	Risks which may be managed by routine procedures
Medium risk	Risks which need attention and mitigation strategies
High risk	Risks which need immediate attention, require further investigation, and need significant interventions put in place and close monitoring

Risk Assessment and Management

Risk mitigation

Ongoing risk mitigation strategies aim to reduce or remove child safety risks across NCCA member churches. Risk mitigation strategies utilised by NCCA member churches may include, but are not limited to:

- Ensuring effective risk management governance arrangements, including accountabilities, reporting lines and processes to enable a cross-section of stakeholders can contribute to risk management, e.g. through a risk management committee.
- Having clear boundaries in relation to physical and online conduct in accordance with member churches' codes of conduct and relevant policies;
- Developing a organisation-wide risk management strategy, which includes the contributions of a range of stakeholders, including children, young people and families. Suh a strategy should pay particular attention to situations and circumstances where children and young people may be at greater risk, e.g. child care, children and youth ministry, transportation, personal care.
- Undertaking reviews of critical incidents and/or breaches of child safeguarding policy to identify learning and strengthen processes going forward;
- Removing potential risks to children where possible, e.g. terminating employees/volunteers/contractors who are deemed unsuitable to work with children and young people, in line with relevant policies, procedures and legal advice.
- Removing physical risks to children, e.g. ensuring lines of sight in all spaces;
- Ensuring all employees, volunteers and contractors have access to child safety training which enables them to identify the signs and indicators of abuse and neglect;
- Ensuring all staff, volunteers and contractors have access to training in relation to risk assessment and management.