# LCA Child Safety Standards for Congregations Self-Assessment “Notetaker” for Assessors

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| **Please note:** This notetaker document has been developed to assist Assessors to record information gathered from discussions and other observations. It has been provided as a “helper” but is not compulsory to use. Either:   * print and add your notes by hand, or * add your notes by typing in the fields provided   Please refer to the Self-Assessment Guidelines and the Child Safety Self-Assessment Instructional Video both located on the CSS webpage at [www.lca.org.au/css](http://www.lca.org.au/css) for more detailed instructions, examples and guidance. |

### Preamble:

Each page of the LCA Child Safety Standards for Congregations contains a standard followed by a series of statements. These statements represent the elements or requirements of each of the standards.

There are 10 standards in total.

Remember, the self-assessment is just an information finding exercise. It is not a test or an audit. It is just a way for you, as the assessor, to find out how well the congregation is meeting each of the standards and elements.

Once you have completed the self-assessment, it will only be seen by your leadership or council and will not be submitted to your district. It is just a guide to help your leadership or council develop its Child Safety Plan.

To undertake the self-assessment, you will need to do four things:

1. Gather information
2. Collate and rate your information
3. Suggest Next Steps
4. Share with Council

### Gather information

* Firstly, have a good read through of each of the standards and their elements to familiarise yourself with them. Whilst reading through, put some thought into how well you think your congregation meets these standards and each of their elements.
* Consider who to speak to and set up times to meet. You will need to talk to congregation leaders, including your pastor, Sunday School teachers and leaders, youth leaders, and any other key people who are involved with children or youth ministry in the congregation. It is also important to speak with children, young people, and family members if this is possible.
* Try to arrange to have these conversations in small groups to save you time, perhaps after worship on a Sunday or after youth group if you have one. You may also wish to talk with people over the telephone if this is easier.
* Use the wording of the standards and their elements as the basis for formulating your questions. The CSS webpage [www.lca.org.au/css](http://www.lca.org.au/css) contains examples of questions you could ask and so do the Self-Assessment Guidelines. Sample questions are listed according to each of the standards. There are lots of examples – remember you don’t need to ask all of them. Just choose the questions or the key areas that you think are most relevant to your congregation.
* Ask your group(s) whether they think the element is being met and what they think the rating should be (refer below for ratings)
* Also ask for examples of how and in what way they think the standard or element is or is not being met and remember to ask people to elaborate if you think this is needed.
* Create some different questions if you wish to. For example, if you are talking with children or youth, or with their parents, you may wish to word the questions differently from the standards and their elements. Have a look at the CSS webpage [www.lca.org.au/css](http://www.lca.org.au/css) for some examples of questions to ask children and young people.
* Also ask your groups for suggestions about how to improve the rating. This is important because it will give you ideas for inclusion in the “Suggested Next Steps” section for each standard.

### Collate and rate your information

* Once you have gathered all your information, complete the online version of the **self-assessment tool**. This can be found on the CSS webpage.
* A copy of these instructions is provided on the opening page of the self-assessment tool.
* Enter the information about your congregation/parish, including the name and email address of your chairperson. There is also a field to record the date on which you completed the assessment.
* Then proceed progressively through each standard. Begin by re-reading each standard and each of its elements.
* Carefully consider the extent to which each of these statements is accurate or ‘true’ using the information you gathered in your discussions with people as well as your own knowledge base and impressions.
* Now **rate** each element of the standards according to the information you have gathered. Choose the rating that best corresponds with your findings. There are 5 ratings and they are quite straight forward. Select one of the following:

1. “*We haven’t started on this yet*” if work hasn’t yet commenced
2. “*We’ve made a promising start*” if work has begun
3. “*We’re about half way*” if it’s progressing quite well
4. “*We’re almost there*” if almost complete and
5. “*Yes, we meet this!*” if it’s all done.

* Don’t be worried about being critical or about giving a “low” rating. It is very important to be honest because this is the only way your congregation leaders will know what needs to be improved.
* Use the **comments** section to add any clarifications or explainers to help your leadership or council understand your rating. You may also wish to include examples of how the standard is, or is not being met, in this section. If you don’t think any clarification or examples are needed, just leave the “Comments” section blank.

### Suggest Next Steps

* Now consider suggestions for the ‘Suggested Next Steps’ section. This section is important because it will form the basis for the congregation’s Child Safety Plan that your leadership team or council will develop and follow.
* In developing ‘Next Steps’, focus on those statements where the rating is low or lowish ie:

1. “*We haven’t started on this yet*”
2. “*We’ve made a promising start*
3. “*We’re about half way*”

* This is because these are likely to be the areas of child safety risk for your congregation.
* Carefully identify strategies or activities that the congregation could put in place to reduce the risk, improve the rating, and meet the standard.
* Record these in the “Suggested Next Steps” section at the bottom of the page. For examples of suggestions to include in this section, please refer to the CSS webpage at [www.lca.org.au/css](http://www.lca.org.au/css)
* Suggest as many or as few as needed for leadership to consider. It is okay to identify only one or two strategies for some of the standards while for others, you may wish to make a number of suggestions.
* Be as creative as possible and, very importantly, use the suggestions from your interviews. Remember there are no limits and these are only suggestions for your council. Also don’t overlook the priority areas.
* Complete these steps for each of the 10 standards.
* There is a page to enter the date you submit your self-assessment. But before you enter the date, view the Preview Form on the Summary page of the tool. Scroll through, check that everything is correct and that there is a response in every field (except for next steps 2 to 5 as appropriate). Correct, update or add information as needed by returning to the appropriate page.
* Select “Save and Continue Later” and enter your email address when prompted to obtain a link that can be shared with other assessment team members. This provides the ability to collaborate and share the workload, and also provides a means for you to return at another time to continue working on the assessment.
* Download a copy of the Preview Form (pdf format) so that you have a copy that can be shared as needed.
* Upon final completion of the self-assessment tool:
  + download a final copy of the Preview Form
  + before you press “submit”, be aware that this will finalise the self-assessment. No more adjustments will be possible, and you will not be able to access or edit this self-assessment.
  + When you are sure of completion, press “submit”. Your completed self-assessment will be automatically delivered to your chairperson via an email (this is because you will have provided your chairperson’s email address in the opening pages of the self-assessment).
* Send a copy of the pdf to your secretary and pastor via an email.

### Share your information with council or leadership

* Arrange to attend the next leadership meeting to speak to your findings and answer any questions that the leadership team might have.
* Take a printed copy of this information gathering notetaker and your completed self-assessment form with you to the council meeting. Alternatively, take your laptop along to the meeting with the above documents. This will ensure you have your information easily available as you and the council discuss the findings.

## Congregation/Parish Information

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| *Please type or write your information in the fields displaying* | |
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| **Congregation or Parish** |  |
| **District** |  |
| **Pastor(s)** *If your congregation or parish is vacant, enter Vacant in this field* |  |
| **Congregation Chairperson or  Parish Council Chairperson** |  |
| **Chairperson’s Email Address** |  |
| **Name(s) of Assessor(s)** |  |
| **Date Assessment Completed** *Only enter this date when completed* |  |
| **Date submitted to Church or  Parish Leadership/Council** *Only enter this date when submitted* |  |

Please refer to the Self-Assessment Guidelines and the Child Safety Self-Assessment Instructional Video both located on the CSS webpage at [www.lca.org.au/css](http://www.lca.org.au/css) for more detailed instructions, examples and guidance

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| STANDARD 1: Our culture, leadership and Governance are child safe Child safety is embedded in the culture, leadership, and governance of our congregation. Our congregation prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and demonstrates this through all levels of its leadership. Our congregation has no tolerance for child abuse in any form. | | |
| STANDARD 1 ELEMENTS | |  |
| **1.1** | Our “Statement of Commitment to Child Safety” is displayed within our congregation spaces and is communicated using various means to our community | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **1.2** | Our pastor(s) and other leaders model a child safe culture by acknowledging the vulnerabilities of children and reminding us of our shared responsibility to keep children safe | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **1.3** | Our pastor(s) and other leaders communicate important messages about child safety to our congregation | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **1.4** | Our leadership understands that child safety must be prioritised in decision-making when child safety concerns are raised | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **1.5** | Our pastor(s) and other leaders understand their legal responsibilities, are aware of the required steps, and know who to contact and report to if there is a child safety concern | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **1.6** | Everyone at our congregation displays appropriate behaviours when interacting with children | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **1.7** | Our leadership team encourages employees and volunteers to raise questions or concerns about child safety | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | |
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| **Comments:** *Only add comments here if you wish to add clarification, explanation, or examples to guide council members regarding your assessment. It is not a requirement to add comments.* |
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| STANDARD 1 SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS: | |  |
|  | *Use your comments and ratings to form suggested ‘Next Steps’ (as appropriate) for the congregation.*  *This section is important because it will form the basis for the congregation’s Child Safety Plan that your leadership team or council will develop.*  *It is not necessary to suggest all five steps – suggest as many or as few as needed for leadership to consider.* | | |
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| STANDARD 2: We value, respect and listen to children Our congregation takes the views of children seriously. We are committed to listening to children and to providing them with opportunities to participate and be heard. We work especially hard to make sure children can raise concerns if they need to. | | |
| STANDARD 2 ELEMENTS | |  |
| **2.1** | Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers acknowledge children during worship and other activities and show children that they are valued and loved by including them in worship and prayer | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **2.2** | Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers value the opinions of children by asking them about what helps to make them feel safe and comfortable | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **2.3** | Our congregation helps children develop and strengthen their church friendships | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **2.4** | Our congregation spaces display child-friendly information which encourages children to speak up if they have a concern and children know who they can talk to if they need support | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **2.5** | Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers know to listen to children and take them seriously if they raise a concern or are worried about something | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **2.6** | Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers understand that some children have additional needs and require extra support to help them engage in activities or to raise concerns if they need to | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | |
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| STANDARD 3: We include families Our congregation works in partnership with families and carers to keep children safe. We are committed to keeping families informed, to listening to their concerns, and to helping them be involved in decisions that affect their children. | | |
| STANDARD 3 ELEMENTS | |  |
| **3.1** | Our leadership advises parents that we take their children’s safety and well-being seriously | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **3.2** | Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers talk to parents and carers about their children’s wellbeing and safety and keep them informed about how we keep their children safe | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **3.3** | LCA child safety related policies, procedures and resources are accessible for parents and carers | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **3.4** | We remind parents and carers that they can raise concerns with us at any time, we make sure that parents and carers know who they can talk to if they have a complaint, and we listen and respond when concerns are raised | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **3.5** | Our leadership reminds parents and carers that families also have responsibility for keeping their children safe while they are engaged in congregational activities | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **3.6** | We invite parents and carers to contribute to activity planning and decision-making which relates to their children | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **3.7** | We seek feedback from parents and carers about child safety in our congregation using a range of methods | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| STANDARD 4: We respect and welcome children with diverse needs and children from diverse backgrounds Our congregation recognises that children from diverse backgrounds have unique vulnerabilities and are more likely to be at risk or experience abuse and neglect. We know this is particularly true for children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, children from refugee backgrounds, children from other diverse cultural groups, children with disabilities, and children who are unable to live with their families.  We appreciate that all children have the right to worship God and to participate freely and happily in our church community. With this in mind, we are committed to minimising the barriers that these children face as we work towards ensuring that our congregation is a safe and welcoming place for all God’s children. | | |
| STANDARD 4 ELEMENTS | |  |
| **4.1** | Our pastor(s) and other leaders communicate to our congregation that children from diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs have the right to worship in the same way as all God’s children | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **4.2** | Our leadership promotes cultural understanding and inclusivity that reflects our wider community | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **4.3** | Our congregation actively encourages children and families from different cultural groups and backgrounds to participate in worship and church activities | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **4.4** | Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers understand that children with special needs or children from diverse backgrounds find it harder to raise concerns or make reports | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **4.5** | Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers work hard to identify and then reduce barriers faced by children with diverse needs to help them participate and raise concerns if they need to | | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| STANDARD 5: Our people are safe, informed and supported Our congregation ensures that our employees and volunteers with designated roles that involve interaction with children as well as our pastor(s) and leadership team are suitable, safe, well informed, and supported. | | |
| STANDARD 5 ELEMENTS | |  |
| **5.1** | Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers have current and valid working with children type clearances | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **5.2** | Our leadership makes it clear that work with children cannot commence without a current and valid clearance | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **5.3** | Our screening compliance is reported to our leadership at regular intervals | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **5.4** | Our leadership has a system to keep track of dates for screening renewals | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **5.5** | Our leadership requires us to follow LCA procedures when recruiting an employee or volunteer for roles with children, including contacting referees, even when the prospective employee or volunteer is well known to us | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **5.6** | Our leadership ensures all leadership members, employees, and volunteers have clear role descriptions which include requirements to follow LCA policies and procedures and also make reference to child safety requirements | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **5.7** | Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers understand and uphold the obligations outlined in the LCA Child Safety Code of Conduct2 and the LCA Standards of Ethical Behaviour | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **5.8** | Our leadership maintains accurate and confidential records of recruitment processes for all leadership, employee, and volunteer appointments | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | |
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| STANDARD 5 SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS: | |  |
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| STANDARD 6: Our reporting and complaints system is child-focused Our congregation has a reporting and complaints process which has a clear focus on child safety, is accessible to children and is clear regarding roles and responsibilities. | | |
| STANDARD 6 ELEMENTS | |  |
| **6.1** | Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers who engage with children understand their respective roles and legal responsibilities regarding mandatory reporting, reportable conduct, and failure to report | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **6.2** | Processes for reporting abuse of a child, a child at risk, or grooming of a child are displayed within our congregation spaces and are accessible to everyone | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **6.3** | Child-friendly versions for reporting abuse of a child, a child at risk, or grooming of a child are also displayed | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **6.4** | Children in our congregation are provided with a variety of ways to make complaints, raise concerns, or give feedback | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **6.5** | Our pastor(s) and other leaders know to support our employees and volunteers in making reports if they reasonably suspect a child is at risk or has been harmed | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **6.6** | In situations where child safety concerns are raised in relation to a member of our congregation, our leadership understands its responsibilities to report to the LCA Professional Standards Department and to follow the relevant LCA policies and procedures | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **6.7** | Our leadership maintains accurate, confidential, and secure records of all complaints and child safety concerns | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **6.8** | All complaints and reports relating to child safety concerns are taken seriously by our leadership, managed promptly, and all parties treated respectfully. | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | |
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| STANDARD 7: Our people understand child safety Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers participate in regular training that provides them with an understanding of the fundamentals of child abuse, the importance of ethical conduct, how to respond to concerns, and how to prioritise child safety in a congregational context. | | |
| STANDARD 7 ELEMENTS | |  |
| **7.1** | Our pastor(s), other leaders, and all employees and volunteers who engage with children are compliant with the LCA Safe Church Training requirements | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **7.2** | Compliance with the requirements of Safe Church Training is regularly reported to our leadership | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **7.3** | Our congregation has a system in place to remind our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers when Safe Church Training is due | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **7.4** | Our pastors, other leaders, and all employees and volunteers who engage with children have a thorough understanding of children at risk, child abuse and its indicators (including grooming), child safety risk assessment and risk management, reporting responsibilities, how to respond to disclosures of abuse, and the characteristics of institutional abuse | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **7.5** | Our leadership supports our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers to undertake further child safety training as appropriate. | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | |
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| STANDARD 8: Our risk management has a child-safety focusOur pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers have the knowledge and skills to identify and reduce risks to children in relation to physical and online surroundings, church activities, and church-related outings. | | |
| STANDARD 8 ELEMENTS | |  |
| **8.1** | All congregation activities involving children are carefully risk-managed using child safety risk management processes | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **8.2** | Our leadership, pastor(s), and relevant employees and volunteers know how to reduce identified risks to children and | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **8.3** | Our leadership, pastor(s), and relevant employees and volunteers know to cancel activities if risks to children cannot be adequately reduced | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **8.4** | We regularly review our church’s physical spaces and reduce identified risks to children | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **8.5** | Our leadership provides information to employees, volunteers, children, and families about appropriate and safe online engagement with children as appropriate | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | |
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| **Comments:** *Only add comments here if you wish to add clarification, explanation or examples to guide council members regarding your assessment. It is not a requirement to add comments.* |
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| STANDARD 8 SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS: | |  |
|  | *Use your initial notes and ratings to form suggested ‘Next Steps’ (as appropriate) for the congregation.*  *This section is important because it will form the basis for the congregation’s Child Safety Plan that your leadership team or council will develop.*  *It is not necessary to suggest all five steps – suggest as many or as few as needed for leadership to consider.* | | |
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| STANDARD 9: We regularly review our child safety progress Our congregation is committed to implementing these standards and to making sure that progress is regularly reviewed. | | |
| STANDARD 9 ELEMENTS | |  |
| **9.1** | Child safety is on the agenda for all our leadership meetings, including the Annual General Meeting | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **9.2** | Our leadership ensures that a self-assessment of our congregation’s child-safety progress occurs once a year | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **9.3** | Our leadership oversees the preparation of a Child Safety Plan each year using information from our annual self-assessment | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **9.4** | Our leadership oversees implementation of the Child Safety Plan and regularly reviews progress | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | |
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| **9.5** | Each year, we submit our Child Safety Plan to the district’s Professional Standards Officer for collation. | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | |
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| **Comments:** *Only add comments here if you wish to add clarification, explanation or examples to guide council members regarding your assessment. It is not a requirement to add comments.* |
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| STANDARD 9 SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS: | |  |
|  | *Use your initial notes and ratings to form suggested ‘Next Steps’ (as appropriate) for the congregation.*  *This section is important because it will form the basis for the congregation’s Child Safety Plan that your leadership team or council will develop.*  *It is not necessary to suggest all five steps – suggest as many or as few as needed for leadership to consider.* | | |
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| STANDARD 10: Our policies and procedures are child safe The church has clear policies and procedures about child safety that help our people to develop and maintain a safe environment for children. | | | |
| STANDARD 10 ELEMENTS | | |  |
| **10.1** | | Our leadership follows LCA policies and procedures that relate to child safety | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | | |
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| **10.2** | | LCA policies and procedures that relate to child safety are accessible for children, families, pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | | |
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| **10.3** | | Our leadership encourages children and families to provide feedback regarding the implementation of our child safety policies and procedures | |
|  | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | | | |
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| **10.4** | | Our church leadership analyses complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to help us improve. | |
|  | | *Observations about this element and to what extent you think it is met:* | |
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| **Comments:** *Only add comments here if you wish to add clarification, explanation or examples to guide council members regarding your assessment. It is not a requirement to add comments.* |
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| STANDARD 10 SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS: | |  |
|  | *Use your initial notes and ratings to form suggested ‘Next Steps’ (as appropriate) for the congregation.*  *This section is important because it will form the basis for the congregation’s Child Safety Plan that your leadership team or council will develop.*  *It is not necessary to suggest all five steps – suggest as many or as few as needed for leadership to consider.* | | |
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