

CHILD SAFETY STANDARDS FOR CONGREGATIONS



Suggestions and Tips for Child Safety Assessors

Tips for talking with people during the self-assessment

Tip 1:

Try to ask open-ended questions like:

- 'In what ways ...'
- 'Can you give me some examples ...'
- 'What could be done differently in relation to ...?'
- 'Can you tell me more about what you mean ...?'
- 'Can you elaborate ...?'

Tip 2:

If you have to ask a closed-ended or yes/no-type question such as, 'How many ...', 'Does your congregation ...' or 'Do you think ...', try to follow it up with an open-ended question like those listed above.

Tip 3:

Keep it informal and be friendly.

Tip 4:

When meeting with children, try to avoid sitting behind a desk or a table. Perhaps sit on the floor with the children or on chairs in a friendly circle.

Possible questions to ask

These example questions are designed to help you gather the right information about how well your congregation is meeting the standards and help you identify some possible strategies or next steps to suggest to your council.

They are just suggestions – you don't have to ask all of these. They are just to get you started and to help your thinking.

Also remember, it is okay if people don't know the answers to some of these questions – so please reassure them that some of this will be new to the congregation and that it is okay to not have all the answers.

Please adjust the wording to suit your style and the people you are talking with.

Standard 1: Child-safe leadership, governance and culture

Possible questions to ask the chairperson and other council members:

1. Is child safety a standing item on your council meeting agendas? Do you think it should be?
2. Is child safety a standing item on your annual general meeting agenda? Do you think it should be?
3. Does your council receive regular updates about compliance with working with children type checks?
4. Does your council receive regular updates about Safe Church Training compliance?
5. If not, how does the council keep up to date with compliance with working with children type checks and Safe Church Training?
6. Does your congregation have the LCA's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety displayed somewhere in the church?
7. Is this statement periodically communicated and promoted across the congregation?
8. Does the council provide regular information about child safety to the congregation via bulletins, newsletters, the church webpage or social media? Do you think this would be helpful?
9. Does the pastor and council communicate child-safe messages to the congregation during worship, ministry or informal events? If so, what type of messages and in what ways?
10. Would you like some tips or suggestions from our district or churchwide offices about child safety information and messages that would be useful to share with the congregation?
11. In what ways does the council promote child safety to the congregation? Can you give me some examples?
12. Can you think of anything your council could do differently or better to promote child safety and the importance of keeping children safe in your congregation? What might these be?
13. Do you think your council prioritises child safety? In what ways?
14. Do you think the pastor and your council members model a child-safe culture and child-safe behaviours? In what ways do they do this? Can you give me some examples?
15. What else could council or leadership do to model child-safe culture and behaviours?

16. Do you think your council members and pastor have a thorough understanding of their child safety duty of care and their legal responsibilities relating to the protection of children?
17. Do you think the council would know what to do if a person with a history of child sexual offending commenced worshipping in your congregation?
18. Do you think all council members and the pastor are familiar with the LCA's child-protection-related policies and procedures? For example, the Prevention of Risk of Harm from a Person of Concern policy and procedure?
19. What do you think the council's learning needs are in relation to the management of child safety risks in the congregation?
20. Do you think the congregation understands what is and isn't appropriate in relation to physical contact with children and young people during church activities? What else could be done in relation to this?
21. Do you think the leadership team here has a child-safe culture?
22. What would help the leadership team to develop its child-safe culture even further?

Possible questions to ask the pastor:

1. How do you see your role in promoting a culture of child safety in your congregation?
2. Does your children's or youth ministry integrate child safety concepts into its activities and events?
3. If so, in what ways?
4. What could be done differently in relation to this, or what suggestions do you have for improving this?
5. Do you think the gospel and the Scriptures provide us with good guidance concerning the vulnerabilities of children and their need for protection?
6. Would you like to see more of this integrated into worship and ministry in your congregation?
7. If so, what do you think would be the best way to go about doing this?

Possible questions for children and young people:

(Adjust for age appropriateness)

1. In what ways do the adults in your congregation teach you and each other about keeping children safe? Can you give me some examples?
2. How do the adults in the congregation show you that your safety is important?
3. What could the adults do better to help keep everyone, especially children, really safe?

Possible questions for parents, family members, youth leaders, Sunday school leaders and teachers:

1. How does the congregation leadership provide you with information about child safety and the congregation's commitment to keeping children safe?
2. Can you provide some examples?
3. Do you think the council or leadership team could do more to highlight the importance of keeping children safe?
4. If so, what else could the council or leadership team be doing?
5. In what ways do you think this congregation shows that it takes child safety seriously?
6. Do you think the leadership team here has a child-safe culture?
7. If yes, can you highlight in what ways?
8. If not, can you elaborate?

Standard 2: Valuing children

1. Are children acknowledged during worship and prayer? If so, in what ways?
2. Do children participate in worship and prayer? If so, in what ways?
3. Do you think more could be done to help children feel welcome in worship and to help them participate in worship and prayer activities? If so, in what ways?
4. In what ways do congregation leaders value the opinions of children and young people?
5. In what ways do congregation leaders show that they value and care for children and young people?
6. Do any of the congregation leaders ask the children and young people if they feel safe and comfortable when they come to church or are involved in church activities? If so, in what ways?
7. What more could be done within your congregation to discover what children and young people think?

Possible questions for children and young people:

(Adjust for age appropriateness)

8. Do you feel that the pastor and other adults in the congregation involve the children enough in worship and prayer? Can you give me some examples?
9. Do the pastor or other adults, such as the Sunday school teacher or youth leaders, ask about how you feel at church and whether you feel safe here?

Standard 3: Involving parents and families

1. Does the congregation leadership tell parents that they take the safety of their children very seriously? If so, in what ways?
2. And does the leadership advise parents about how they keep children safe? Can you give me some examples of this?
3. How does the congregation's leadership remind parents that they can raise concerns at any time?
4. How do parents know who they can talk to if they are worried about the care of their children?
5. In what ways are parents encouraged to be involved in planning children's activities?
6. In what ways does the congregation seek feedback from parents and families?
7. Are parents reminded that they are responsible for looking after their children and making sure they are safe during worship? How does the congregation remind parents of this?

Standard 4: Diversity

1. How does the congregation show its support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture?
2. In what ways does the congregation encourage and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to participate in worship?
3. Does the congregation display any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural information, the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander flag, or other related objects?
4. Does the leadership or the pastor tell the congregation about God's love for children with disabilities and children from other cultures?

5. In what ways does the congregation reflect the cultural diversity of its community?
6. In what ways are other cultures promoted by the congregation?
7. In what ways does the congregation show its support for other cultures?
8. How does the congregation encourage children and young people with disabilities to participate in worship and other congregational activities? Can you provide some examples?
9. How does the congregation help and support children and young people with disabilities? Can you provide some examples?
10. Do you think the leadership understands that children from diverse backgrounds and children with disabilities are more vulnerable? Can you explain why you believe this?
11. Do you think the leadership understands that children from diverse backgrounds and children with disabilities find it harder to ask for help or raise concerns? Can you explain why you think this?

Standard 5: Safe people

1. Does the pastor (or pastors) have a current and valid working with children type clearance?
2. Do all members of the church council or leadership team have current and valid working with children type clearances?
3. Do all church employees have current and valid working with children type clearances?
4. Do all church volunteers who work with children have current and valid working with children type clearances?
5. Does the leadership make it clear that work with children cannot commence until a current and valid working with children type clearance is provided? If so, how do they let you know? Are there reminders in the newsletter, bulletins or on social media? Or are there verbal reminders after worship or on the notice boards?
6. Does the church council or leadership team receive regular reports about compliance with working with children type checks? If so, how often? And who provides the reports?
7. Does the church council or leadership team have a system for knowing when screening renewals are due? If yes, how does this work?
8. How does the church council or leadership ensure that LCA procedures are followed when recruiting volunteers or employees for roles with children?
9. Does the leadership insist that referees are contacted when the volunteer is well known to the congregation? How does the council let you know this?
10. Does the leadership team keep a record of appointments of employees and volunteers?
11. Does the congregation have role descriptions for all volunteer roles with children? Which roles?
12. Do these role descriptions refer to child safety?
13. Do you think the pastor, the leadership team and all volunteers and employees uphold the LCA Standards of Ethical Behaviour? Can you describe how they show this and in what ways?

Standard 6: Child-safe complaints and reporting

Possible questions to ask the chairperson and other council members:

1. Do you think the leadership team understand their legal responsibilities to report child abuse concerns? Can you elaborate? What do you think could be done to help them better understand?
2. How well do you think leadership members understand their responsibilities when child safety concerns are raised about someone in the congregation? Can you elaborate?
3. Does the leadership keep confidential records of child safety concerns within the congregation?

Questions for all:

1. Do you think all people working or volunteering for the congregation understand their legal responsibilities to report child abuse concerns? What do you think could be done to help people better understand?
2. How well and in what ways does the leadership team encourage congregation members to raise concerns about child safety?
3. How does the leadership remind the congregation about the importance of reporting child abuse concerns?
4. Does the congregation have posters about reporting child abuse displayed in the church? Do you think these are up to date? Do you think they are helpful?
5. In what ways does the leadership team show that it takes child safety concerns seriously?
6. How are children helped to raise concerns or give feedback?
7. If a child or young person within the congregation is feeling unsafe or being hurt, either at church, at home, at school or elsewhere, is there someone in the congregation who they could talk to? And how would they know who to turn to for help?
8. Do you have any information on display in the congregation or available for children and young people that tells them about making a report if they are worried about something to do with their safety?

Possible questions to ask children and young people:

(Adjust for age appropriateness)

1. If you were worried about something to do with church or felt uncomfortable, would you know who to talk to?
2. How would you know who to talk to for advice or help?
3. Is there any information that helps you know who you can talk to?

Standard 7: Training and education – our people understand child safety

1. Has the pastor (or pastors) completed levels 1 and 2 of Safe Church Training and is this up to date?
2. Have all members of the church council or leadership team completed levels 1 and 2 of Safe Church Training and is this up to date?
3. Have all church employees and volunteers in leadership roles (such as Sunday school superintendents) who work with children completed levels 1 and 2 of Safe Church Training and is this up to date?

4. Have all church employees and volunteers who work with children completed level 1 of Safe Church Training and is this up to date?
5. Does the church council or leadership receive regular updates about Safe Church Training compliance within the congregation? If yes, how frequently are reports provided to the council or leadership?

Standard 8: Child-safe risk management

1. Does the leadership require that risk assessments are carried out for all child-related activities (such as outings, sleepovers, excursions, Sunday school activities, youth group activities, lunches, dinners etc)?
2. If so, how does this take place?
3. Does the congregation leadership or council advise those who work or volunteer with children about how to undertake risk assessments for child-related activities?
4. If risks to children are identified, how are they managed? Is there a risk management tool that the congregation uses? Do people know how to access it and how to use it?
5. What happens if risks to children are identified and can't be adequately reduced? Will the activity still go ahead? Does the leadership or council make this known to volunteers and employees who work with children?
6. Do you know who should be notified if the risks to children are thought to be too high, and who decides whether an activity with children will go ahead or not? (An example might be that there are not enough people available to supervise children for an activity or outing because someone calls in sick at the last moment or more children turn up for an activity than available supervisors.)

Standard 9: Regular review

1. Does the council or leadership team regularly review its child safety progress? If so, in what ways? (Please note the development of a child safety plan and the placement of child safety on the council agenda will help this to happen.)

Standard 10: Policies and procedures

1. Does the council or leadership team review and analyse complaints, concerns and safety incidents to help improvement?
2. How well do you think the leadership or council understands and follows the LCA policies and procedures relating to child safety?
3. Does the council or leadership team advise the congregation and community that the LCA policies and procedures relating to child safety are all available at www.lca.org.au/policies?
4. Does the council or leadership encourage families and the church community to provide feedback about child safety policies and procedures?