

# CHILD SAFETY STANDARDS FOR CONGREGATIONS



## Guidelines for Preparing the Child Safety Plan

### Purpose

In our church, the safety and welfare of children is paramount.

A Child Safety Plan will help congregations improve child safety and record child safety progress.

A Child Safety Plan outlines the steps the congregation or parish leadership team has agreed to implement to meet the LCA's Child Safety Standards for Congregations.

Preparing a Child Safety Plan is a leadership obligation, consistent with Child Safety Standard 1: child safety is 'embedded in the culture, leadership and governance' of the congregation.

Implementing a Child Safety Plan is an LCA policy requirement for every Australian congregation.

The Child Safety Plan tool is very similar to the self-assessment tool and is simple to complete. It differs from the self-assessment tool because it is a record of all the next steps that the congregation or parish leadership team has agreed to.

### Instructions

The leadership team, or its representative, develops the Child Safety Plan using information in the congregation's Child Safety Self-Assessment.

There are six simple overarching steps for leadership teams to follow in developing the Child Safety Plan:

1. Review the self-assessment information.
2. Agree on ratings for each Child Safety Standard.
3. Agree on next steps.
4. Delegate tasks and decide time frames.
5. Complete the online Child Safety Plan tool.
6. Implement the completed Child Safety Plan and review its progress.

## **1. Review the self-assessment information**

Invite the assessor or assessors to attend a leadership meeting to present their findings from the self-assessment.

Ask the assessor to send a copy of the self-assessment to all council or leadership team members before the meeting, and ask for a printed or electronic copy of the self-assessment to be brought to the meeting.

Carefully consider the self-assessment information, scrutinise it, and take ownership of it.

This includes reviewing the suggested ratings for each element, as well as the suggestions for next steps, which the assessor has made.

In particular, consider:

- a) whether the ratings are an accurate reflection
- b) whether the suggested next steps will be sufficient to address the identified gaps or risks.

Take note of those elements where the suggested ratings are low – these are the areas of child safety risk in your congregation that should be addressed.

Also take note of the elements where the suggested ratings are high – these are areas of strength for your congregation; they should be noted and celebrated.

Use the meeting to ask the assessor for examples and clarifications about the findings. Remember to thank the assessor at the end of the meeting!

## **2. Agree on ratings for each Child Safety Standard**

Once the assessor(s) has completed their presentation of the findings, the leadership team then needs to:

- Consider the ratings that the assessor(s) has suggested, for each element of each standard.
- Either endorse the ratings that the assessor(s) has suggested or change the ratings (eg if the ratings are considered to be too high or too low).
- Record the reasons for any changes to ratings.
- Record the agreed ratings in the minutes of the meeting.
- Appoint a person from the leadership team or another representative to record these agreed ratings using the online Child Safety Plan tool.

This step can either be done after the assessor(s) has left the meeting, at a subsequent leadership meeting, or with the assessor(s) still present. It really is up to your leadership team, to decide what will work best for your congregation.

### **3. Agree on next steps**

Consider each of the suggested next steps from the self-assessment.

If the leadership team agrees:

- Endorse or amend the suggestions made, recording the reasons for any changes in the minutes.
- Discard or 'park' any suggestions that the leadership team thinks may be unnecessary, recording the reasons for such views.
- Discuss and endorse any additional suggestions that the leadership team thinks might be needed.

Focus on suggestions that will address elements where the ratings are low – these are the areas of child safety risk for the congregation and, therefore, the areas that require attention.

Also focus on priorities – for example, don't ignore critical issues, such as screening or gaps in Safe Church Training.

Be realistic about what is achievable for your congregation and don't be too ambitious in your expectations. It is okay to only choose a small number of actions in your agreed next steps section. As long as you have covered the priorities, that is okay. You can always include additional actions later.

This step can either be done after the assessor(s) has left the meeting, at a subsequent leadership meeting, or with the assessor(s) still present. It really is up to your leadership team members to decide what will work best for your congregation.

Record the agreed next steps in your leadership team meeting minutes.

### **4. Delegate tasks and decide time frames**

Identify potential people in the congregation to be responsible for each of the agreed next steps.

Confirm these people are prepared to undertake each task.

Consider and agree upon appropriate time frames for each task – considering priorities such as screening or Safe Church Training.

This step might need to be conducted and finalised between meetings.

### **5. Complete the online Child Safety Plan tool**

This is very straightforward and can be completed by anyone on the leadership team or by a representative.

The online Child Safety Plan tool can be found on the CSS webpage at [www.lca.org.au/css](http://www.lca.org.au/css)

It can either be completed in one sitting or worked on over a series of sittings, using the Save and Continue Later button.

To complete the Child Safety Plan tool, follow these simple steps:

1. Fill in the Congregation/Parish information page.
2. Enter the rating for each element, which the leadership team has agreed upon, by selecting the appropriate button.
3. Fill in the boxes relating to 'agreed next steps', 'by whom' and 'by when' in the designated areas for each of the Child Safety Standards.
4. Press the Submit button – the completed Child Safety Plan will automatically be sent to your chairperson and the Professional Standards Officer in your district for collation. Remember, once the Submit button has been pressed, it is not possible to make any changes.

## **6. Implement the completed Child Safety Plan and review its progress**

This is the most important part of the leadership team's child safety work.

The leadership team is responsible for:

- overseeing the implementation of all agreed next steps
- regularly reviewing progress towards completing each of the agreed next steps – updates and discussions, at least quarterly, in meetings of the leadership team are recommended
- regularly communicating with the congregation regarding progress
- celebrating achievements and progress
- providing support to those who are completing tasks
- identifying and managing any newly identified child safety risks, as well as amending the Child Safety Plan as required.

Please note that additional ideas, for meeting the standards, can be found on the LCA Child Safety Standards webpage at [www.lca.org.au/css](http://www.lca.org.au/css)

This webpage also includes links to the LCA's Child Safety Plan instructional video and the LCA's Learning Hub resource for the Child Safety Standards.

Support and assistance with developing and completing Child Safety Plans is also available from:

1. your district Professional Standards Officer
2. the Child Safety Standards Implementation Support Officer
3. the LCA Child Protection Officer.

Contact details for each of these people can be found on the CSS webpage.