



# Guidance Document: Risk Assessment and Mitigation Strategies for Safe Environments

The emotional, physical, and spiritual safety, well-being and dignity of Children and Adults at Risk is an integral part of the teachings and values of the Catholic Church. Risk assessments and mitigation strategies for activities involving Children and/or Adults at Risk are an important safeguarding strategy used to assist us to create safe environments for all participants.

Risk Management is incorporated into all aspects of the work of the Archdiocese. This Guidance Document describes the steps taken to support the identifying, reporting and review of risk. It is the responsibility of all those involved to be proactive in risk management and following this guidance.

## Risk Management Process

Communication and consultation are key to the process of risk management and are essential at each step of the risk management process. Involving others to consider differing perspectives and knowledge is essential for effective risk management and is commonly referred to as socialising risk.



## **Step 1: Establish Objectives and Context**

Risk Assessments are undertaken:

- To achieve the principles of the Protocol: Safeguarding Risk Assessments.
- In all planning, activities, processes and responsibilities related to safeguarding.
- For both internal and external risks that have an impact on a proposed activities.

## **Step 2: Identify Risks**

In the Risk column, identify the key risks. Risks may be identified using the following sources:

- Planned workshops, meetings or research.
- The Archdiocese Safeguarding Risk Management Register, complaints and feedback, incidents, accidents, risks and data breach and research.
- Findings from internal and external audits.
- Exit interviews for cessation of employment.
- Employee and community feedback and surveys.
- Internal reporting processes such as WHS notifications.
- Self-assessment audits from previous years.

## **Step 3: Analyse the Risk**

Risk analysis is the process that is used to understand the nature, source and cause of the identified risk, which will also assist in rating the risk. It is used to establish an understanding of the risks and to provide input to the evaluation of risks, to make decisions on whether risks need to be treated and the most appropriate strategies to treat the risks. How detailed the risk analysis ought to be will depend on the risks identified.

Team members involved in the discussions about risk shall:

- Establish a shared understanding of:
  - The nature of the risks
  - The root cause of the risks
  - The possible consequences or impacts of the risks
  - How often the risks occur and
  - Any patterns for the risk and relationship of the risk
  - Identify any relationships of the current identified risk to existing risks.
  - Prioritise the risks if there have been many identified.
- Group the risk by risk type by selecting at least one of the following risk types.

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- Behavioural Risk – Risk of loss or foregone value due to patterns of behavior for example adults consuming alcohol whilst supervising children’s activities.
- WHS Risk – Risk relating to the Work, Health or Safety of Team Members and Others in the workplace for example not having appropriate safety in place at a parish BBQ.
- Financial Risk – Risk of loss or foregone value due to uncertainty of a return or potential financial loss for example paying for an event and not being able to recoup the money.
- Reputational Risk – Risk of loss of organizational image or brand for example the Archdiocese of Sydney being in the media due to an inappropriate incident at a parish run event.
- In the Risk Validation column identify possible impacts arising from the risk. Consider the current risk control measures.
- In the Risk Rating Column, determine the risk rating by assessing the likelihood and consequences of the risk using the Safeguarding Risk Matrix. Consider the controls and how effective these controls are for example, Policy and Protocol requirements.
  - Likelihood is the chance that something might happen. It can be defined, determined or measured objectively or subjectively and can be expressed either quantitatively or qualitatively.
  - Consequences is the outcome of an event and has an effect. A single event can generate a range of consequences, which can have positive and negative effects or even knock on effects.

### Step 4: Evaluate the Risk

After each identified risk is rated, it is evaluated to determine the responsible person and/or if a risk should be escalated. The responsible person must ensure that the risk management process has been carried out and effectively managed.

Enter the person responsible using the following risk management responsibilities identification guide:

- Negligible Risk – the action is the responsibility of the person managing the activity.
- Low Risk – the action is the responsibility of the person managing the activity.
- Medium Risk – the action is the responsibility of the Parish Priest and person managing the activity with advice from the Safeguarding Office

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- Significant Risk – the action is the responsibility of the Parish Priest and must be discussed with the Safeguarding Office prior to an activity proceeding.
- High Risk – the action is the responsibility of the Parish Priest and must be brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Office prior to the activity proceeding.
- Very High Risk – the action is the responsibility of the Parish Priest and must be brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Office prior to an activity proceeding.
- Extreme Risk – The action is the responsibility of the Parish Priest/Agency Head and must be brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Office prior to an activity proceeding.

### Step 5: Treat the Risk

Once the risk has been evaluated, efficient and effective risk treatments must be determined. The treatment must be proportionate to both the identified risk and the Archdiocese tolerance for that risk. It is not about managing the risk completely, instead about modifying the risk in some way to minimize negative impacts or improve positive impacts.

If the risk has been rated as Significant, High, Very High, or Extreme, it is important that the risk assessment is discussed with the Safeguarding Office to assist in assessing an appropriate response:

Control actions could be:

- Retain or accept the risk. If after controls are put in place, the remaining risk is deemed acceptable and can be retained then consider this option. However, plans should be put in place to manage the consequence of the risk should it occur.
- Control or reduce the impact of the risk occurring. For example, contingency planning, disaster recovery plans, insurance policies, emergency procedures and practices
- Prevent or reduce the likelihood of the risk occurring. For example, staff training and supervision, revisiting internal policies, procedures and practices, internal audit programs.
- Eliminate or avoid the risk. For example, by deciding not to start or continue the activity that gives rise to the risk.

Enter an agreed list of actions to treat the risk. The action needs to be appropriate, measurable and verifiable over time. For example, ensure that two adults are present with a group of children at all times.

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Enter a Due Date for the actions to be completed prior to the activity.

Enter information sources or controls to verify effective risk management. This will also assist in tracking or evaluating risk over time. For example, feedback from previous activities, Risk Register, internal processes and controls such as incident forms.

A residual risk may be applied at this point. The residual risk is the risk rating after all the control measures have been applied.

### **Step 6: Monitor and Review**

All risks will be monitored and reviewed following the activity. It may be necessary to re-evaluate the risks.

The Evaluation and Continuous Improvement Form must be completed and saved for future reference.

### **Related Documents**

**The following documents are related to this Guidance Document:**

- Protocol: Safeguarding Risk Assessments
- Guide to Completing a Risk Assessment for Activities involving Children and Adults at Risk
- Safeguarding Risk Matrix
- Safeguarding Risk Management Register
- Template: Risk Assessment and Mitigation Strategies Template
- Template: Evaluation and Continuous Improvement