

# Child Safe and Friendly Organisations:

## INTRODUCTORY FACTSHEET



*Ensuring that people who are in child-related work have the rigorous Working with Children Check contributes to the protection of children. People with the kinds of criminal histories that pose a risk to children can be deterred from applying for jobs with children and if they do apply can be prohibited from such work.*

**It is important to remember the Working with Children Check is only one of a number of strategies to help keep children safe.**

It is not a guarantee that someone is suitable to work with children. Employers and organisations providing services for children should think of a Working with Children Check like a swimming pool fence...a great safety measure but not a substitute for supervision or teaching a child to swim.

This factsheet provides suggestions of other strategies that can be implemented alongside the Working with Children Check, including thorough staff recruitment and selection procedures, risk management strategies and how to involve children in the creation of environments where they feel safe, valued and respected.

This factsheet introduces the concept of creating child safe and friendly environments for organisations that work with or care for children and young people. Please refer to "Useful Contacts and Organisations" or the Working with Children Check website [www.checkwwc.wa.gov.au](http://www.checkwwc.wa.gov.au) for details of organisations that provide more comprehensive information and services.

*This factsheet does not provide information on how to identify or report child abuse. For information on this refer to the Department for Child Protection website [www.childprotection.wa.gov.au](http://www.childprotection.wa.gov.au)*

### WHAT IS A CHILD SAFE AND FRIENDLY ORGANISATION?

A child safe and friendly organisation:

- Includes, involves and values children.
- Has child safe and friendly policies and procedures in place.
- Is vigilant in the recruitment, selection and screening of staff to ensure they are safe and suitable to care for children and young people.
- Supports and respects staff and volunteers by providing training and clear guidelines for employees and volunteers on how to work with and care for children and young people.

### INCLUDE AND VALUE CHILDREN

A child safe organisation involves children and young people in creating a safe and friendly environment. This is important because children and young people experience the organisation quite differently to the employees and volunteers. They can offer valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses, risks and dangers that might otherwise go undetected.

Children who are encouraged to express their own views are less vulnerable to harm and better able to contribute towards their own protection.

### SUGGESTIONS OF HOW TO INCLUDE AND VALUE CHILDREN:

- > Peer education: educate and train children and young people in the organisation to then impart knowledge to their peers on specific issues.
- > Feedback forms or surveys can be used to gain children's views on when they feel safe/unsafe, happy/unhappy and included/not included.
- > Form an interest group of children to consult when formulating a child safe and friendly policy or when undertaking risk assessments.
- > Ask children to write or suggest their own Code of Conduct that includes expected behaviour for their interactions with other children and staff
- > Include a child on the interview panel and get them to assist in forming interview questions. Ask them what they want to know about people who care for or work with them.



**help children  
tell you what they  
think and feel**

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### SUGGESTIONS OF HOW TO INCLUDE AND VALUE CHILDREN (continued):

- > Appoint a young person as a Youth Safety Officer or advocate for children and young people's issues in the organisation.
- > Educate children of their rights and what having rights means. Go to [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org) for a copy of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- > Make sure children know who to speak to if they feel unsafe or unhappy about something.
- > Develop a reporting process for children and young people to use when raising a concern. Look for alternative ways such as a message box, emails or nominate a Youth/Child Safety Officer.
- > Teach children protective behaviours and personal safety skills. For further information see 'Useful contacts and Organisations'.
- > Train staff in how to effectively listen to and communicate with children.

### A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY SHOULD INCLUDE:

Title and statement of commitment to child protection



Scope – Who is the policy for?



Legislative Requirements: (eg. Working with Children Check)



How the organisation will promote itself as a child safe and friendly organisation, including what information will be provided to parents and children



Recruitment, selection and screening procedures



Staff and volunteer induction, support, supervision and training including a code of conduct



Child empowerment and participation principles and strategies



Risk management strategies including Internet safety, strategies for visitors or others on premises



Review and monitoring – appointing a Child Safety Officer

### DEVELOP CHILD SAFE AND FRIENDLY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A "Child Safe and Friendly Policy" is a statement of an organisation's commitment to a child's safety and development. It outlines the strategies of how the organisation will meet this commitment. The purpose of the policy is to provide principles and to guide decisions and action on how the organisation will ensure it has the procedures in place to enhance children's safety and development.

**Codes of Conduct** should also be developed to clearly outline the "dos" and "dont's" of behaviour and relationships with children and their families. Below are suggestions of information to include:

- Appropriate boundaries eg. no out of hours contact, rules on physical contact/touching
- Expected behaviour eg. safe/respectful interactions with children
- Acceptable discipline practices

**Implementation:** To ensure everyone in the organisation knows about the Policy and Code of Conduct and to ensure the child safe practices are integrated into the organisation's culture the organisation needs to promote these strategies. This could be through:

- A launch
- Information and training sessions
- A mandatory part of staff induction process
- Promotion on website or intranet site

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### CHOOSING THE RIGHT STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

One of the most proactive risk management strategies organisations can use is to be very selective in recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers. Vigilant processes will ensure the best applicants are employed that will embrace the organisation's child safe and friendly practices. Child safe recruitment processes reduce the risk of employing unsuitable people.

People who wish to harm children will target organisations that are unaware of the risks and negative impacts of child abuse and neglect and who conduct little or no screening.

An organisation will greatly increase the likelihood of attracting appropriate candidates by using the following child safe recruitment processes:

#### ADVERTISING

- When advertising for positions include a child safe message in the advertisement. This includes a statement about the organisation's commitment to child protection, making reference to the child protection policy and the code of conduct.
- The advertisement can include a statement that where appropriate rigorous reference checking will be undertaken, including a Working with Children Check if the person is in child-related work.

#### SELECTION CRITERIA

- Developing appropriate selection criteria: clearly state the experience, qualifications, qualities and attributes you expect from the successful applicant. Also outline the specific skills and knowledge required and the supervision and accountability processes in place.

- Send information packages that include a standardised application form and the code of conduct. You may also choose to include a copy of your child protection policy.
- Refer the applicant to the Working with Children website so they understand the nature of the rigorous criminal record check required if the applicant is in child-related work.
- Some useful questions may include: *"Tell me about why you want to work with children? Describe a time when you had to manage a child whose behaviour you found challenging? Tell me about a time when you had to comfort a distressed child/or were particularly fond of a child?"*
- Watch for red flags or warning signs which may include; erratic employment history, the applicant seems 'too good to be true', does not value or 'need' supervision and is evasive or inconsistent in his/her answers.

#### INTERVIEW

- Form a skilled interview panel that has time to plan and prepare, ensuring panel members are clear on what the position requires of the applicant.
- Make use of behavioural based open ended questions in the interview that can assist in determining a person's motivation for working with children. This style of questioning assists with gaining insight into the applicant's values, attitudes and understanding of professional boundaries and accountability.
- Remain aware of how the applicant responds to questions with regard to his/her words and body language.
- Take notice of your own thoughts and feelings when interacting with the applicant and ask for more information when not satisfied with responses given.

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### BACKGROUND CHECKING

- Working with Children Checks are required for people in "child-related work" as defined in the Working with Children legislation – refer to the website. If the person is not in child-related work ask for a National Police Check.
- Reference checks are a critical component of child safe recruitment. It is advised to always request talking to referees as this can provide insight into the character and capabilities of an applicant.
- Conduct a minimum of two referee checks on all paid and voluntary applicants. The contact should be direct by phone, even if overseas.
- Ensure clarity about the referee's relationship with the applicant.
- Establish how long the applicant and referee worked together, the specifics of the position, the referee's perceived strengths and weaknesses, and take note of any pauses or gaps in the referee's responses.
- Useful questions include behaviour based questions like; *"what did the applicant do when...?"* *"Given the specific tasks and responsibilities of the position (being specific about any direct contact with children) do you have any concerns about the applicant working with children? "Would you employ this person again?"*
- Check at least two forms of identification.
- Ensure the successful applicant applies for a Working with Children Check if applicable.
- Ask for verified academic transcript of qualifications or check details with the educational institution.

### DEVELOP RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Risk management is a conscious series of steps used to identify potential risks to a child's safety and well being or determining an employee/volunteer's capacity to perform the job effectively. Strategies can then be developed to reduce the risk of harm occurring to children.

Risk management methods should routinely be used when developing new programs/activities, or to evaluate existing programs on an annual basis.

The following table highlights examples of risks to children and provides a template to implement risk management strategies with the aim of preventing harm.

RISK FACTORS	HIGH RISK FEATURES	STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS
Age/vulnerability/special needs of child	Younger children, no parental involvement	Experienced/qualified staff employed. Adequate supervision ratios
Location/setting i.e. Home, open, overnight contact	Not visible, isolated, overnight	Adequate adult supervision. Transparent practices, reduces opportunities for overnight contact
Activity: level/type of contact	Bathing, dressing, one to one	Rigorous screening and reference checking. Clear accountability measures/reporting on any activity
Level of supervision	Minimal or none	Screen and train volunteers to assist if appropriate
Staffing	Casual/high turnover/visitors	Review reasons for this, implement rigorous screening and minimum mandatory standards for orientation/training

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### SUPPORT AND TRAINING FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Training and supervision are essential to the implementation and maintenance of child safe practices of any organisation. Regular supervision contributes to an environment where employees and volunteers are encouraged to speak up about concerns and where interaction with children can be monitored and supported.

Relevant topics for staff training include:

- Child development.
- Definitions and indicators of child abuse.
- Responding to children.
- Risk management awareness.
- The Child Protection Policy.
- Reporting procedures – details on who to report to, what to report and how it will be responded to.
- Clear supervision/accountability mechanisms.

*This information has been adapted from Child Wise "Choose with Care" 2004.*

### SUMMARY

Organisations that are committed to child safe practices and procedures will monitor and review their implementation strategies. It is recommended this occurs at least every 2–3 years. The more proactive an organisation is around issues of child safety the less likely children will be harmed. Refer to the list of useful contacts and organisations available to support organisations in creating and maintaining a child safe environment.

### USEFUL CONTACTS AND ORGANISATIONS

#### DEPARTMENT FOR CHILD PROTECTION

The Department has a number of information resources on what constitutes child abuse and neglect, how to report suspected cases as well as other useful information on how to create a child safe and friendly environment.

**Ph: (08) 9222 2555 Ph: 1800 622 258**

**URL: [www.childprotection.wa.gov.au](http://www.childprotection.wa.gov.au)**

#### CHILD WISE

Child Wise is a non-profit organisation working to prevent the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in Australia and overseas.

Child Wise can provide advice, support and resources on issues of child abuse, developing child safe organisations, child pornography, child sex tourism or child trafficking and exploitation.

**Ph: 61 3 9645 8911 • Help Desk: 1800 99 00 99**

**Email: [office@childwise.net](mailto:office@childwise.net) • URL: [www.childwise.net](http://www.childwise.net)**

#### AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH ORGANISATIONS (ACCYO)

ACCYO offers an online training program "Safe Guarding Children".

The program provides organisations with a comprehensive set of standards to protect children in their care and an accreditation process for organisations to undergo.

**Ph: 61 3 9419-1455 Ph: 1800 724 754 • Email: [info@accyo.org.au](mailto:info@accyo.org.au)**

**URL: [www.accyo.org.au](http://www.accyo.org.au)**

#### PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOURS WORKSHOPS

**State Coordinator: Andrea Muslin**

**[pbwainc@hotmail.com](mailto:pbwainc@hotmail.com) Ph: 0409 071 068**

Workshops designed to teach employees and parents the strategies of protective behaviours in order to increase the personal safety of clients and children.

#### POLICE CHILD ABUSE UNIT

**Ph: (08) 9492 5444**

#### CRISIS CARE (24HRS)

**Ph: (08) 9223 1111**

#### PRINCESS MARGARET HOSPITAL – CHILD PROTECTION UNIT

**Ph: (08) 9340 8646**

#### RELATIONSHIPS AUSTRALIA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE UNIT

**Ph: (08) 9489 6363**

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### USEFUL CONTACTS AND ORGANISATIONS

#### KIDS HELP LINE PH: 1800 55 1800

A free and confidential telephone counselling service for 5 to 18 year olds in Australia.

#### OTHER STATES:

The following states have developed kits and resources for organisations in their state wanting to create a child safe and friendly environment.

#### NEW SOUTH WALES: COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

[www.kids.nsw.gov.au](http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au)

#### QUEENSLAND: COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILD GUARDIAN:

[www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au](http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au)

#### VICTORIA: OFFICE OF THE CHILD SAFETY COMMISSIONER

[www.ocsc.vic.gov.au](http://www.ocsc.vic.gov.au)



### WORKING WITH CHILDREN SCREENING UNIT

PO Box 1262  
West Perth 6872  
[www.checkwwwc.wa.gov.au](http://www.checkwwwc.wa.gov.au)  
[checkquery@dcp.wa.gov.au](mailto:checkquery@dcp.wa.gov.au)  
Enquiries: (08) 6217 8100, toll free 1800 883 979