

National Catholic Safeguarding Standards

Implementation Guide Standard 2

Catholic Professional Standards Ltd acknowledges the lifelong trauma of abuse victims, survivors and their families, the failure of the Catholic Church to protect, believe and respond justly to children and vulnerable adults, and the consequent breaches of community trust.

Catholic Professional Standards Ltd is committed to fostering a culture of safety and care for children and vulnerable adults.

This is the first edition of the ***National Catholic Safeguarding Standards – Implementation Guide Standard 2*** produced by Catholic Professional Standards Ltd.

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Catholic Professional Standards Ltd respectfully acknowledges all Traditional Owners of the land and waters of Australia. We pay respect to their Elders, past and present, and young leaders of today and the future.

STANDARD 2



Children are safe, informed and participate

Children are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

The right of all children to be heard and taken seriously is one of the fundamental values of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It is seen by many as the gateway to enjoying all other human rights. Children are particularly vulnerable to being overlooked in decision making processes and for vulnerable children this is even more acute.

Article 12 of the UNCRC requires that:

“... [a] child who is capable of forming his or her own views [has] the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”¹

A child safe institution is one that seeks the views of children and considers their age, development, maturity, understanding, abilities and the different formats and means of communication they may use. It provides children with formal and informal opportunities to share their views on institutional issues. Children can access sexual abuse prevention programs and/or information, and feel confident to complain, for example, by using helplines. Personnel in child safe institutions are aware of signs of harm, including unexplained changes in behavior, and routinely check children’s wellbeing.²

Empowerment and participation of children should not be a one-off event. It is an approach that needs to be a part of the entity’s culture. It also needs to be regularly reviewed for its effectiveness.

2.1 Children are informed about their rights, including safety, information and participation.

Well-intentioned people put policies and procedures aimed at protecting children in place, yet it is rare that children know these policies exist.

Children may not feel safe if they are unaware of what the entity is doing to keep them safe. Participation of, and communication with, children are vital to keeping them safe.

Engaging children and informing them of their rights does not mean that an entity assumes the parental responsibility for children. Parental engagement and parental responsibilities are reinforced through Standard 3.

How could your entity implement this criterion?

- Ensure that all relevant safeguarding policies/procedures are written in child-friendly language and are easily accessible and available publicly (through, for example, your website, a notice board, a welcome pack or safety card);
- provide information in a variety of accessible formats for children such as easy-to-read posters, flowcharts, cartoons and other graphics;
- ensure information is suitable for children of all ages, children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and children with disabilities;

¹ United Nations Human Rights Commission, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 1990, cited at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> on 30 January 2019.

² Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Final Report: Volume 6, Making institutions child safe*, p 416, 2017.

- openly display contact details for independent child advocacy services and child helpline numbers within the entity and educate children in the role and use of these services and helplines;
- run informal sessions on the Conventions of the Rights of the Child to help children understand their basic human rights. Focus on their right to safety, their right to be informed and their right to participate in decisions affecting them. Teach children that with every right they enjoy, they need to meet its corresponding responsibility;
- talk to children about:
 - their right to feel safe
 - steps the entity takes to keep them safe
 - the Code of Conduct
 - who to talk to and how to speak up if something is worrying them;
- regularly check with children and parents that they are aware of relevant safeguarding policies and procedures and that the child safe culture you are striving to achieve is visible, lived and experienced;
- provide information on community campaigns, such as Child Protection Week;
- provide opportunities for children to contribute to program and policy development and review by asking their opinions through discussions, activities and surveys (for example: what they like/don't like, what makes them feel safe/unsafe in the entity);
- encourage children to design/write child-friendly versions of a Code of Conduct. Ask children what is acceptable behaviour and what is unacceptable behaviour. This includes behaviour of adults towards children, of children towards adults and of children towards children;
- where appropriate, establish and regularly engage with advisory groups such as Student Representative Councils, parish youth leaders or young people's reference groups;
- provide opportunities for children to give feedback to the entity, including anonymous surveys and/or suggestion boxes;
- gather feedback from children about whether they would feel safe to raise concerns. Implement improvements based on this feedback;
- ensure transparency with children about the extent of their involvement and give feedback on how their views have been actioned; and
- document and regularly review opportunities that are provided for the participation of children.

CPSL Tools

What does a child-safe parish look like? – video resource

The conversations we have to have – video resource

Aligned with

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations - National Principle 2.1

Royal Commission Child Safe Standard 2 (a)

2.2 The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, helping children feel safe and less isolated.

How could your entity implement this criterion?

- Talk to children about what to do if someone they know is being hurt.
- Actively support children to develop and sustain friendships (for example, through buddy systems).
- Develop and implement policies and procedures that promote peer support such as friendship circles, buddying, mentor programs and peer support groups.
- Provide children with education about safe and respectful peer relationships, including through social media.

Aligned with

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations - National Principle 2.2

Royal Commission Child Safe Standard 2 (b)

2.3 Where relevant to the setting and context, children and families may be offered access to abuse prevention programs and related information that is age-appropriate.

A key factor in empowering children is to provide age-appropriate abuse prevention programs, such as protective behaviours education, to equip children and young people with the skills and knowledge to enhance their personal safety. Whilst these programs assist children and add another protective layer, it is never a child's responsibility to protect themselves from abuse.

Protective behaviours programs contain simple, practical, non-threatening and age-appropriate information and strategies.

Where relevant to the setting and context, protective behaviours programs should be delivered by trained professionals to children and/or parents in an appropriate manner taking account of the nature and environment in which the entity operates its services. Church entities may consider outsourcing the delivery of these programs to expert providers.

Sample themes for young children include: good and bad secrets; trusted adults; safe and not safe touches; feelings and instincts; it's OK to tell.

How could your entity implement this criterion?

- Provide children and families with information, access and/or referral to protective behaviours programs appropriate to their age, ability and level of understanding.
- Openly display contact details for independent child advocacy services and child helpline telephone numbers, and explain their use to children (refer also to Criterion 2.1).
- Appropriate to the context or setting, provide abuse prevention education to equip children with the skills and knowledge to keep themselves safe, such as protective behaviours programs.
- Appropriate to the context or setting, provide e-safety education or information links to relevant online safety websites.
- Arrange appropriate referrals or support for children.

Aligned with

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations - National Principle 2.3

Royal Commission Child Safe Standard 2 (c)

Royal Commission Recommendation 16.40

2.4 Personnel are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns.

How could your entity implement this criterion?

- Encourage personnel to be vigilant to signs of harm and routinely check to see if children are OK.
- Make a strong commitment to children's participation and provide staff with training and resources that support children's participation.
- Match participation methods to the age, capabilities and background of the children and be adaptive to their ways of understanding and working.
- Ensure transparency with children about the extent of their involvement and give feedback on how their views have been actioned.
- Allow sufficient time, opportunity and appropriate support for children with disability to raise concerns.
- Draw on a culturally diverse workforce to nurture and support children's diverse needs and cultural safety.

Aligned with

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations - National Principle 2.4

Royal Commission Child Safe Standard 2 (d)