

National Catholic Safeguarding Standards

Implementation Guide Standard 9

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 9*** 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 9



Continuous improvement

Entities regularly review and improve implementation of their systems for keeping children safe

Child safe entities know it is a significant challenge to maintain a safe environment for children in a dynamic organisation. The entity's leadership maintains vigilance by putting in place systems to frequently monitor and improve performance against the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. An open culture encourages people to discuss difficult issues and identify and learn from mistakes. Complaints are an opportunity to identify the root cause of a problem and improve policies and practices to reduce the risk of harm to children. Where appropriate, the entity should seek advice from independent specialist agencies to investigate failures and recommended improvements.¹

9.1 The entity regularly reviews and improves child safeguarding practices.

Regular reviews and audits demonstrate that the entity is committed to fostering a culture of continuous improvement in safeguarding the children in its care. There is no room for complacency.

How could your entity implement this criterion?

- The Safeguarding Committee [refer to Indicator 1.2.2] co-ordinates and has oversight of annual self-audits of each of the entity's agencies to ensure compliance with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. For example, parishes, local ministries or congregational works.
- Ensure that all self-audits are documented, analysed for strengths and weaknesses and retained for use as evidence with external audits.
- Once gaps in safeguarding practice or non-compliance has been identified, develop a Safeguarding Implementation Plan. The Safeguarding Committee initiates and has oversight of the entity's Safeguarding Implementation Plan. This is a documented plan which articulates actions to be taken across the entity to ensure safeguarding practices are in place. Key elements include:
 - specific NCSS criterion to be addressed;
 - goal - the desired outcome;
 - actions - how the goal will be achieved;
 - by whom - person/group responsible;
 - completion date - when the outcome will be achieved;
 - evidence - supporting documents, reports, examples, or other evidence; and
 - status - tracking status of the actions.
- Periodically conduct spot checks across the entity.
- Ensure your safeguarding policy and procedures are dated with a regular review date (at least every three years), unless legislative changes or other significant changes necessitate a review sooner.
- Ensure that any reviews include feedback from all stakeholders including clergy, religious, employees, volunteers, children, parents, carers and community members. This would include formal reviews as well as having mechanisms in place for ongoing and regular feedback (maybe a suggestion box could be used to gather ongoing feedback).

¹ Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Final Report: Volume 6, Making Institutions Child Safe*, p 432, 2017

- Ensure children and families from diverse backgrounds are encouraged and supported to give feedback and input into review processes [Refer to Implementation Guides 2 and 4].
- Foster open and positive relationships with other entities and organisations to share lessons learned, experiences and practices. This may include participating in safeguarding networks, working collaboratively across entities, participating in conferences, training or knowledge exchange activities.
- Undertake external audits conducted by CPSL.

CPSL Tools

9.1.1 Safeguarding Implementation Plan Template

Aligned with

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations - National Principle 9.1

Royal Commission Child Safe Standard 9 (a)

9.2 The entity analyses concerns and complaints to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.

Child safe institutions learn from complaints and failures, continuously improving the safety of children in the institution.

An institution can also review the number of complaints it receives to gain an indication of whether people feel it is safe to complain. This would also provide a measurement of the practicality of the policies and procedures in place and the continuous improvement of the environment in which children feel safe to report. This is particularly relevant, for instance, to institutions which claim to have received few or no complaints of child sexual abuse.²

How could your entity implement this criterion?

- Undertake a careful and thorough internal review to identify the root cause of a problem and any potential systemic failures once a complaint has been finalised.
- Consider employing an external expert or agency to offer an independent case review to identify causes and possible systemic failures.
- Use continuous improvement frameworks to assist in this process. Key elements of these frameworks include:
 - assess (identify problem/need);
 - plan (scoping and develop solutions);
 - implement changes (train and support); and
 - assess (monitor and review).
- Communicate to all stakeholders the ways in which policies and practices have changed once the need for improvement has been identified. Support by training as required.

CPSL Tools

9.2.2 Sample Continuous Improvement Framework

Aligned with

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations - National Principle 9.2

Royal Commission Child Safe Standard 9 (b)

² Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual abuse, *Final Report: Volume 6, Making Institutions Child Safe*, p 203, 2017.

9.3 The Church Authority reports on the findings of relevant reviews to personnel, children, families, carers and community.

Accountability and transparency are vital in building and maintaining a culture of trust and shared commitment within a child safe entity. Reporting on the findings of reviews and audits is one important way to achieve this.

How could your entity implement this criterion?

- Communicate to all stakeholders any safeguarding review or audit reports relating to the entity, including the audit report published by Catholic Professional Standards Ltd. Communication methods may include:
 - formal information nights where participants can ask questions and discuss findings and recommendations;
 - reports posted on the entity’s website;
 - links to the report in newsletters, parish bulletins and other communiques; and
 - inclusion in annual reports.
- Take into account cultural relevance and different levels of English language skills (translate into relevant languages, where appropriate, use plain English, consider communicating results using images or voiceover).
- Ensure that any communication to stakeholders includes a Safeguarding Implementation Plan which articulates any actions to be taken as a result of recommendations arising out of any review or audit.

CPSL Tools

Transparency and audits – video resource

Aligned with

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations - National Principle 9.3