



Catholic Archdiocese
of Perth

GUIDELINES



GUIDELINE: Safeguarding – Safe Online Environments

Approved: 08-08-2024

Effective: 08-08-2024

Policy Category: Governance

Sub-category: Safety of Children and Adults at Risk



Our guidelines provide additional guidance on best practice relating to policy and procedure

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Name of Guideline:	Safeguarding – Safe Online Environments
Governing Policy	Safeguarding
Description:	Guidelines to support the safety and well-being of children and adults using the internet, social media or mobile devices for church roles and activities
Guideline supports:	All members of the Church Community
Guideline Status:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Guideline, or <input type="checkbox"/> Revision of Existing Guideline
Related Policy Category:	Governance
Related Policy Sub-category:	Safety of Children and Adults at Risk
Approval Authority:	Senior Operations Officer
Governing Authority:	N/A
Responsible Officer:	Director, Safeguarding
Approval Date:	08-08-2024
Date of Guideline review¹:	01-05-2026

Assistance:	Questions related to the <i>Guideline: Safeguarding Safe Online Environments</i> can be directed to the Director of Safeguarding by email to: director.safeguarding@perthcatholic.org.au
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¹ Unless otherwise indicated, this Guideline will still apply beyond the review date.



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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of the Safe Online Environments guideline is to support the safety and well-being of children and adults in the Church Community within the Archdiocese using the internet, social media or mobile devices for church roles and activities.
- 1.2. Acknowledging and upholding children's and adult's rights to participation and protection in online environments.
- 1.3. The guideline embodies the empowerment of all and recognises the inherent dignity of all people – made in God's image (Gen 1:26).

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This guideline applies to:
 - a) Clergy, Religious Brothers and Religious Sisters, Seminarians, Employees, Church Workers, Volunteers; and
 - b) Contractors and Third-Party Users of Church Property, where appropriate as determined by an Executive Director, Director, Senior Manager or Parish Priest

3. PRINCIPLES

- 3.1. The Archdiocese is committed to maintaining safe practices for the protection of children and adults.
- 3.2. Safeguarding the rights and integrity of the most vulnerable in society is guided by the Gospel command of Jesus to love our neighbour (Mk 12:31), to promote the common good and to lead all to the fullness of human life (Jn 10:10).
- 3.3. Online use in the Church Community is conducted and monitored in accordance with the Archdiocesan Code of Conduct, Privacy and Confidentiality and Communication and Record Management Policies.

4. STANDARDS AND GUIDANCE

Archdiocesan Agencies, Offices, Organisations, Ministries and Parishes can encourage online safety when engaging with children and adults at risk in compliance with legislative requirements and Archdiocesan guidelines.



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Practices when engaging online include but are not limited to:

4.1 Online Communication and Information Technology

- Providing education and training on the safe and appropriate use of technology
- Setting clear understanding and boundaries for communicating respectfully online
- Recognising the importance of protecting personal information by not sharing passwords with other people
- Reviewing and updating the security of information systems and ensuring that usernames, logins, and email accounts are secure and filtering software is used effectively
- ensuring personal information about the adults and children who are involved in our Church Community is held securely and shared only as appropriate.
- Ensuring no child is shown or provided with access to sexually explicit content or pornography
- Ensuring no child or adult is receiving or sharing unwanted contact or content such as:
 - sexting or sharing self-generated nudes or sexual images
 - inappropriate images and videos
 - contact with strangers or offers to meet offline
 - online child sexual abuse or child exploitation material
 - grooming
 - cyber bullying
 - harassment
 - aggression, or hate speech
 - breaches of privacy
- Supervising children who have access to internet devices whilst engaged in Church related activities
- No direct communication with a child engaging in church activities via email, mobile device, or social media by a cleric, religious or church worker (paid or unpaid) unless there are extenuating circumstances and written permission is sought from the parent or carer
 - should extenuating circumstances arise for communication with a child. No 1:1 online communication is to occur. A parent, carer or another church worker should be copied in on all communication.
- All social media platforms, chat rooms, forums, pages or accounts that are established by Archdiocesan Parishes, Agencies, Offices or Organisations to engage with the broader community and parishioners, participants or volunteers are to be approved by the Parish Priest, Agency Director or Manager and monitored regularly



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- All social media platforms, chat rooms, forums, pages or accounts where camera use is used should include an appropriate dress code
- Take a zero-tolerance to online abuse and report online abuse and inappropriate online content

4.2 Photography

- Ensuring that written permission is sought from a parent or carer for taking photographs or videos of children and only for the purpose for which consent has been given
- Photography and video taking in the church is at the discretion of the Parish Priest. It is recommended for large gatherings such as First Communion or Confirmation, where children are prepared in school that parental permission should be obtained in consultation with the school
- Photography should be taken at the end of a ceremony and by an authorised person who has a suitable reason or who is related to the child, school, or parish
- For events or ceremonies notice of photography, videography or live streaming should be announced at the beginning of the event

Notwithstanding the above, it is not illegal to take photographs or videography at a public event even if asked not to do so. If an event is private, then permission is required.

If there are concerns regarding the conduct of someone taking photographs or video footage in a public place, report this to WA Police immediately and the Safeguarding Office via the Safeguarding Concern Report.

5. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (Edition 2)
- Safeguarding Policy
- Safeguarding Guidelines
- Parent Carer Consent Form
- Code of Conduct

6. DEFINITIONS | GLOSSARY OF TERMS

For the purposes of this Guideline, the definitions contained in the Governing Policy apply. In addition, the following definitions apply to this Guideline:

Child Exploitation Material means any content (image or video) that sexualises and takes unfair advantage of a child or young person under 18, as well as child sexual abuse material that shows the sexual assault of a child.



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Cyberbullying is a form of bullying or harassment where someone uses the internet to be mean to, intimidate or threaten another person.

Nudes means when someone shares intimate photos or videos of themselves with someone else using an online message, chat function, or a phone text service.

Sexting means sending a sexual message or text, with or without a photo or video.

7. REVISIONS MADE TO THIS GUIDELINE

Date of Approval	Editorial ² , Minor or Major Amendment	Approved By	Description
08-08-2024	N/A	SOO	New Guideline

These Guidelines are scheduled for review every three (3) years or more frequently, if appropriate.

² Refer to the Policy Framework for definitions of Editorial, Minor and Major amendments.