



Catholic Archdiocese
of Perth

GUIDELINES



GUIDELINE: Safeguarding – Safe Physical 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 Physical Environments
Governing Policy	Safeguarding
Description:	Guidelines to support the creation and maintenance of safe physical environments for ministry and service.
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: Safe Physical 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 Physical Environments guideline is to support minimising the opportunity for abuse in physical environments for ministry and service roles in the Church Community within the Archdiocese.
- 1.2. The guideline aims to ensure proactive measures are used to recognise and mitigate safeguarding risks in physical environments.
- 1.3. The Archdiocese has a responsibility to develop and support appropriate supervision, oversight and behaviours towards children and adults at risk.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This guideline applies to:
 - 2.1.1. Clergy, Religious Brothers and Religious Sisters, Seminarians, Employees, Church Workers, Volunteers; and
 - 2.1.2. 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 guiding and essential belief that is at the heart and foundation of the social teaching of the Church is the sacredness and dignity of the human person as created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27).
- 3.2. A strong commitment to identifying and mitigating risk that supports the common good and leads all to the fullness of human life (Jn 10:10).
- 3.3. Awareness of safeguarding responsibilities, supervision, oversight and behaviours of those engaged in ministry or service in the Church supports and encourages the full and active participation of all.

4. STANDARDS AND GUIDANCE

Archdiocesan Agencies, Offices, Organisations, Ministries and Parishes can build a culture of safety by ensuring physical environments used when working with children and adults are suitable and reflect safeguarding values in practice.



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Practices and physical spaces include, but are not limited to:

4.1 General

- Respect the physical space and boundaries of others, especially children and adults at risk.
- Comply with the Archdiocese Code of Conduct in line with the *In Our Common Mission – A National Code of Conduct*.
- Comply with the Archdiocese Work, Health and Safety Policy.
- Undertake a Risk Assessment Checklist before using physical spaces.
- Keep a first aid kit on hand.
- Keep floors, walkways, and emergency exits clear of hazards and obstructions.
- Have an Emergency Evacuation Plan.
- Respond to and report all concerns, suspicions, and allegations of abuse.
- Have adequate restroom facilities (including sanitary facilities)

4.2 Children's Activity Room

- There should be no situations where adults engaging in children's activities are alone with a child.
Use a 2:1 ratio (2 adults to 1 child or 2 children to 1 adult)
- For group activities or events, it is recommended that two supervisors are present. Where this is not possible, invite a parent/carer of a child in the activity to stay
- Do not leave a child alone in a room.
- Endeavour to be in a space within clear view (clear glass) or within earshot of others.
- Where possible leave the door of the room open with a clear line of sight of another adult when engaging with children.
- Remove hazards such as sharp objects, toxic substances or possible choking hazards.
- Ensure adequate lighting.
- Avoid blind spots or hidden spaces in the room.
- Display in areas where children's activities or events are held a child-friendly children's code of behaviour
- Review the access to bathrooms. If they are not within the proximity of the room, ensure they are escorted by an adult or a 'buddy' system with another child is used.
- Ensure the space designated for children's use is fit for use with suitable equipment and materials, i.e. equipment and toys are appropriate for the demographic and in safe working order.



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4.3 Meeting/Counselling Room/Office space

- Endeavour to be in a space with a clear view (clear glass) of others.
- Ensure the room is spacious enough to accommodate the number of people.
- Consider confidentiality and whether conversations can be overheard.
- If aggressive or concerning behaviour escalate in a meeting/counselling room, use a calm, non-threatening posture to let the person know you will be stopping the meeting/session.

4.4 Sacristy

- Where possible leave the door of the room open with a clear line of sight of others.
- Consider a sign-in/sign-out book for those working in the sacristy.

4.5 Confessional

- The Sacrament of Penance should be conducted in an open or visible space where possible. Alternatively, if held in a confessional it is recommended a clear line of sight or clear glass in doors be installed so there is visibility to other people.
- Where a child is involved, the Sacrament of Penance must only be conducted in an open space within the clear line of sight of another adult.
- A fixed screen be between the penitent and the priest so that physical contact is not possible.
- Ensure that the right to anonymity is retained.

4.6 Hall

- Ensure the room is spacious enough to accommodate the number of people.
- Ensure adequate lighting.
- Remove blind spots or hidden spaces in the room.

4.7 Outdoors

- Ensure adequate supervision of children in outdoor spaces.
- Engage parents/carers as the primary carers for their children to supervise children in outdoor spaces.
- Ensure the space is safe and free from hazards and is also suitable for the users.



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5. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (Edition 2)
- Safeguarding Policy
- Safeguarding Guidelines
- Integrity in Our Common Mission – A National Code of Conduct
- Code of Conduct
- Risk Assessment Checklist

6. DEFINITIONS | GLOSSARY OF TERMS

For the purposes of this Guideline, the definitions contained in the Governing Policy apply.

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.