



Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy

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Foreword

Safe service environments don't just happen: they require ongoing planning, commitment and maintenance. This toolkit has been designed to provide information and guidance to assist you to develop and implement a child and youth risk management strategy that satisfies the eight minimum requirements outlined in the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011*. A series of videos has been developed to complement this toolkit and are available on the [Blue Card Services YouTube channel](#).

In developing your strategy, it is vital to consult with all people involved with your organisation, including children and young people. This will help you to develop a child and youth risk management strategy which is comprehensive and relevant to the needs of your organisation and effectively manages risks of harm to children and young people.

The blue card system aims to create safe and supportive service environments where children and young people can receive services and participate in activities essential to their development and wellbeing.

The blue card system has three key components:

Risk management strategies

- Under the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*, organisations regulated by the blue card system are legislatively required to develop, implement and maintain a child and youth risk management strategy.
- The purpose of a child and youth risk management strategy is to help to identify potential risks of harm to children and young people and to implement strategies to minimise these risks.
- A well-developed strategy will help your organisation achieve its objectives by providing a clear and consistent framework to guide and support the stakeholders who work or volunteer with your organisation or who benefit from your services.

Blue card screening

- The blue card screening process is an important component of an effective risk management strategy. It assesses a person's eligibility to work with children based on their known past police and disciplinary information.
- This process prevents people from working with children in regulated service environments if their past behaviour indicates that they are unable to protect a child from harm and promote their wellbeing.
- It also disqualifies certain people from applying for a blue card (i.e. those convicted of serious child-related sex or child pornography offences or the murder of a child).

Compliance and ongoing monitoring

- Blue Card Services monitors the police information of all applicants and cardholders on a daily basis. If the information changes, Blue Card Services can take steps to immediately protect children from harm, including suspending or cancelling a card.
- Blue Card Services also monitors and audits service providers' compliance with blue card system obligations, including risk management, to ensure that appropriate safeguards are being implemented and maintained.

Requirements for organisations

The *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* (the Act) and the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011* require regulated organisations to develop and implement a child and youth risk management strategy which aims to keep children and young people safe.

To comply with the legislative framework, a child and youth risk management strategy must include eight minimum requirements. These requirements:

- address an organisation's **commitment** to creating a safe and supportive service environment
- strengthen an organisation's **capability** to provide such an environment
- assist an organisation to manage any particular **concerns** with respect to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who are involved with the organisation, and
- promote the **consistency** of an organisation's approach to risk management, both within the organisation and with respect to compliance with the requirements under the Act.

The eight requirements are:

Commitment

1. A statement of commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and the protection of children from harm, and
2. A code of conduct for interacting with children.

Capability

3. Written procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing staff and volunteers.

Concerns

4. Policies and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines
5. A plan for managing breaches of your risk management strategy, and
6. Risk management plans for high risk activities and special events.

Consistency

7. Policies and procedures for managing compliance with the blue card system, and
8. Strategies for communication and support.

Getting started - developing policies and procedures

A *policy* is a concise, formal statement that guides an organisation's practices.

A *procedure* outlines the steps required to implement and comply with a policy. Procedures specify who does what, when and how. Generally, policies and procedures should flow from the aims and values of your organisation as stated in your mission statement or, in the case of a child and youth risk management strategy, your statement of commitment.

While there are several ways to develop policies and procedures, the following steps may be useful:

1. Decide what the policy and/or procedure will address.
2. Clearly identify the issues and the expected outcomes of introducing the policy and procedures.
3. Refer to any other documentation that may be relevant, for example, legislation, industry codes of practice, your organisation's constitution, strategic plan or business plan.
4. Consult with key stakeholders, including:
 - paid employees and volunteers within your organisation
 - children and young people to whom you provide services and their parents
 - your management committee (if applicable)
 - other organisations that may have developed similar policies
 - governing or industry bodies
 - relevant government departments, and
 - members of the community.

Involving your stakeholders in developing a child and youth risk management strategy will:

- promote a sense of ownership, which will encourage support for your strategy
 - give them an understanding that promoting and protecting the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people is everyone's responsibility
 - empower children and young people by encouraging them to participate in the process, and
 - encourage the discussion of child and youth risk management strategies within your professional networks in order to foster compliance with best practice procedures and processes.
5. Develop a draft policy. When developing a policy, it is important to think about the language you use, who the intended audience is and the message you wish to convey. Using direct, assertive and easily understood language will help to minimise any confusion about what is expected from people.
 6. After writing a draft:
 - encourage discussion and allow time for feedback from those it might affect, including people outside your organisation, and
 - make changes as appropriate.
 7. When you have completed a final draft, it should be endorsed by management or committee members.

8. A child and youth risk management strategy must be reviewed at least on an annual basis and after any incidents to ensure that risks continue to be addressed and minimised throughout the organisation.

Your organisation may already have various policies and procedures in place. The following table can be used to help you map what policies you already have and plan what additional information you need.

Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy Checklist / Action Plan Template

Mandatory Requirements	Does this already exist?				
	Yes	Location and/or amendments	No	Resources required	By whom/when?
1. A statement of commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and the protection of children from harm					
2. A code of conduct for interacting with children and young people					
3. Written procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing staff and volunteers					
4. Policies and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines					
5. A plan for managing breaches of the risk management strategy					
6. Policies and procedures for managing compliance with the blue card system					
7. Risk management plans for high risk activities and special events					
8. Strategies for communication and support					

Part One: Commitment

1. Statement of commitment

What do I need to do?

Your risk management strategy must include a statement about your organisation's commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and the protection of children from harm. The purpose of your statement of commitment is to provide an overarching statement which will set the tone for your entire child and youth risk management strategy and which will positively influence your organisation's culture.

Why do I need a statement of commitment?

The culture of your organisation is a critical factor in successfully mitigating the risks of harm to children in your service environment. Your statement of commitment should reflect the culture of your organisation and provide a useful foundation to guide the decisions and actions of people who work, or come into contact, with children and young people.

How do I draft a statement of commitment?

When drafting a statement of commitment you should consider your organisation's aims and values and how they relate to providing child-related services.

The statement you create may vary in length depending on the nature of the services your organisation provides to children and young people.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How do the services/activities provided by your organisation contribute to the development and wellbeing of children and young people?
- What are the values of your organisation and how do they relate to the safety and wellbeing of children?
- What can your organisation do to protect children from harm and promote their wellbeing?
- What is the purpose of your risk management strategy?

TIPS

- Use language that is strong, clear and direct.
- You may wish to start your statement with phrases such as
 - Our organisation is committed to...
 - Our organisation supports...
 - Our organisation is dedicated to...
 - Our organisation ensures...
- Explicitly state that it is a "statement of commitment". This is an effective way of communicating to people involved with your organisation that the safety of children is of utmost importance to you.
- Display your statement of commitment in a prominent place where staff, parents, children and visitors can be reminded of your organisation's specific commitment.

SAMPLE STATEMENTS

Sample 1 – for organisations

(Insert your organisation's name) is committed to providing services to children and young people to assist them to *(include information about the skills, support or values that your organisation assists children and young people to develop)*.

Our organisation is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people and will endeavour to provide a safe and supportive service environment for children and young people by... *(list actions your organisation will take)*.

The following values reflect the culture that we are committed to promoting within our organisation.... *(list the values which apply to your organisation)*.

Sample 2 – for self-employed persons

I am committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, and will treat them with respect and understanding at all times. In order to provide a positive and supportive environment where learning and skill development is encouraged and facilitated, I will conduct my business activities in accordance with the following values...*(list the values)*.

2. Code of conduct

What do I need to do?

A code of conduct outlines expected standards of behaviour for all stakeholders interacting with children and young people in your service environment. Most organisations already have a standard code of conduct for employees. However, the code of conduct for your child and youth risk management strategy must specifically address interactions with children and young people.

Why do I need a code of conduct?

A strong code of conduct will provide clear guidelines for everyone involved in your organisation about what is expected of them and the consequences if they fail to meet the expectations. When a code of conduct is well established and implemented, it promotes a transparent and accountable service environment.

Who should be involved in developing a code of conduct?

Involving all stakeholders in the development of your code of conduct will encourage greater ownership and adherence to the code.

By involving children and young people in the development of a code of conduct, staff can be made aware of the impact of their behaviour on children and young people and can adopt a code that maximises their welfare. In addition, involving children and young people enhances their confidence and trust that any concerns they raise will be taken seriously, and encourages them to consider their own responsibilities in relation to a code of conduct within the organisation.

Who should a code of conduct apply to?

Your code of conduct should apply to all people involved with your organisation, for example:

- employees (permanent, temporary and casual)
- volunteers
- children and young people
- parents
- consultants and contractors
- board/committee members
- students on placement
- people undertaking work experience
- visitors, and
- spectators.

TIPS

- Involve everybody in your organisation, including children and young people where appropriate, in the development of your code of conduct.
- You may wish to consider developing separate codes of conduct for each group of people.

How do I draft a code of conduct?

Every organisation is different so you should undertake a thorough analysis of your service environment, identify the potential risks, and tailor your code of conduct to ensure that it addresses those risks.

You should consider if the following issues are relevant in your organisation, and if so, develop specific policies and guidelines which clearly outline expected standards of behaviour within your organisation:

- **Language**

People involved with your organisation should be clear about the expected standards of language and the types of language which are encouraged in your organisation and those that are not permitted.

- **Supervision of children**

You should have clear guidelines to ensure children are adequately supervised at all times, for example:

- outlining ratios of staff to children to ensure adequate supervision and limit opportunities for unsupervised access to children
- setting clear expectations as to when children may be left with your organisation or whether parental supervision is required
- specifying the arrangements for drop offs and pick-ups, including:
 - providing clear details of the physical locations for this to happen and the supervision arrangements in place
 - developing a procedure which will apply if a child remains uncollected, and
 - addressing issues which may arise in relation to the collection of children, for example, intoxication of a person collecting them.

- **Physical contact**

There should be clear guidelines in relation to the circumstances in which it might be necessary to have physical contact with a child, e.g.:

- injury management
- to demonstrate a skill or for instructional purposes as part of an activity, or
- to assist with toileting of young children.

You should also clearly outline what would be considered inappropriate physical contact, e.g.:

- violent or aggressive behaviour such as hitting, kicking, slapping or pushing
- kissing, or
- touching of a sexual nature.

You should consider whether in your service environment it is practical and necessary to provide an explanation to a child about what physical contact will occur and why it will occur. Additionally, you should consider if it is necessary to seek permission from a child and/or parents in relation to the physical contact and how this would be clearly documented. You should also consider what supervision is necessary while physical contact is occurring.

- **One-on-one contact with a child**

Your strategy should outline when/if it is appropriate for a person to be alone with a child and the strategies which are expected to be put in place to minimise risks, for example, where possible ensuring that the child and the person are visible to others.

Your strategy should aim to achieve an appropriate balance between maintaining privacy for children and young people (if it is required) and maintaining their safety.

- **Relationships**

Your strategy should outline clear guidelines in relation to developing appropriate relationships with children and young people. For example, you should provide guidance for your staff about:

- how to set clear personal and professional boundaries
- when, or if, it is appropriate to have contact with a child outside of the service environment, including on social media, and
- when, or if, it is appropriate to give a child or young person a gift.

- **Behaviour management**

You should clearly outline the behaviour management policies of your organisation and how staff are expected to manage challenging behaviours in accordance with your code of conduct, for example, ensuring policies are not punitive, humiliating or aggressive.

There should be clear expectations for children and young people about what is acceptable behaviour and the behaviour management strategies which will be used should be clear for children and young people and their parents.

- **Transport of children and young people**

There should be clear guidelines about whether it is appropriate in any circumstances for staff to transport children and young people

If transportation of children is a necessary part of your activities, there should be clear policies and procedures to outline the safeguards which should be put in place in relation to transporting children, for example, consideration should be given to providing specific guidance about the following issues:

- ensuring that approved child restraints are used
- when, or if, it would be acceptable for a child to travel alone with a staff member
- how consent from the child's parents will be sought and documented, and
- the processes to be followed to ensure that all drivers are correctly licensed and vehicles are registered, insured and safe for the children and/or young people.

- **Change rooms/toilets**

There should be clear guidelines in relation to the use of change rooms and toilets which are age appropriate. These guidelines should maintain the privacy of children and young people while allowing for adequate supervision.

- **Managing injuries or illnesses**

Your policies should provide clear guidelines in relation to managing illness or injuries, including:

- procedures for first aid
- adequate supervision of a child who is sick or injured, and
- relevant notifications to parents.

- **Visitor policy**

Your organisation should consider what processes need to be put in place to manage any risks associated with visitors, for example outlining:

- processes for identifying and recording visitors to the premises, and
- expected levels of supervision while visitors are on the premises.

- **Photography policy**

There should be a comprehensive policy which clearly outlines:

- the circumstances in which it would be appropriate to take photographs or videos of a child or young person while participating in activities
- the processes to be followed in relation to photographing children (e.g. parental consent)
- if official photographers are designated, the processes and guidelines which apply, and
- guidelines in relation to the use of photographs (including on social media), for example:
 - when it is appropriate to publish a photograph of a child or young person
 - when it is appropriate to include identifying information about a child with their photograph
 - ensuring children are appropriately clothed and the photos are appropriate for the child's age, and
 - limiting, where possible, the ability for photographs to be copied or redistributed.

- **Use of technology and social media**

Your organisation should have guidelines in place for staff and children and young people in relation to when use of the internet, computers, mobile phones and other electronic devices is permitted and for what purpose.

It is also advisable to develop a clear policy in relation to the use of official websites and social media platforms associated with the organisation and the expected standards of behaviour.

There should be clear policies for managing issues which arise from inappropriate usage of electronic devices or inappropriate conduct on social media

- **Smoking, alcohol consumption and the use of medications and drugs**

Your organisation should have clear guidelines in place for all stakeholders in relation to smoking, alcohol consumption and drugs on the premises.

It is also important to provide clear direction in relation to:

- staff attending work while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs (including medications) which may impair their judgment or impact on their performance, and
- outlining processes to ensure that medications are secured and not accessible by children and young people.

- **Organisation standards**

You should have clear guidelines in place for all stakeholders involved with the organisation in relation to the general standards which apply within your organisation, including:

- an outline of what constitutes bullying, cyberbullying, discrimination and sexual harassment
- a clear policy in relation to how allegations of bullying, cyberbullying, discrimination and sexual harassment will be dealt with by the organisation
- an outline of your organisation's commitment and relevant policies which promote cultural diversity and equal opportunity within your organisation, and
- a clear outline of expected standards of dress and attire.

- **General safety**

It is important that you consider the general safety of children and young people within your service environment and what policies need to be put in place, for example you should consider the following:

- any risks posed by the physical environment or equipment used in your service environment
- the security of the physical premises in which your services are offered
- that children and young people can only access safe play spaces and equipment, and
- policies are in place in relation to:
 - sun safety
 - the administration of medications to children and young people, and
 - the management of allergies and other medical conditions.

- **Confidentiality of information**

It is important that you have clear guidelines for staff in relation to how they are expected to manage confidential information about children and young people, including in relation to:

- how information is stored and who has access to it
- any breaches of your child and youth risk management strategy, and
- information about disclosures or suspicions of harm.

It may also be relevant to have clear policies in relation to providing any information to the media, to ensure that the privacy of children and young people is protected.

- **Other requirements**

There may be similar, or additional, requirements under other legislation, e.g. the National Quality Framework (NQF) in relation to education and care/family day care.

You should outline clearly any relevant legislative requirements which apply to your organisation.

DRAFTING TIPS

- You should use direct, assertive and easily understood language as this will help minimise confusion about what is expected. For example, use 'will', 'will not' or 'must', 'must not' rather than 'should' or 'should not'.
- Steer clear of words which can be subjective or subject to interpretation.
- If you use 'appropriate' provide specific examples, as what is appropriate for one person may not be considered appropriate by another. For example, rather than stating something like -
'inappropriate relationships with young people will not be tolerated', it is more useful to specify the types of behaviours that you consider to be 'inappropriate', such as -
'close personal relationships with children and young people outside of the service are inappropriate and will not be tolerated'.

DRAFTING IDEA

You may wish to format your specific policies and procedures in a table, for example* -

Behaviour	Appropriate (I must...)	Inappropriate (I must not...)
Language	<i>[You should insert a list of clear examples relevant to your organisation]</i>	<i>[You should insert a list of clear examples relevant to your organisation]</i>
Behaviour	<i>[You should insert a list of clear examples relevant to your organisation]</i>	<i>[You should insert a list of clear examples relevant to your organisation]</i>
Supervision of children	<i>[You should insert a list of clear examples relevant to your organisation]</i>	<i>[You should insert a list of clear examples relevant to your organisation]</i>
Physical Contact	<i>[You should insert a list of clear examples relevant to your organisation]</i>	<i>[You should insert a list of clear examples relevant to your organisation]</i>

* Please note that structuring parts of your code of conduct in tabular format is not compulsory, it is merely a suggestion which may or may not be appropriate for your organisation. Additionally, the examples provided are not an exhaustive list of the policies which would need to be included in a code of conduct. You should assess your organisation's needs when determining which aspects need to be covered in your code of conduct.

Part Two: Capability

3. Recruitment, selection, training and management

What do I need to do?

Your organisation must have effective child-focused policies and procedures in place for recruiting, selecting, training and managing paid employees and volunteers.

Each of these practices should be considered separately in order to minimise risks at each stage of the employment process. It may be useful to group the processes into “pre-appointment” (recruitment and selection) and “post-appointment” (training and management).

Why do I need to have these types of procedures?

Working with Children Checks are most effective when supplemented by child-focused recruitment policies within the organisation itself. While the blue card screening process is an assessment of a person’s eligibility to work with children and young people, the recruitment and selection of your staff is your first opportunity to ascertain a person’s suitability to work with children and young people in your organisation. Your training and management then allows you to monitor and develop your staff members’ skills and performance.

Effective recruitment, selection, training and management strategies will -

- deter and identify applicants that are not suitable for your organisation
- assist you to find the people that are qualified and who will contribute to facilitating a safe and supportive environment for children
- ensure that staff receive adequate and appropriate training to deliver child-related services in a safe and productive way, and
- ensure that any issues with staff performance or conduct are identified early and actioned appropriately.

How do I draft these procedures?

Every organisation is different. Your procedures for recruitment, selection, training and management should be tailored to your organisation.

PRE-APPOINTMENT

Recruitment

The goal of this process is to identify and recruit someone who has the skills and attributes to fulfil the role requirements. When developing a recruitment strategy, it is important to consider the following:

- **Position descriptions**

Selecting the right people for your organisation will be easier if you develop position descriptions. Having clear position descriptions allows you to detail the skills and experience needed by your staff and volunteers to perform their duties and contribute to an environment which is safe and supportive for children and young people.

Generally, a position description starts with a brief statement about an organisation. This could be your statement of commitment. It then details what the tasks or duties are of the role. Finally, it will outline what skills and attributes a person needs to fulfil the role.

A position description (sometimes referred to as 'job description', or 'duty statement') should be developed for all positions and volunteer roles in your organisation that work with children and young people. A position description can help you:

- establish an understanding of the role and expectations for staff to provide a safe and supportive environment for children and young people
- become more aware of the tasks required for specific activities
- develop 'requirements of the position' (sometimes referred to as selection criteria)
- identify training needs, and
- attract and retain staff.

Your organisation should regularly review your position descriptions to assist with ongoing performance improvement.

DRAFTING TIPS

- Analyse the position and outline the skills, experience and responsibilities required of the role including:
 - the nature and the environment of the service provided to children and young people
 - the responsibilities and level of supervision associated with the position, and
 - the experience and qualifications required of the position.
- Write down the types of tasks or activities the role requires over a day, a week, a month and a year.

- **Selection criteria**

You should frame selection criteria to assess commitment, understandings, attributes, attitudes and values required of the position, particularly as they relate to children. A good way to do this is to list the duties and tasks required of the job in one column and then in the next column list the skills and attributes which are required to achieve these tasks.

SAMPLE SELECTION CRITERIA

You may wish to format your specific policies and procedures in a table, for example -

Duties and Tasks	Skills and Attributes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - talking and interacting with children - communicating with parents and carers - supervising children playing together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keen desire to work with children including patience and enthusiasm • values children's rights to feel safe and happy • prior experience with working with children • understanding of physical and emotional needs of children • communication skills including rapport and trust building skills • leadership skills • problem solving and conflict resolution skills • positive reinforcement/strength-based approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conducting activities with children - organising and conducting special events such as holiday parties - planning what activities will be undertaken during the next month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keen desire to work with children including patience and enthusiasm • values children's rights to feel safe and happy • prior experience with working with children • leadership skills • problem solving and conflict resolution skills • time management and planning skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - development of quarterly newsletter - report writing and case notes - developing activities for children to undertake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written communication skills • time management and planning skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - referring children and families to other services - liaising with other organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication skills including rapport and trust building skills • problem solving and conflict resolution skills • telephone communication skills

- **Advertising the position**

A well thought out position description will assist you to advertise the position to attract suitable applicants. When advertising a position, you should be clear about your organisation's commitment to provide a safe and supportive service environment for children and young people.

Applicants should be informed if they are going to be subjected to blue card screening, referee checks, identification verification, and that the organisation will request that the candidate disclose any information relevant to their eligibility to engage in activities involving children and young people.

DRAFTING TIPS FOR ADVERTISEMENTS

- Include a clear statement about your organisation's safe and supportive work practices
- Include clear, concise details about your organisation
- Provide brief details about the position and working conditions, and
- Name a contact person for more information.

Selection

The selection stage allows your organisation to choose the most suitable candidate for the position. It provides an opportunity to select people who will promote and protect the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people. When recruiting new staff or volunteers, your assessment should be based on the position description you developed for the role. Your aim should be to recruit someone who has the skills and attributes to fulfil the role requirements, or someone who, with a little extra training, can acquire the skills.

There are a range of methods to help you select the most suitable candidate for your organisation which are as follows -

- **Interview process**

An interview gives you the opportunity to explore applicants' backgrounds, work history, skills and values, and evaluate their suitability to work with children and young people.

During the interview process, asking appropriate and informative questions can help you select the most appropriate person for the role. The responses provided by the applicant give you an opportunity to consider how well they will uphold your organisation's values, including your statement of commitment. You should ask a number of questions that explore the candidate's capacity to contribute to your organisation's safe and supportive environment. As an employer with a responsibility to provide a safe and supportive organisation for children and young people, you have the right to question any inconsistencies in a person's work history.

Consider using a combination of question types, including:

- scenario-type questions that explore how an applicant might behave in employment-related situations
- open-ended questions that allow the applicant to provide detailed answers, and
- probing questions which ask applicants to elaborate on the answers that they have provided to previously asked questions.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- *This organisation is committed to ensuring that the behaviour of all paid employees and volunteers towards children and young people is appropriate. Can you explain what you see as 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' practices [in the particular area relevant to your organisation for example, behaviour management techniques]?*
- *How would you ensure child and young person-friendly practices are carried out? For instance, how would you ensure the privacy of a child or young person in changing rooms?*
- *How would you act in the following scenarios, and why? [Provide work-setting appropriate situations for the candidate to consider] For example,*
 - *Can you describe how you would encourage a child or young person to participate in group activities?*
 - *A young person you are working with suddenly gets angry, swears loudly and walks off. What would you do?*
 - *You are informed by one of the children that another child has stolen an item from her backpack. What do you say to the child who has informed you? What do you say to the child who was accused of taking the item?*
- *Think of an experience you have had with a child or young person where you felt particularly close to, or proud of, the person. Tell us why you felt that way. Do you think it affected your behaviour towards them?'*

• Referee checks

Checking referee reports can be a vital part of any selection process. You should complete the reference checks with most recent employer to verify the:

- identity of prospective employee
- accuracy of the details of previous employment, and
- suitability of individual to work with children and young people.

If the reference is written, contact the referee to confirm authenticity.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR REFEREE CHECKS

- *Would you employ the person again?*
- *Have you directly supervised the applicant and directly observed their work with children?*
- *Do you have any concerns about the applicant working directly with children?*
- *Can you give an example of a time when you observed the applicant managing a child with challenging behaviours?*

- **Probationary period of employment**

A probation period can allow you to assess the performance of a new employee and their suitability before permanently confirming their employment.

You should consider whether it is appropriate for the person to receive closer supervision throughout the probationary period.

TIPS

During the probation period, it is recommended that a supervisor meet with a new employee to:

- set goals
- identify training needs, specifically in relation to risk management practices, and
- identify and provide additional support to the new employee to ensure success in the new role.

POST-APPOINTMENT

Training

An effective organisation requires that staff receive ongoing training. New staff need support and information when they begin their new role, and existing staff might need to develop new skills and knowledge to meet the requirements of their positions and expand their career options.

It is essential that staff provide a positive contribution to the service environment and commit to promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Training should enhance the skills and knowledge of employees and volunteers, and reduce exposure to risks.

Mechanisms to support this may be:

- undertaking an assessment of the specific risks and subsequent training needs which are relevant to your service environment
- maintaining a calendar of what training is on offer in a place which can be easily accessed by all staff and volunteers
- clearly identifying mandatory training to all staff and specifying how frequently it should occur, for example, training in relation to your risk management strategy and reporting disclosures or suspicions of harm must occur with initial induction and then refresher training must be undertaken annually, and
- maintaining a register of who has completed what training.

TIPS

Staff should receive training in the following areas:

- identifying, assessing and minimising risks
- the organisation's policies and procedures (including the organisation's code of conduct)
- compulsory training as required by industry standards or legislation, and
- handling a disclosure or suspicion of harm, including reporting guidelines.

- **Induction programs**

An induction program which includes details of the organisation's child and youth risk management strategy will assist staff to understand their role in providing a safe and supportive environment for children and young people.

It is important to make sure that all employees and volunteers participate in your organisation's induction program.

SUGGESTIONS FOR INDUCTION TOPICS

- All aspects of your child and youth risk management strategy, including but not limited to, statement of commitment, code of conduct and reporting disclosures or suspicions of harm.
- Rights and responsibilities of staff, as well as those of children and young people.
- What to expect if there is an allegation of harm made against them or to them.
- What constitutes a breach of your organisation's child and youth risk management strategy and the potential consequences.
- The roles of key people in your organisation.
- Grievance procedures.

- **Monitoring training requirements**

Consider who will be responsible for making sure training procedures are followed and any training requirements are met.

TRAINING IDEAS

- Higher education training and accreditation.
- Training offered by external organisations.
- Training developed and delivered internally.
- On-the-job training meeting key objectives.
- Inviting police officers or Child Safety staff to meetings to discuss issues in relation to child protection.
- Inviting other professionals to speak at meetings or functions.
- Internal mentoring and coaching.

TIPS

- Document the induction process including what has been covered and who has completed the induction.
- Utilise a checklist to record and ensure that all essential information is covered.

A training register helps you to ensure that staff are appropriately trained and aware of the responsibilities of their roles. It also helps your organisation to keep effective records in relation to training requirements, potential areas for staff development and the regularity of training.

SAMPLE TRAINING REGISTER TEMPLATE

Employee/Volunteer _____

Position _____

Date	Details of training	Refresher required? Yes/No If 'yes' provide details	Competency achieved (if applicable)

Management

It is usually the responsibility of the owner, board of management or a committee to ensure management procedures are in place to support and encourage safe and supportive environments for children and young people. You should ensure that your management processes are consistent, fair and supportive.

To assist your organisation to provide the highest quality of care to children and young people, it is important to continually promote and demonstrate respect for the rights and expectations of children and young people, parents and carers.

Organisations offering child-related services should ensure that their daily operations reflect the active engagement and inclusive participation of children and young people as described within their policies and procedures.

Parents and carers should be able not only to access all the organisation's policies and procedures, but also to ensure that the organisation is living up to the expectations within the policies and procedures, and that they are reflected in the daily operations within the service environment.

You should have clearly documented policies and procedures in relation to:

- professional development and performance appraisals, including regularly reviewing the skill sets of staff, identifying training needs and setting goals in relation to issues which impact on the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- complaints management

- performance management, including processes for addressing issues related to performance which may impact on the safety or wellbeing of children, and
- disciplinary procedures (including in relation to criminal matters).

In addition, it is useful to consider the following processes to effectively manage staff:

- **Goal setting**

Undertaking a goal setting process with all employees can assist your organisation to encourage staff and volunteers to improve their performance in a positive manner. This should be a collaborative process for staff to set targets and make a plan on how they will achieve them. To identify the goals, it is important to refer to the duties and skills contained within the job description.

- **Exit interviews or questionnaires**

The information you gather during an exit interview or questionnaire process may assist your organisation to identify broader issues of concern that may impact on the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in your service environment. An exit interview or questionnaire can provide an opportunity to:

- gather information about the effectiveness of the recruitment process
- identify possible areas for improvement in organisational processes, management, job design, remuneration or career planning and development, and
- receive positive feedback on what is working well in your organisation.

Part 3: Concerns

4. Handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines

What do I need to do?

Your organisation must have policies and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines.

Why do I need to have these policies and procedures?

Children and young people can only be protected from harm if it is reported and dealt with quickly and effectively. Therefore, your organisation must have policies and procedures in place to ensure staff and volunteers respond as quickly as possible to a disclosure or suspicion of harm. A lack of formal policies and procedures can impede the reporting of such matters.

You should consider including information within your risk management strategy about the reasons for having these policies and procedures in place.

How should I draft these policies and procedures?

When developing a policy in relation to handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, you should include information about:

- Defining 'harm'
- Identifying 'harm'
- Managing and recording a disclosure or suspicion of harm
- Reporting a disclosure or suspicion of harm, and
- Reviewing policies and procedures following an incident.

Defining harm

Harm is defined as '*any detrimental effect of a **significant nature** on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing*'. Harm can be caused by physical, psychological, or emotional abuse or neglect; or sexual abuse or exploitation (section 9 of the *Child Protection Act 1999*).

Considerations when forming a reasonable suspicion about harm to a child include:

- whether there are detrimental effects on the child's body or the psychological state or emotional state
 - that are evident to the person, or
 - that the person considers are likely to become evident in the future, and
- in relation to any detrimental effects mentioned above
 - their nature and severity, and
 - the likelihood that they will continue, and
- the child's age (section 13C of the *Child Protection Act 1999*).

It is also important to remember that harm can be caused by a single act or omission or a series of acts or omissions.

Identifying harm

TIPS

You should provide training and guidance to staff about the different types of abuse which can occur and the harm which can arise.

TYPES OF ABUSE <i>Actions/behaviours by perpetrator</i>	RESULTING HARM <i>Impact experienced by the child</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">Physical abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitting • Shaking • Burning/scalding • Biting • Causing bruise or fractures by excessive discipline • Poisoning • Giving children alcohol, illegal drugs or inappropriate medication • Domestic and family violence 	<p style="text-align: center;">Physical <i>Refers to the body</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruising • Fractures • Internal injuries • Burns
<p style="text-align: center;">Psychological or Emotional abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scapegoating • Persistent rejection or hostility • Constant yelling, insults or criticism • Cultural affronts • Teasing/bullying/cyberbullying • Domestic and family violence 	<p style="text-align: center;">Psychological <i>Refers to the mind and cognitive processes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and developmental delays • Impaired self-image
<p style="text-align: center;">Neglect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not giving a child sufficient food, housing, clothing, enough sleep, hygienic living conditions, health care and adequate supervision • Leaving children unattended • Children missing school 	<p style="text-align: center;">Emotional <i>Refers to the ability to express emotions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression • Hypervigilance • Poor self esteem • Self harm • Fear/anxiety
<p style="text-align: center;">Sexual abuse or exploitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kissing or holding a child in a sexual manner • Exposing a sexual body part to a child • Exposing children to sexual acts or pornography • Making obscene phone calls or remarks to a child • Having sexual relations with a child or young person under 16 years of age 	

This is not a complete list of the types of abuse and resulting harm that may be experienced by children and young people, however it is to be used as a predictive tool for potential signs of harm. Each child's experience is different and depends on a range of factors, including the child or young person's age, the nature of harm, how long the abuse has been occurring, their relationship to the abuser, and their support networks

Your organisation's risk management strategy should include information about the signs to help identify if harm is occurring.

GENERAL INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE

Some general indicators of child abuse include:

- showing wariness and distrust of adults
- rocking, sucking or biting excessively
- bedwetting or soiling
- demanding or aggressive behaviour
- sleeping difficulties, often being tired and falling asleep
- low self-esteem
- difficulty relating to adults and peers
- abusing alcohol or drugs
- being seemingly accident prone
- having broken bones or unexplained bruising, burns or welts in different stages of healing
- being unable to explain an injury, or providing explanations that are inconsistent, vague or unbelievable
- feeling suicidal or attempting suicide
- having difficulty concentrating
- being withdrawn or overly obedient
- being reluctant to go home
- creating stories, poems or artwork about abuse.

GENERAL INDICATORS OF NEGLECT

Some indicators of neglect include:

- malnutrition, begging, stealing or hoarding food
- poor hygiene, matted hair, dirty skin or body odour
- unattended physical or medical problems
- comments from a child that no one is home to provide care
- being constantly tired
- frequent lateness or absence from school
- inappropriate clothing, especially inadequate clothing in winter
- frequent illness, infections or sores
- being left unsupervised for long periods.

What is a 'disclosure' of harm?

A **disclosure of harm** occurs when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened, is happening, or is likely to happen to a child.

Disclosures of harm may start with:

- *'I think I saw...'*
- *'Somebody told me that...'*
- *'Just think you should know...'*
- *'I'm not sure what I want you to do, but...'*

It is important to act quickly and in the best interests of the child or young person after a disclosure of harm is received, irrespective of the alleged source of harm.

What is a 'suspicion' of harm?

A **suspicion of harm** is when someone has a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering, or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering, significant harm. This includes circumstances which relate to an unborn child who may be in need of protection after he or she is born. A child who has been, or may be experiencing, abuse may show behavioural, emotional or physical signs of stress and abuse.

There may also be other circumstances where there is concern for a child's welfare but it does not reach the threshold to be considered a disclosure or suspicion of harm.

You have a duty of care to follow up any suspicions of harm or potential risk of harm to children and young people in your care. You can do this by observing and recording the actions of children who might be at risk, and reporting your concerns to the relevant authority.

You can suspect harm if:

- a child or young person tells you they have been harmed
- someone else, for example another child, a parent, or an employee, tells you that harm has occurred or is likely to occur
- a child or young person tells you they know someone who has been harmed (it is possible that they may be referring to themselves)
- you are concerned at significant changes in the behaviour of a child or young person, or the presence of new unexplained and suspicious injuries, or
- you see the harm happening.

Managing and recording a disclosure or suspicion of harm

Your organisation must document how staff and volunteers should receive a disclosure of harm from a child or young person or manage a disclosure or suspicion of harm.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER

You should provide your staff with guidance about how to manage a disclosure of harm. For example you should advise them to:

- remain calm and listen attentively, actively and non-judgementally
- ensure there is a private place to talk
- encourage the person to talk in their own words and ensure just enough open-ended questions are asked to act protectively (e.g. *'Can you tell me what happened'...* or *'Can you tell me more about that'*). Don't ask leading questions which tend to suggest an answer. Ensure the person is advised that the disclosure cannot remain a secret and it is necessary to tell someone in order to get help
- reassure the person they have done the right thing by telling you
- advise the child that you need to tell someone else who can help the child
- document the disclosure clearly and accurately, including a detailed description of:
 - the relevant dates, times, locations and who was present
 - exactly what the person disclosing said, using "I said," "they said," statements
 - the questions you asked
 - any comments you made, and
 - your actions following the disclosure
- not attempt to investigate or mediate an outcome, and
- follow any relevant process for reporting a disclosure of harm and consider whether there are requirements to report matters to the Queensland Police Service or Child Safety.

Suspicion of harm (or other concern for a child's welfare)

In relation to a 'suspicion' of harm, you may, for example, advise your staff that they should:

- remain alert to any warning signs or indicators
- pay close attention to changes in the child's behaviour, ideas, feelings and the words they use
- make written notes of observations in a non-judgemental and accurate manner
- assure a child that they can come to talk when they need to, and listen to them and believe them when they do, and
- follow any relevant process for reporting a suspicion of harm and consider whether there are requirements to report matters to the Queensland Police Service or Child Safety, or consider what support services could be offered to the family if the concern does not meet the relevant threshold to make a report.

It is helpful to provide a template to assist staff in recording a disclosure or suspicion of harm.

Specifying a contact officer

It is worthwhile considering appointing a contact officer who can deal with child protection issues in your organisation and act as a point of contact should someone wish to raise concerns. You can include the contact officer's details in the information you give to parents and carers.

A contact officer should be honest, mature, ethical and have enough experience to deal with difficult and sensitive issues if they arise. You need to define the contact officer's duties and ensure they are trained to deliver them.

A contact officer's duties might include:

- reviewing and managing your policies and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm
- inducting and training paid employees and volunteers in handling disclosures or suspicions of harm
- providing paid employees and volunteers with a copy of your policies and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, as well as the phone numbers of key contacts
- offering assistance and support when a person in the organisation receives a disclosure of harm
- organising external support to assist parties following a disclosure or suspicion of harm
- developing processes for minor corrective issues that don't need to be reported to an outside authority, and
- dealing with the media.

Reporting a disclosure or suspicion of harm

Your organisation should document clear policies in relation to reporting a disclosure or suspicion of harm. These policies should outline the timeframes and relevant processes for reporting a disclosure or suspicion of harm.

Reporting of a disclosure or suspicion of harm involves a 3-step-process, namely:

1. Considering whether the disclosure or suspicion needs to be reported to the Queensland Police Service

Your policy should be clear about the circumstances in which a report should be made to the Queensland Police Service, for example, where a child is at imminent risk of harm or a child has been the victim of a criminal offence. You should ensure that you outline any applicable legislative obligations which apply to individuals working in your organisation to report matters to the Queensland Police Service.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO NOTE

If an individual believes a child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation, they should **immediately** contact the Queensland Police Service by dialling **000**.

Queensland Police Service has a number of child protection and investigation units across Queensland. To contact the Queensland Police Service, individuals should contact their nearest Police District Communication Centre (<https://www.police.qld.gov.au/forms/contact.asp#districtComms>)

If a person reasonably suspects a child has been, or is likely to become, a victim of a criminal offence, individuals should contact Queensland Police Service in relation to their concerns.

In addition, you should also consider whether there are any specific reporting obligations in relation to your organisation (e.g. reporting requirements under the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*).

2. Considering whether the disclosure or reasonable suspicion of harm needs to be reported to Child Safety

Mandatory reporters

Your policy should be clear about whether or not you have any mandatory reporters within your organisations.

If applicable, your policy must provide information about the obligations which apply to mandatory reporters.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO NOTE

People with mandatory reporting obligations include doctors, registered nurses, approved teachers employed at a school and police officers with child protection responsibilities.

These individuals **MUST** report to Child Safety a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering, or is at unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse AND does not have a parent able and willing to protect the child from the harm.

Mandatory reporters should also report to Child Safety a reasonable suspicion that a child or unborn child may be in need of protection where the harm or risk of harm relates to any other type of abuse or neglect under s13A of the *Child Protection Act 1999*.

Your policies and procedures should provide clear guidance about:

How to determine if there is significant harm

Section 13C of the *Child Protection Act 1999* provides guidance when forming a reasonable suspicion about whether a child has suffered significant harm, is suffering significant harm, or is

at an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm. The matters that a person may consider include:

- whether there are detrimental effects on the child's body or the child's psychological or emotional state:
 - that are evident to the person, or
 - that the person considers are likely to become evident in the future, and
- in relation to any detrimental effects to the child the reporter may consider:
 - their nature and severity, and
 - the likelihood that they will continue, and
- the child's age.

The person's consideration may be informed by an observation of the child, other knowledge about the child or any other relevant knowledge, training or experience that the person may have.

How to determine if there is a parent willing and able to protect the child

A parent may be willing to protect a child, but not have capacity to do so and therefore they are not considered 'able'. This may include parents suffering from a severe mental health condition or physical illness/injury.

Alternatively, a parent may have the capacity to protect a child (i.e. they may be able), but may choose not to do so (i.e. they are not willing). This may include a parent continuing a relationship with a person who is sexually abusing their child.

In some circumstances, a parent may be both not able and not willing to protect the child from harm.

In some cases, the circumstances in which the harm occurred will be so serious that it can be presumed there is no parent able or willing to protect the child.

If there is considered to be at least one parent both 'able' and 'willing' to protect the child, the child is considered to not be in 'need of protection'.

The information which must be provided to Child Safety

Under section 13G(2) of the *Child Protection Act 1999*, the written report about a 'reportable suspicion' must contain the following details:

- the basis on which the person has formed the reportable suspicion, and
- the information prescribed by regulation, to the extent of the person's knowledge.

Non-mandatory reporting

Your policies should clearly outline the expectations for staff who are not mandatory reporters.

Child protection is everybody's responsibility and every person SHOULD report to Child Safety if that person forms a reasonable suspicion that a child (including an unborn child) has suffered, is suffering, or is at unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm AND does not have a parent able and willing to protect the child from the harm.

Making a report

You should provide clear guidance about how a report should be made to Child Safety and the relevant contact details.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If an individual working with your organisation needs to make a report to Child Safety Services, this can be done as follows:

- **During normal business hours** - contact the Regional Intake Service <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety/about-us/contact-us/child-safety-service-centres/regional-intake-services>
- **After hours and on weekends** - contact the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre on **1800 177 135** or **(07) 3235 9999**. The service operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If individuals working with your organisation are not sure who to call, or for assistance to locate their nearest Child Safety Service Centre, contact Child Safety Services' Enquiries Unit on **1800 811 810**. Child Safety Service Centres have professionally trained child protection staff members who are skilled in dealing with information about harm or risk of harm to children.

A person making a report is protected from liability under the *Child Protection Act 1999* from civil or criminal legal actions and is not considered to have broken any code of conduct or ethics.

3. Consider whether referral is required to other support services, including Family and Child Connect

You should provide clear guidance for your staff about how to deal with concerns for a child that do not amount to a **reasonable suspicion** of harm by considering what support services could be offered to the family, for example, a Family and Child Connect service can provide information and advice about connecting families with support services and the circumstances in which a referral can and should be made to one of these services.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO NOTE

Anyone can contact Family and Child Connect for information, advice and support for connecting families with support services.

A mandatory reporter can refer a family without their consent, but others require the consent of the family to make a referral.

The criteria for Family and Child Connect service to work with the family is:

- the referred family has a child from unborn to 18 years of age, and
- the child is not currently in need of protection, and
- without support the child, young person and family are at risk of entering or re-entering the statutory child protection system, and
- the family would benefit from access to intensive and specialist support services, and
- the family has multiple and complex needs.

The Family and Child Connect website provides useful materials, including Training resources in relation to family support services, which can assist you further:

<https://www.qld.gov.au/community/caring-child/family-child-connect>

Other important aspects of managing a report

You should also provide clear guidelines to staff which address the following:

- a clear process for reporting within your organisation, particularly where a disclosure is made concerning a person within your organisation. While it is important for you to have designated people and reporting guidelines within your organisation, please be aware that the person receiving the information is also able to report this to the relevant authorities and is encouraged to be involved in the reporting process. This is important as:
 - the integrity of the information is retained when the person receiving the disclosure is the person reporting the matter to the authorities
 - information is not accidentally mishandled in the internal reporting procedures, prior to the matter being reported to the authorities, and

- where there is immediate risk of harm to a child, all staff or volunteers are aware they can act immediately to protect that child and contact the authorities.
- Processes to ensure appropriate confidentiality is maintained in relation to the issues and any relevant documents.
- Procedures to access appropriate support or counselling for the child or young person and the person who receives the disclosure should be detailed.
- The importance of obtaining clear guidance and advice from the Queensland Police Service or Child Safety as to:
 - who should tell the child or young person’s parents or carers about the disclosure and the action taken, and
 - who can give ongoing help and trained support to the child or young person.

Reviewing current policies and procedures

You should undertake a review of the operation of your policies and procedures following a disclosure or suspicion of harm being actioned to:

- consider the application of the policies and whether there are any changes necessary, for example, whether they are suitable for:
 - responding to a child or young person when a disclosure is made
 - protecting children and young people from harm, and
 - assisting involved parties within your organisation, and
- identify any additional training requirements.

Your review must not interfere with court processes, and it may be a good idea to seek legal advice before starting a review. During the review, record what worked well and what may need to be improved upon. If you need to develop new policies and procedures, remember to provide information regarding the changes to your stakeholders.

Media attention

A disclosure or suspicion of harm may attract media notice. It is critical to avoid giving out protected or potentially damaging information. Consider limiting contact with the media to one person in your organisation. If you are uncomfortable dealing with the media, refer them to your legal agent.

5. Managing breaches of your risk management strategy

What do I need to do?

Your risk management strategy must include a plan for managing any action or inaction by a person in your organisation that fails to comply with any of the policies and procedures which make up your risk management strategy.

Why do I need a plan for managing breaches of a risk management strategy?

Having a plan allows your organisation to manage any potential breaches in a fair and supportive manner. Without a plan:

- people may not be clear on their obligations and rights and therefore may be hesitant to report breaches
- appropriate consequences for breaches may not be enforced due to confusion about what course of action to take
- similar breaches may be dealt with inconsistently which may result in repeat offences and also a lack of confidence in the risk management strategy, and
- opportunities for training and improvement will be more difficult to identify.

How do I draft a plan for managing breaches of a risk management strategy?

Your plan should cover a number of aspects in detail, for example –

- **Definition of a breach**

A good place to start when drafting your plan for managing breaches is to define what constitutes a breach of your risk management strategy. For example –

A breach is any action or inaction by any member of the organisation, including children and young people, that fails to comply with any part of the strategy which includes [insert details particular to your organisation]

- **Who must comply with the plan**

You must also clearly outline who must comply with the plan. It is important to remember, as discussed in the code of conduct section above, that your risk management strategy will not just apply to your employees and volunteers. Your risk management strategy should apply to everybody who is involved with your organisation including children, parents, contractors and all other people relevant to your organisation.

You should consider involving people involved in your organisation in the development of this plan and also how the plan will be communicated.

- **Responsibilities and delegations**

You will also need to identify who is responsible for the management of each type of breach. You should make sure you nominate a person or people who have the time, authority, patience and ability to follow the processes.

- **Processes for reporting breaches**

Another aspect which you will need to cover in your plan is the processes for managing the breach, including the process for reporting breaches. It is imperative that all people should be clear on who they should contact and how they should progress a concern regarding a breach. It is then equally important that the people from your organisation who are responsible for dealing with the breach are aware of the correct process to follow.

- **Process for managing breaches**

Processes for managing breaches including suitable consequences and outcomes for breaches should also be outlined.

DRAFTING TIPS

- Pre-categorise the types of breach and corresponding consequences based on degree of seriousness. The consequences should be proportionate to the breach. For example, a breach of the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action, whereas a breach in relation to failing to update blue card contact information may result in further training being provided.
- Outcomes may include:
 - emphasising the relevant component of the child and youth risk management strategy, for example, the code of conduct
 - providing closer supervision
 - providing further education and training
 - mediating between those involved in the incident (where appropriate)
 - disciplinary procedures (if necessary)
 - reviewing current policies and procedures, and
 - developing new policies and procedures (if necessary).

- **Process for recording breaches, including outcomes**

You must also ensure that you document a process for recording breaches, including outcomes.

A template incident report form which details aspects of the incident such as names of parties involved, description of the incident, date, time, action taken etc. may assist with ensuring consistent reporting. A sample template incident report form is provided for you below.

Your organisation must be mindful that appropriate confidentiality is maintained at all times to protect the privacy of children and young people.

6. Risk management plans for high risk activities and special events

What is a high risk activity or special event?

The answer to this question will be different for every organisation. A high risk activity or special event, due to their nature, will require extra planning to ensure that appropriate control measures are implemented to manage the identified risks. What your organisation deems to be a high risk activity or special event will be dependent on the nature of the activities or services which your organisation provides.

Why do you need to have risk management plans for high risk activities and special events?

Forward planning to identify risks and implement strategies can assist to reduce the possibility of children being harmed. It is important to recognise that in order for a child to suffer harm, there must be an opportunity for harm to arise. These opportunities can be reduced by developing specific policies to manage high risk activities and special events.

What happens if you feel that this section does not apply to your organisation?

If you have considered all the possibilities and are certain that this section does not apply to the activities you undertake in your organisation, then you must explicitly state this in your child and youth risk management strategy.

How do you draft risk management plans for high risk activities and special events?

Criteria or examples should be provided in your plan to guide an assessment of when an activity should be considered high risk and would therefore warrant a plan. For example you may wish to consider whether the activity or event:

- involves the participation of volunteers or people who are external to your organisation
- is to take place at an external venue or destination with a large amount of people and/or hazards (e.g. involving water hazards such as ponds, lakes or pools), and/or
- is to take place overnight or for a lengthy period of time.

It is important to note that these are just some examples of the types of things which you might consider to assist in determining if an activity or event is high risk.

Once you have determined that your organisation is undertaking a high risk activity or special event you must then draft your risk management plan.

Risk Management Process

The following is adapted from the Standards Australia's AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 Risk management - Principles and Guidelines.

There are six steps to consider in the development of an effective risk management plan:

1. Describe the activity
2. Identify the risks
3. Analyse the risks
4. Evaluate the risks
5. Manage the risks and reassess, and
6. Review.

Step 1 – Describe the activity

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER*

- What is the activity?
- What is the purpose of the activity?
- What are your objectives in undertaking the activity?
- What are the elements of the activity from start to finish?
- Where is the activity taking place?
- What environmental factors need to be considered?
- Who is involved in the activity? Parents? Staff? Children? People external to the organisation?

* Please note that the examples provided are not an exhaustive list of the issues which would need to be included in your plan. You should assess your organisation's needs when determining which aspects need to be covered in your plan.

Step 2 - Identify the risks

In this step you need to consider, how might a child be harmed? You should, where possible, encourage people involved with your organisation, including children and young people, to assist with identifying the risks associated with the high risk activity or special event.

It is a good idea to use a checklist which identifies general risks that should always be considered for every high risk activity or special event. However, it is also important to brainstorm with the people involved with your organisation to ensure all potential risks that might result in harm to a child or young person for the particular high risk activity or special event which you are creating a plan for are identified.

The risks which you are identifying in this strategy are different to workplace health and safety processes which generally consider environment and equipment risks. These are important and should definitely be considered however, it is essential to also focus on the risks of physical, emotional or psychological harm to children which may occur.

It may assist to consider where these risks of harm may come from, for example:

- Will children need to be transported?
- Is it possible that a child could be injured or become ill?
- What would happen if an emergency occurred?
- Are there any risks presented by the physical environment or location of the activity?
- Will there be people external to your organisation involved in the activity?
- Are there accommodation requirements?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Where or when might harm occur?
 - e.g. on play equipment in the park
 - e.g. a staff member giving a child a lift home unsupervised
- How might harm occur?
 - e.g. child may fall off monkey bars
- Why might harm occur?
 - e.g. child was not being adequately supervised

Step 3 - Analyse the risks

The purpose of risk evaluation is to make decisions, based on the outcomes of risk analysis. The level of risk will determine whether the high risk activity or special event is practical.

In this step you should consider –

A. How likely is it that the harm will occur? (Likelihood)

Likelihood	Almost Certain	Almost certain to occur in most circumstances
	Likely	Likely to occur frequently
	Possible	Possible and likely to occur at some time
	Unlikely	Unlikely to occur but could happen
	Rare	May occur but only in rare and exceptional circumstances

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B. What would happen if the harm did occur? (Consequence)

Consequence	Critical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical incident. (e.g. Death or permanent disability of adult or child; high level of distress to other parties) • Sustained negative publicity or damage to reputation from a national perspective or from the community welfare perspective.
	Major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple injuries requiring specialist medical treatment or hospitalisation; and/or major occupational health safety & welfare liability incident / issue. • Major incident which damages public or parent confidence. • One or more children are lost from the main group.
	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious injuries and/or illness. • Complex welfare and/or health care issue. • Serious disruption or incident, resulting in distress to children and adults.
	Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor first aid or minor occupational health safety & welfare liability incident / issue (e.g. minor cuts, bruises, bumps). • Minor behavioural issues.
	Insignificant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No treatment required.

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Step 4 – Evaluate the risks

The fourth step requires you to evaluate the level of risk, which will depend on your answers to the questions asked at Step 3. For example, if a risk is likely to occur and the consequences could result in major harm to a child, then this would be considered high risk.

Below is an example of a risk analysis matrix for *analysing* and *evaluating* risks in organisational activities. To determine the *likelihood* of risk using this matrix, refer to the left hand column of the risk analysis matrix. Then use the impact information to determine the level of *consequence*. Finally, combine the *consequence* and *likelihood* rating to arrive at the *risk level*.

		Likelihood				
		Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Almost Certain
Consequence	Critical	Moderate	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
	Major	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Extreme
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	High
	Minor	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	Insignificant	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate

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Step 5 - Manage the risk

Standards Australia’s AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 Risk management - Principles and Guidelines describes risk treatment as –

“a cyclical process of:

- assessing a risk treatment;
- deciding whether residual risk levels are tolerable;
- if not tolerable, generating a new risk treatment; and
- assessing the effectiveness of that treatment.”

Risk management options should consider the values and perceptions of people involved with your organisation and the most appropriate way to communicate with them.

You now should consider how likely it is for the risk to occur after control measures have been put in place, and how bad the outcome would be if the risk was to occur. If you assess that a risk is still highly likely to occur and the outcome could result in harm to a child then you may need to rethink the activity.

Step 6 - Review

Ongoing review is essential to ensure that the risk management plan your organisation develops for your high risk activity or special event is effective. Reviewing controls and responsibilities can be useful for future planning. You should identify in your strategy who will review the risk management plan after the event or activity.

Each stage of the risk management process should be recorded appropriately. A template is provided below to assist you with drafting your plans for high risk activities and special events.

Example Risk Management Plan for High Risk Activity:

Family day care - excursion to the park

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6
<p>Describe the activity Identify all elements of the event from beginning to end</p>	<p>Identify Risks Something that could happen that results in harm to a child or young person</p>	<p>Analyse the Risk Likelihood/ Consequences</p>	<p>Evaluate the Risk The level of risk</p>	<p>Manage the Risk Assess the options</p>	<p>Review Nominate who will review after the event/activity</p>
<p>On a Monday four children aged 2, 3, 5 and 7 will be taken to the park by one family day care educator.</p> <p>They will be at the park for one hour.</p> <p>The mode of transportation will be driving.</p>	<p>Children could be hurt in an accident</p>	<p>Likelihood - rare</p> <p>Consequences - moderate to critical</p>	<p>Low to Moderate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure vehicle is roadworthy • Ensure staff member has a valid driver's license • Ensure children are in approved child restraints 	<p>Family day care educator who attends the excursion in consultation with relevant supervisor</p>
	<p>Children could suffer dehydration or sunburn</p>				

<p><i>The park is bordered by a main road and has public toilets and a pond.</i></p> <p><i>The park is usually busy.</i></p> <p><i>There is an adjoining dog park.</i></p>	Children could injure themselves on play equipment				
	Children could be harmed by another park user				
	A child might get lost				
	Children could drown in the pond				
	A dog from the adjoining dog park could bite a child				

Template Risk Management Plan for High Risk Activity:

In addition to occupational health and safety concerns, a child and youth risk management strategy should analyse the risk of ‘harm’ to children and young people.

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6
<p>Describe the activity <i>Identify all elements of the event from beginning to end</i></p>	<p>Identify Risks <i>Something that could happen that results in harm to a child or young person</i></p>	<p>Analyse the Risk <i>Likelihood/Consequences</i></p>	<p>Evaluate the Risk <i>The level of risk</i></p>	<p>Manage the Risk <i>Assess the options</i></p>	<p>Review <i>Nominate who will review after the event/activity</i></p>

Part 4: Consistency

7. Compliance with the requirements of the blue card system

What do I need to do?

It is necessary to outline policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the blue card system requirements under the Act. Your organisation's policies and procedures in relation to blue card compliance, together with procedures for review, must be incorporated in your child and youth risk management strategy.

Why do I need to have policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the blue card system?

By ensuring that you are complying with your legislative requirements under the blue card system, your organisation can demonstrate to stakeholders that you are committed to maintaining a safe and supportive environment for children and young people. You can also ensure that your strategy remains current and effective in identifying and minimising risks of harm to children and young people.

How do I do it?

Some guiding information has been included in this toolkit to assist you and your organisation to develop procedures for compliance with the blue card system, including implementing and reviewing a child and youth risk management strategy, developing policies to ensure screening requirements are met and keeping a written register of the blue card status of your staff. The procedures you develop will depend on the services your organisation provides to children and young people.

Risk management requirements

Your organisation must have clear procedures for implementing and reviewing your child and youth risk management strategy. Continually reviewing your strategy will ensure that it remains up-to-date with any legislative changes and continues to be effective in addressing the risks to children and young people in your service environment. Your child and youth risk management strategy must be reviewed at least annually and you should ensure that you include input from your stakeholders, including children and young people, within your policies and procedures.

Your annual review of your child and youth risk management strategy should consider:

- whether your policies and procedures were followed
- whether any incidents relating to children and young people's risk management issues occurred
- the actual process used to manage any incidents
- the effectiveness of your organisation's policies and procedures in preventing or minimising harm to children and young people, and
- the content and frequency of training in relation to your child and youth risk management strategy.

You should document your review and ensure that any relevant changes to your policies and procedures are appropriately communicated to staff.

Blue card screening requirements

Your child and youth risk management strategy should contain clear procedures for compliance with blue card screening requirements.

To assist you to comply with the Act, your organisation should specifically address:

- **Identification of who requires a blue card or exemption card**

It is important to recognise that blue card screening requirements do not apply to every environment a child may be present. The blue card system is structured so that organisations providing services which are essential to children’s development and wellbeing, such as child care, education, sport, and cultural activities are captured. Further information to assist you in determining whether people in your organisation require a blue card or exemption card can be accessed on the [Blue Card Services website](#). Please note that you cannot make it a compulsory requirement for employees or volunteers to hold either card unless they are providing child-related services that are regulated by the Act.

- **Nomination of a contact person/s**

You should clearly identify a designated contact person/s who will be responsible for managing blue cards and exemption cards within your organisation. Each [blue card or exemption card application](#) form for a paid employee or volunteer has a space in the “Organisation details” section for a “contact person”. This is the person who Blue Card Services will send all notifications to and this is the only person who Blue Card Services can discuss the person’s blue card status with unless additional authorisation is provided.

- **Following the blue card processes**

There are a number of important blue card system processes which must be followed and you should have clear guidelines in place to guide relevant staff in completing these processes:

Managing blue card applications

- You must consider the need to make a blue card application for every person you engage in regulated employment that does not already have a blue card.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER

- You must notify all applicants that by signing the application form they are consenting to the screening process.
- You must be able to certify that the ‘contact person’ or delegate has sighted documents to confirm an employee’s identity as prescribed under the Act.
- You should carefully check through the application form to ensure all sections have been appropriately completed. This will minimise unnecessary delays that can result if further information is required after receiving an incorrect or incomplete form.
- Be aware that while paid employees can commence employment after an application form has been submitted, volunteers and trainee students must not commence regulated employment until they hold a valid blue card and positive notice.
- You must explicitly warn potential staff (paid employees, volunteers and students) that it is an offence for a ‘disqualified person’ to sign a blue card application form or a renewal form. **It is an offence for an employer not to provide this warning.**

Managing existing blue card holders

- If a person joins your organisation and already has a blue card, you must ensure that you have processes in place to:
 - Verify the validity of the blue card, AND
 - *If the person holds a paid blue card*
Lodge a [Link an applicant/cardholder to this organisation form](#) with Blue Card Services. This will ensure that you receive important notifications in relation to the blue card holder, including that the card has been cancelled or suspended.
 - *If the person holds a volunteer blue card and will be undertaking paid employment with your organisation*
Lodge a [Volunteer to paid employment transfer form](#) with Blue Card Services. This will transfer their card from volunteer to paid status and will ensure that you receive important notifications in relation to the blue card holder, including that the card has been cancelled or suspended.
 - *If the person holds a volunteer blue card and will be undertaking voluntary employment with your organisation*
Lodge a [Link an applicant/cardholder to this organisation form](#) with Blue Card Services. This will ensure that you receive important notifications in relation to the blue card holder, including that the card has been cancelled or suspended.
- If a person ceases working with you, you should lodge an [Applicant/cardholder no longer with organisation \(for organisations\) form](#) to advise Blue Card Services immediately.

TIPS

- To check of the validity of a prospective employee's card, it is possible to do so on the [Blue Card Services website](#) provided that you have details of the employee's name as it appears on the card, full card number (including the number following the 'I' on the card) and its expiry date.
- It is still a mandatory requirement that you also submit the [Link an applicant/cardholder to this organisation form](#).

Managing changes in police information

- You must ensure that individuals understand their obligation to advise you if there is a change in their police information. Your employees/volunteers are not required to disclose the specific nature of the change, only that a change has occurred, and
- You must have processes in place to ensure that a [Change in police information notification form](#) is submitted to Blue Card Services if you receive notification that there is a change in the person's police information.

Managing high-risk individuals

- You must ensure that you have relevant processes in place for managing notifications from Blue Card Services in relation to high-risk individuals, for example:
 - an employee receives a negative notice or is a known disqualified person, or
 - an employee has their blue card or exemption card cancelled or suspended, or
 - an employee has their blue card application withdrawn, or

- a notification in relation to a serious change in criminal history is received from Blue Card Services.

TIPS

- If an employee has had a card cancelled or suspended or receives a negative notice after a change in police information, your organisation must:
 - ensure the employee does not continue to undertake child-related work within your organisation (work that is regulated by the Act), and
 - if you continue to employ the person to perform work that is not child-related, ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to manage any risks of harm to children and young people that may arise as a result of the person's ongoing employment within your organisation.

Employee Register

As part of your child and youth risk management strategy, your organisation is required to establish and maintain an employee register which is a written record or register of all business operators, paid employees and volunteers involved in child-related activities within your organisation.

Under the Act, Blue Card Services has the power to conduct an audit on an organisation to ensure that the organisation maintains an employee register.

You will need to develop procedures for establishing and maintaining a register in either electronic or hard copy format. For large organisations, you may already have a database – this is sufficient. If employees or volunteers come to your organisation with a blue card, you will need to confirm that the card is valid.

If a complaint is made in relation to an individual or your organisation, you may be asked for a copy of your employee register.

In relation to your organisation's obligations regarding your blue card register, you are required to maintain a written record of all employees within your organisation which includes:

- whether or not the person requires a blue/exemption card (if not, why not – e.g. an exemption applies under the Act)
- the type of application/blue card (e.g. paid or volunteer) or exemption card
- when the person applied and/or the date of issue of the positive notice and blue/exemption card
- the blue card/exemption card number and the expiry date of the blue card, and
- the renewal date.

TIPS

- If business operators, volunteers and students apply at least 30 days before their blue card expires, it allows them to continue working in child-related employment, even if their blue card expires before a new card is issued.
- Paid employees must submit a renewal application before the expiry date of their blue card to continue working in regulated child-related employment once their application has been lodged).

A template blue card register is provided below and is available on the [Blue Card Services website](http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au/risk-management.html) at <http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au/risk-management.html>.

You must also ensure that appropriate and confidential records in relation to the following are maintained:

- whether a negative notice has been issued
- any change in status to a blue/exemption card or exemption card (such as a change in police information, or the cancellation or suspension of a blue/exemption card)
- where there is a change in police information, the date you informed Blue Card Services of the change
- where an employee leaves your organisation and the date you informed Blue Card Services, and
- any change to the employee's/volunteer's personal information, including the date they informed Blue Card Services (you should note that it is an offence for an employee to fail to notify Blue Card Services on the appropriate form of any change in personal details within 14 days).

8. Communication and support

What do I need to do?

Your organisation must have strategies for communication of your risk management strategy and support. Strategies for communication and support must include -

- written information for parents, employees and volunteers that includes details of your organisation's risk management strategy or where the strategy can be accessed; and
- training materials for employees and volunteers which
 - help identify risks of harm and how to handle disclosures or suspicions of harm; and
 - outline your organisation's risk management strategy.

Why do you need to have strategies for communication and support?

Your child and youth risk management strategy will be most effective when it has been successfully communicated to all people involved with your organisation. If parents/carers, employees, volunteers, children and young people are actively involved in developing your organisation's policies and procedures, they will be more likely to accept, support and adhere to them. This will then build a culture which recognises and values the importance of upholding safeguards for children.

An effective strategy for communication and support will

- ensure that all people in your organisation are aware of their responsibilities and understand what is acceptable behaviour for interacting with children
- enable people to feel comfortable addressing issues of concern
- highlight the importance of your organisation's commitment to protecting the safety and wellbeing of children in your service environment, and
- reduce the likelihood of breaches of your risk management strategy.

How should you draft strategies for communication and support?

Communication

You must consider strategies to ensure effective communication about your risk management strategy within your organisation. This starts with ensuring that all stakeholders are consulted (especially children and young people) in the development and review of your strategy. This will assist to build an understanding of the importance of the strategy and build a culture which recognises and values the importance of upholding safeguards for children.

IDEAS TO GET PEOPLE INVOLVED

- Run a brainstorming session to identify the risks which are particular to your service environment and think about ways that those risks can be reduced.
- Present your strategy to all people involved in your organisation, particularly parents, and actively seek their feedback.
- Feature a 'policy of the month' where people in your organisation are encouraged to become familiar with the policy and provide feedback they consider appropriate.

Every organisation is different. Your organisation should also consider which methods of communication will be most suitable for your organisation.

COMMUNICATION METHOD IDEAS

- Provide compulsory induction covering the risk management policies and procedures for all paid employees and volunteers.
- Deliver regular information sessions for people involved with your organisation in relation to your risk management strategy (these could be incorporated into other sessions you hold for staff and parents).
- Implement specific strategies to encourage the participation of children and young people to make sure they understand how to keep themselves safe and what to do if they feel unsafe.
- Provide information about the various policies and procedures in your newsletter or other publications, and seek input and feedback.
- Utilise bulletin boards and posters (e.g. with your code of conduct) to visually promote your organisation's commitment to safe and supportive environments for children and young people.
- Provide a copy of your risk management strategy (or information about where it can be accessed) as part of any resources you provide to people (e.g. staff handbook/induction materials, parent/carer handbook, handbook for children and young people).
- Schedule regular and mandatory training for staff in relation to the various policies and procedures which make up your strategy, with a particular focus on managing disclosures or suspicions of harm.
- Consider if there are any aspects of your strategy which can be incorporated within professional development and performance plans.
- Subscribe to relevant industry journals and training materials for staff.
- Provide relevant individuals with information to understand their obligations as a blue card holder. A range of information sheets are available on the [Blue Card Services website](#).

Support

Staff may require support to deal with issues such as behaviour management, stress, conflict, bullying including cyberbullying, child protection concerns, breaches of the risk management strategy and dealing with disclosures or suspicions of harm. If staff concerns are not addressed effectively, your organisation's ability to provide a safe and supportive environment for children and young people may be affected. Therefore, it is extremely important to consider how your organisation will support staff when they are experiencing difficulties. You should then actively communicate the types of support services you offer.

Other people involved in your organisation such as volunteers, parents and children and young people may also require support to assist with managing concerns. Your organisation should ensure that it is prepared to provide or facilitate required support services to all people involved with your organisation.

SUPPORT METHOD IDEAS

- Appointing internal support service officers or workplace health and safety officers.
- Partnering with external support and counselling services.
- Implementing mentoring programs using mentors which are either internal or external to your organisation.
- Mediation or other alternative conflict resolution techniques.
- Coaching.
- Providing additional training.

Useful References

1. Blue Card Services website:
www.bluecard.qld.gov.au/
2. Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women:
www.csyw.qld.gov.au/department-child-safety-youth-women

Family and Child Connect Services:
www.qld.gov.au/community/caring-child/family-child-connect
3. Queensland Police Service:
www.police.qld.gov.au
4. Department of Education and Training:
www.deta.qld.gov.au

Early Childhood Education and Care:
www.deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/
5. Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships:
www.datsip.qld.gov.au/
6. Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel to access legislation such as the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*, *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011*, *Child Protection Act 1999* etc:
www.legislation.qld.gov.au/OQPChome.htm
7. Play by the Rules:
<http://www.playbytherules.net.au/>
8. Bullying and cyberbullying:
www.qld.gov.au/education/schools/health/bullying
9. Australian Human Rights Commission – Children’s Rights
www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights
10. Queensland Family and Child Commission
www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/

Conclusion

To further assist you in developing and implementing effective child and youth risk management strategies, a series of videos, which are available on the [Blue Card Services YouTube channel](#), have been developed to supplement this toolkit.

Remember, safe service environments don't just happen, they require ongoing planning, commitment and maintenance.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about child and youth risk management strategies.

We hope you found this toolkit useful and we encourage you to contact Blue Card Services if you require further assistance.