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# Checklist Dealing with Child Abuse Allegations

**in the Anglican Church  
Diocese of Sydney**

Prepared by the Professional Standards Unit for the assistance of clergy and church workers.

This document is an initial checklist only. As a guideline it should not be solely relied upon for advice. Those responsible for protecting children and responding to allegations of child abuse should consult the resource materials and the relevant legislation and obtain professional advice in each situation and every individual case. Remember **you are not on your own** in these matters.

**March 2007**

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# Child Protection Checklist

## What to do with an allegation of child abuse

### 1. Clarify exactly what the allegation is

Do not undertake an investigation.

Only ascertain the gist of the allegation.

Do not minimise or disbelieve. Remember, belief is not proof.

What may seem incredible could be true.

Paedophile offenders are cunning, secretive and not immediately nor obviously identifiable.

Do not disclose allegations to the respondent at this initial stage.

Maintain confidentiality. Only disclose to those who need to know.

Assure the complainant and victim that timely action will be taken.

### 2. Contact Director, Professional Standards Unit (PSU) on (02) 9265 1514, (m) 0408 218 940 [psu@sydney.anglican.asn.au](mailto:psu@sydney.anglican.asn.au) who can advise on:

a. risk assessment regarding children and the respondent;

b. what must be reported, to whom and by whom; and

c. an agreed plan of action, to protect the child and deal with the allegation.

### 3. Report allegation

Legally, clergy, paid church workers and in some cases lay people have reporting obligations.

Get advice from the Director PSU as to who, when and how.

Reports must be made to:

**Department of Community Services (DoCS)** if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at current risk of harm because of:

a. physical or sexual abuse or ill-treatment;

b. serious psychological harm;

c. neglect.

**PSU Contact Person** if allegations relate to clergy, lay volunteer, paid church worker or person holding a position in the Diocese.

### 4. Take action to protect any child at risk and to deal fairly with the accused person

If a child is at current risk of harm, immediate suspension or removal of a lay church worker from a position (with due process for employees) will be required.

For clergy or person holding a position in the Diocese this will require PSU and the Archbishop's action.

### 5. Arrange support for all persons concerned

Make provision for separate pastoral support for the person making the allegation or the alleged victim and the respondent.

Victims may require immediate specialist counselling or other support.

They also need ongoing contact, support and process updates.

Family and friends of both the victim and the respondent (after notification) may need specialist counselling or other support. Other members of the parish may also need specialist support. Trained parish recovery consultants are available to assist.

## **6. Report any disciplinary action**

This reporting obligation arises at the conclusion of the matter.

All disciplinary action involving allegations of child abuse, sexual misconduct in the presence of or involving children, acts of violence at work or violence in the presence of or directed at children must be reported to the Commission for Children & Young People (CCYP).

An unsubstantiated allegation, prematurely aborted action, warning, reprimand or removal as a result of such allegation must be reported.

No report is required where the allegation is found to be false, vexatious or misconceived.

The respondent must be notified of this report.

Get advice from the Director, PSU on this issue.

## **7. Keep a record of all allegations and actions**

Confidentiality is essential.

Keep notes and dates of relevant conversations.

Record what conclusions, if any, were reached and what action was taken.

## **8. If in doubt, get advice**

Experience suggests that child abuse manifests itself in many different ways.

### ***The best protection against child abuse is prevention***

#### **For all those working with children in your parish**

1. Ensure that you know who they are.
2. For new or unknown people, undertake reference, and other background checks.
3. Obtain prohibited employment declarations from all who work with children.
4. Obtain SRE engagement form from school scripture teachers.
5. Conduct a Working With Children Background Check on new paid workers with Commission for Children & Young People.
6. Provide regular child protection training to all.

#### **Conducting safe ministry to children**

1. Train, support and monitor children's workers.
2. Keep details and a regular roll of children who attend ministry events.
3. Define responsibilities and explicit behaviour expectations of leaders.
4. Plan activities.
5. Have a suitable gender balance of leaders.
6. Provide adequate leader coverage and supervision at activities.
7. Allow for shared, not individual leadership at activities.
8. Respect the privacy of children.
9. Respect the privacy of children.
10. Develop an appropriate touching policy and practice.

## Contacts

### **Professional Standards Unit (PSU)**

Director	(02) 9265 1514
Contact Persons	1 8 0 0 7 7 4 9 4 5
Request protocol & other document	(02) 9265 1604
Chaplain to Victims	(02) 9265 1500
Pastoral Care & Assistance Scheme	(02) 9265 1500
<a href="http://www.sydneianglicans.net/index.php/portal/psu">www.sydneianglicans.net/index.php/portal/psu</a>	

### **Department of Community Services (DoCS)**

Mandatory reporters	133 627
Voluntary reporters	132 111
Facsimile	(02) 9633 7666
<a href="http://www.community.gov.au">www.community.gov.au</a>	

### **Commission for Children & Young People (CCYP)**

Phone	(02) 9286 7220
Facsimile ( <i>for screening and reports</i> )	(02) 9286 7201
<a href="http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au">www.kids.nsw.gov.au</a>	

### **TAMAR (Towards a More Appropriate Response)**

Anglican Victims Support & Advocacy	(02) 9484 0174
Boundaries & Ethics Training	(02) 9636 7937

### **Encompass Sex Offender Treatment Program**

(02) 9716 1400

## Resources

Child Protection Guidelines – Diocesan Secretariat	(02) 9265 1545
Safe Ministry Training – Youthworks	(02) 8268 3344
Child Sexual Abuse & the Churches (2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition – Parkinson)	(02) 8268 3344
Behind Closed Doors Video & Workbook (TAMAR) – Anglicare	(02) 9895 8000
Code of Conduct for Clergy 2005 – <i>Faithfulness in Service</i> – PSU	(02) 9265 1604
Reporting Sexual Abuse – PSU	(02) 9265 1604
Safe Ministry – PSU	(02) 9265 1604
Guidelines for Parishes - PSU	(02) 9265 1604
Employment Relations Guidelines – Diocesan Secretariat	(20) 9265 1545
NSW Working with Children Check Guidelines for Employers – CCYP <a href="http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/check">www.kids.nsw.gov.au/check</a>	(02) 9286 7220
Discipline Ordinance 2006 <a href="http://www.sydney.anglican.asn.au.au/synod/ords/adminord/index.html">www.sydney.anglican.asn.au.au/synod/ords/adminord/index.html</a>	