



This fact sheet outlines the Archdiocese's expectations of behaviour of Parish Priests and Parish workers when working with children.

FACT SHEET: APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOURS WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN

Included below is an indicative, but not exhaustive, list of behaviour recommendations for all people in Parishes who work with children.

PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH CHILDREN

DO:

- Use gentle and non-intrusive behaviours to gain a child's attention if necessary
- Use non-intrusive touch to congratulate a child e.g. pat on the back, shaking hands
- Use non-intrusive age-appropriate touch to comfort a child e.g. one arm hug
- Use approved procedures for managing children with difficult behaviours
- Use language to de-escalate situations – seek assistance promptly if needed
- What is reasonably required to protect self and children
- Promptly document and report incidents of physical contact

DON'T:

- Do not use force to impose compliance
- Do not throw anything at a child in anger or frustration
- Do not use physical restraint or interactions unnecessarily
- Do not touch a child in an inappropriate or unnecessary fashion
- Do not touch face, breasts, buttocks or groin, and avoid behaviour which could be construed as sexual
- Do not use unnecessary or unwarranted displays of physical affection towards a child
- Do not use physical touch to demonstrate an action without warning or being given permission
- Do not use an intimidating, confrontational or over-bearing physical stance

COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN

DO:

- Use appropriate and affirming language and gestures with children
- Use electronic media safely, respectfully and in line with Archdiocesan policies
- Discuss any contact made to you by a child outside the course of your work
- Listen, reassure and respect when responding to a child's disclosure of harmful behaviour by an adult (refer included *Australian Institute of Family Studies* fact sheet)

DON'T:

- Do not make inappropriate comments about a child's appearance
- Do not use derogatory, discriminatory, sarcastic or belittling language or comments with children
- Do not swear or use of offensive or aggressive language near or at children
- Do not become involved in inappropriate conversation or enquiries of a sexual nature
- Do not make threatening or intimidating comments to or near a child
- Do not engage in one on one communication via letter, technology or social media (including mobile phone, text or email)



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MANAGEMENT OF CHILDREN

DO:

- Use positive reinforcement and language to maintain rapport
- Have another adult with you, or at least within line of sight, when you are with a child or young person
- Be respectful of the child's age and development level in setting behavioural expectations
- Treat all children with equality and fairness without showing favour to particular children
- Attend to children who are injured or unwell and/or obtain appropriate support
- Develop strategies for managing non-compliant behaviours
- Seek the support of another adult promptly if you are unable to manage the behaviour of a child
- Adequately supervise children in your care

DON'T:

- Do not provide assistance of a personal nature that the child can manage for him or herself (such as using the toilet or changing clothes).
- Do not use confrontational behaviour management styles, or threatening gestures and comments
- Do not inappropriately isolate a child
- Do not bully, harass or publicly denigrate a child in order to ensure compliance
- Avoid wherever possible being alone in a room or confined space with a child

APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES WITH CHILDREN

DO:

- Set and maintain appropriate boundaries Avoid placing yourself in a position where a child may come to rely on you emotionally
- Ensure your actions are open and transparent
- Demonstrate relationships with children that cannot be misinterpreted as overly personal, intimate or inequitable
- Follow all guidelines regarding reporting children at risk of harm or concerns about inappropriate adult behavior towards children
- Ensure that risk assessment and mitigation procedures have been followed for any excursions or activities
- Act in accordance with the values and teachings of the Church, Archdiocesan protocols and parental expectations
- Have another person present, preferably an adult, in a vehicle if you need to transport a child

DON'T:

- Do not provide or have in your possession drugs, alcohol, or prohibitive substances
- Do not facilitate access to pornography
- Do not give or accept personal gifts or provide special favours to individual children
- Do not drive a child unaccompanied without approval of parents - except in an emergency
- Do not have social contact unless you have parental permission beforehand
- Do not form exclusive relationships with a child or young person



Responding to children and young people's disclosures of abuse

Listen, reassure and respect

Listen

- Move to a suitable environment, free of distractions.
- Be calm and patient—allow for the child or young person to be heard.
- Let the child or young person use their own words—avoid asking leading questions.
- Avoid “quizzing” the child or young person about details of the abuse.
- Don't be afraid of saying the “wrong” thing. Listening supportively is more important than what you say.

Reassure

- Reassure the child or young person that it is OK that they have told you what's been happening.
- Address any concerns about the child or young person's safety.
- Reassure the child or young person that he or she is *not* at fault, and *not* the cause of any distress you may feel.

Respect

- Respect that the child or young person may only reveal some details.
- Acknowledge the child or young person's bravery and strength.
- Avoid making promises you can't keep—manage the child or young person's expectations.
- Explain to the child or young person that in order for them to be safe you will need to report their experience to someone else.

What happens next?

If a child or young person discloses abuse, you should report it to the relevant authorities.

Mandatory reporting requirements vary throughout Australian states and territories. For information about mandatory reporting requirements including who is mandated to report, see CFCA Resource Sheet *Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect* <www3.aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>

State and territory contact details for reporting abuse and neglect are available on the CFCA Resource Sheet *Reporting Abuse and Neglect: State and Territory Departments Responsible for Protecting Children* <www3.aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/reporting-abuse-and-neglect>