**Office of the
Children's Guardian**

**NSW
GOVERNMENT**

# Risk Management Tips
# for Centre-Based Services*



## The Child Safe Standards provide a framework so organisations can be safer for children.

Child harm or abuse can occur in any child-related organisation. To effectively embed the Standards to help prevent or reduce child harm and abuse, you must identify the unique risks in your organisation, to help understand which areas may need to be improved.

Risks can be related to the service type, location, service and educator profile, and the children that access each service. Harm and abuse of children in organisations is not always intentional and can be the result of a lack of training and support when implementing child safe policies and procedures.

Read on to learn more about what you can do to identify and manage common risks in your service. In addition to identifying and managing these common risks, it is important to assess and manage any further risks that are unique to your service.

**Common risks that may increase the likelihood of child harm and abuse**

- **Poor leadership and culture** – when leaders are not supporting and implementing child safe practices risk is more likely to occur.

- **Conflicts of interest** – managing conflicts of interest should be addressed in your child safe policies, procedures and codes of conduct to help reduce risk. They can occur in any service type but are more common in family and community run services that hire friends and family. This can happen more often in rural and regional towns.

- **High turnover of board members** – community-based services may need to rely on families and volunteers to be on the board or Parent Management Committee. This can result in the approved provider, board or Parent Management Committee not being aware and educated on their legislative and reporting obligations to keep children safe. Directors and educators need the support and direction of the board or Parent Management Committee to fulfil their duties and implement child safe practices.

- **Sleep times and nappy change/toileting areas** – research shows these times and areas carry a higher risk, where harm or abuse is more likely to occur because of lack of visibility and changes in staffing supervision (because of lunch breaks and staff rotations).

*Centre-based services include long day care, preschools, occasional care, mobile services and Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS).

## Tips for directors and managers

Ensure all **recruitment and reference checks** are completed before educators commence work. Don't rely only on family or friend recommendations and references. Verify all WWCC clearances.

Prioritise teaching **educators what are acceptable and unacceptable behaviours** when interacting with children. You can do this in your Child Safe Code of Conduct – make sure it is **understood and practised**.

Ensure you and your educators know how to **respond to disclosures of harm and abuse** from children.

**Understand all of your reporting obligations and ensure your educators know their obligations** and alternative reporting avenues (such as reporting anonymously).

**Manage conflicts of interest** proactively through policies, procedures and having discussions with educators.

Teach the educators about **how to provide adequate supervision** across the service at different times of the day. It's also important for them to understand how to provide additional support to more vulnerable children.

Some staff are less qualified and experienced. This can increase the risk of abuse if they are not adequately supported and supervised.

## Tips for educators

**Understand and be confident in your reporting obligations** for child protection, including the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Know acceptable and unacceptable behaviour when interacting with children and **report unacceptable staff behaviour** if you see it.

Consider if the children you work with **know who to go to for support** if they feel unsafe or have been harmed.

Ensure you are **supervising across all spaces** being used by children and educators. Also be aware of peer-to-peer interactions.

**Do not take photos of children on your personal device.** Ensure permissions have been obtained when taking photos with the service's devices.

If you have contact with a child or family outside of the service, tell your manager so they are aware.

## Tips for approved provider boards and Parent Management Committees

Publicly state your organisation's **commitment to child safety**.

**Prioritise child safety** and have it as a standing item on meeting agendas.

**Declare and actively manage conflicts of interest** on boards, Parent Management Committees and within the service.

Take steps to **understand what makes children vulnerable to abuse** and provide all staff with training and information.

Have a **Child Safe Risk Management Plan** that is regularly reviewed and updated.



The Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) has resources to support you on a range of topics, including risk management, the Child Safe Standards, empowering children and more: **ocg.nsw.gov.au/training-and-resources**

The eSafety Commissioner also has resources that support educators, children and young people: **esafety.gov.au/educators**
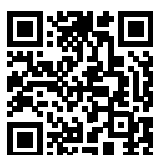
There are a number of peak bodies that can provide support and other resources for centre-based services. We suggest you research which peak body best suits the needs of your service.