

**DUTY of CARE POLICY
AND GUIDELINES**



BOOKLET 5

**BEST PRACTICE
IN SELECTION
AND
APPOINTMENT**

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Adopt Best Practise in Selection & Appointment

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“To be child safe, children’s organisations need to employ the best applicants for both paid and unpaid positions. Use the recruitment and selection process to attract positive role models for children and people who will embrace the child protection principles of your organisation. Organisations also need to be vigilant in their recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers to reduce the risk of employing unsuitable people. Child sex offenders will target organisations that are unaware of the risks and dangers of child abuse and who conduct little or no screening. Organisations need to adopt a structured and systematic approach to recruitment and selection for all staff and volunteers.” Child Wise Booklet, 12 Steps to Building Child Safe Organisations - www.childwise.net

Screen All Employed Staff AND Screen All Volunteers Who Work With / Have Access to Children

Develop Key Selection Criteria

It is crucial to set in place certain criteria that must be met before a person is entrusted to work with or have access to children or young people in your church.

Key questions to consider when forming your selection criteria:

1. Regular Church Attendance

- (a) What level of church involvement / length of time of being known to your church is considered suitable to be endorsed to work with children / young people? (i.e. six months)
- (b) Will any exceptions to this be considered? (i.e. referral from previous church’s Senior Minister)

2. Required Documentation

- (a) What documentation is required to fulfil your commitment to CRC Best Practise? (Main Policy Document, page 18)
 - National Police or State Check
 - Application Form
 - Include two character referees and a signed statement that applicant has read and will implement your church’s Duty of Care and Child Protection Policy, particularly the Code of Conduct and Mandatory Notification requirements
- (b) What additional documentation will your church require of endorsed team members?
 - Commonwealth Statutory Declaration of no previous or undisclosed allegations, offences, convictions or inappropriate behaviours

3. Interview Process

- (a) How will interviews of employed staff, any volunteer person applying to work with / have access to children in your church be conducted?
- (b) Who will conduct these interviews? (at least one person should be a member of Church Oversight or someone appointed by them)

4. Oversight Endorsement

- (a) How will Church Oversight procedurally ratify all staff / volunteer appointments for those working with or having access to children / young people?
- (b) How will your church document Staff / Volunteer Team Member appointments that have been ratified by Church Oversight?

Define Your Screening Process

All employed staff **and** all those who volunteer to work directly with, or have access to children as part of your church ministries / programs should be required to undergo a screening process prior to employment or the commencement of their voluntary role.

This screening process needs to be clearly defined, communicated widely throughout your church and implemented by all church leaders responsible for employing staff or endorsing volunteers to work with or have access to children (including those who access children's Medical Information, residential addresses or other privacy information).

Insufficient screening is a risk factor which could allow child abuse to occur in your church by the placement of a child sex offender or otherwise unsuitable candidate. Advertised screening procedures are also a way to maintain an open and aware culture.

Before offering an applicant an employed or volunteer position you should:

- Always conduct reference checks
- Check two forms of identification
- Ask for a verified academic transcript of qualifications or check details with the educational institution
- Carefully look at the applicant's employment history and seek explanations (e.g. travel, study leave) for any gaps. An application form that asks for a detailed work history including months and years removes uncertainty.
- Conduct a Police Check (Criminal History Check)

An employee, officer-holder or volunteer of your church may be subject to a contract of employment or other similar conditions. It is therefore vital to include in contracts of employment a clear statement of your oversight's expectation regarding full disclosure of any new allegations of, or investigations into, any inappropriate or criminal activity.

National Police Check / Working with Children Check

CRC Best Practice requires people seeking to work with or have access to children or young people under the age of 18, including all Children and Youth ministry Team Members and all CRC Ordained Ministers, to undergo a National Police Check / Working with Children Check (according to the requirements for the relevant State or Territory).

This is method of assessing a person's suitability to be entrusted with providing reasonable care for children or young people (when used in conjunction with other screening processes). These important checks are important to:

1. Minimize risks to children and young people under the age of eighteen and to encourage a safe environment
2. Protect the confidentiality of information and privacy of persons in relation to the release of Police Check information

When A National Police Check / Working With Children Check Is Required:

The following is a list of children's/young people's programs that will require Team Member's to complete a National Police Check / Working with Children Check prior to beginning their role:

- Sunday School
- Children's Church / Kid's Church
- Youth group
- Crèche
- Cry / Training room
- Kids Club / Kid's Outreach Event
- Classes e.g. Music & Movement, Instrumental lessons
- Children's / Young People's Holiday Program
- Children's / Young People's Camps
- Mission Trips / Outreach Trips with child / youth participants
- Any other ministry, outreach or program under the auspices of the church which has children / youth participants
- Small Group Leaders / Home Fellowship Meeting Leaders where children or youth under 18 are present either in their group or at their meeting place / home
- Church security monitors that monitor toilets / church foyer / kid's programs
- Bus Drivers
- Catering or hospitality Team Members who serve food, beverages at Kid's / Youth program activities
- Any person transporting children or youth as part of a church program, ministry or activity
- In all situations where a person has access to children, directly or indirectly during any church sanctioned event and in all situations where a person has access to the personal records of children participating in such activities
- Completed National Police Checks are posted directly to the applicant who is then responsible for bringing the original document to the authorized person within the church.

Access to Police History Information

- Any results of a person's National Police Check or Working With Children check are not to be electronically transmitted or posted on to a third party
- Information received from National Police Checks or Working With Children checks is permitted to be disclosed between CRC churches for the express purpose of protecting children / young people. Such information is not to be shared with third party organisations.
- Implement secure storage of the information until it can be confidentially destroyed. Person history records must be regarded as confidential and should be stored securely (This Booklet, page 9)

Disposal of Information

- a) Any information that needs disposing will be destroyed '*in house*' or by a reputable secure contractor
- b) After National Police Checks or Working With Children Checks expire they are to be destroyed by shredding (as they will be replaced by the current one and are no longer necessary)

What to do with Police Checks / Working With Children Checks Once Submitted

- a) Persons should only be authorized to work with children and youth under 18 years when they are cleared of any present or prior history that may present a risk.
- b) Where the records check contains information on the basis of which a person might be ineligible to serve in ministry with children / young people under the age of 18, or other concerning negative information, the authorized person shall disclose the information received to the Church Leader / Senior Pastor and the Church Oversight team.
- c) An applicant with an offender History Record should be given the opportunity to discuss or clarify the history.
- d) Written record is to be maintained regarding the outcome of the Endorsement Process. (This Booklet, page 8)

Guidelines for Interpreting Police Offender History Records

- a) A check should form part of the assessment of an applicant's suitability for obtaining employment/ministry, and compliment normal selection guidelines. An applicant should not be automatically precluded from gaining ministry in general on the basis of a National Police Check/Working With Children Check. The only exception to this would be where state/territory statutory provision states that an individual must **not** have any convictions or have been found guilty of any offence.
- b) When assessing an applicant's suitability for ministry, consideration should be given to the relevance of the person's record **to the ministry for which the applicant is being considered.** Important facts to consider are:

- The nature of the offence and the relationship of the offence to the particular ministry for which the applicant is being considered
- The period of time that has elapsed since the offence took place
- Whether there is evidence of an extensive criminal history
- Whether the offence was committed as an adult or a juvenile. Offences of a minor nature committed during youth may be viewed differently from the same offences committed by an adult
- Evidence of the applicant's good character since the offences were committed

Providing Feedback to Non-Suitable Applicants

- a) Once a decision not to appoint an applicant to a ministry because of his/her history has been reached, the reason for this decision must be documented and discussed with applicant.
- b) An applicant who is denied appointment on the basis of his/her person history should be given the opportunity to discuss or clarify the history but the church oversight still has the right to decide an applicant is **not** suitable to work with children or have access to young people based on their discretion.

Carefully Consider Suitability of Applicants

Unfortunately some people are not suited to work with children. Being Child Focused requires the safety of children to be the paramount concern. This then precludes people who are under accusation, suspicion or conviction of: sexual offences; violence; the use of illegal drugs; or who have a history of or present issues with the misuse of alcohol, illicit or prescription drugs from being given this responsibility or endorsed as Team Members. Careful consideration should be given to applicants with a history of recurring mental illness.

Be discerning and thorough in Interviewing Applicants

- Interview panels should include at least two Ministry Leaders, one of whom is a member, or an appointee of the Church Oversight
- Plan and prepare for employment interviews/ volunteer role interviews
- Request & follow up references provided by applicant (See **Sample Referee Questionnaire** – crcchurches.org/docresources)
- Insist upon completion of National Police Check & required documentation before appointment
- Watch for red flags and warning signs in interviews
- Use behavioural and situational questions in interviews
- Ask the difficult questions
- Check applicant has read and understood your church's Duty of Care and Child Protection Policy
- Train Ministry Leaders in recruitment and selection of Team Members

Appoint Children / Youth Ministry Leaders with Care

Prospective applicants for Children's Ministry Leader / Youth Ministry Leader roles in your church will have:

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1. Met the selection criteria for working with children in your church and undergone your church's screening process (including National Police Check and required documentation).
2. Be expected to be a person of good character, growing in their relationship with Christ and consistently demonstrating an exemplary standard of behavior that will be a blessing to children / young people.
3. Received and read your churches Policy and Guidelines regarding all aspects of Duty of Care.
4. Understand that they are mandated to report suspected Child Abuse and Neglect and have training relevant to their role
5. Be able to answer questions relevant to the qualifications, duties, and personal qualities required for the position
6. Be given the opportunity to ask relevant questions
7. Be endorsed by your Church Oversight prior to commencing in their specific role of overseeing Team Members and Team Leaders who work with or have access to children or young people

Document All Endorsements

As far as possible your church needs to ensure, and may be required to demonstrate, that the people you have endorsed to work with or have access to children / young people are considered responsible and suitable to provide reasonable care for them. All appointments are to be ratified by your church oversight, documented and stored securely.

It is vital that the Senior Leadership Team / Church Oversight assess, confirm, monitor and when necessary query the suitability of a person to be working with, having access to children / young people within your church. This can be done as a part of your regular Leadership Team meeting. Official endorsements of staff / volunteer team members working with or having access to children should be noted in these leadership meeting minutes. Similarly, incidents or follow up action required should be raised, discussed and recorded in these minutes, along with the person(s) responsible for the action(s) decided upon.

It is particularly important for Ministry Leaders and Church Oversight to be mindful of and watchful for recurring behaviours, family circumstances, crises / tragic events or life issues that are causing an increasing destabilisation of any endorsed Team Member. It may be necessary to ask / insist upon a Team Member taking some time out of their role for a period of time if the Church Oversight has any doubt of their capacity to provide reasonable care for children during times of intense stress, serious illness or personal / family crises. Your Church Oversight needs to carefully consider and sensitively guide the process of when / if a person is ready and endorsed to return to work with children.

Store Documentation Securely

It is advisable for your church to permanently store records to demonstrate due diligence. In response to inquiries regarding allegations of abuse, some organisations are required to produce documentation of particular Team Member many years after a person is no longer associated with the church.

- All Team Member files / documentation should be stored in a central location, in a locked cabinet.
- Access to this information should be restricted to two or three people who have undergone your church's Screening Process and are appointed by the Senior Pastor or Church Oversight to oversee/ have access to these records
- At no time should only one person have access to this sensitive information
- Relevant documentation in relation to Team Member application and selection process should be strictly confidential
- The people appointed to oversee / have access to this information should inform the Senior Pastor and the Church Oversight if a person's National Police Check/Working with Children Check returns a record of offence or conviction or in any other way raises a potential concern. It is important for the Senior Pastor and Church Oversight to be notified of this information so they can oversee what appropriate action is to take place.