



Family and Community

Guidelines for Engaging Families and Communities in Child Safety and Wellbeing

Families usually form the first circle of care and belonging around every Child, and may include parents, carers, relatives and kin who nurture and guide Children in daily life. Communities may consist of a wider circle of care - such as Church members, schools, cultural groups and local organisations associated with the Church. Families and communities play an important role in supporting child safety and wellbeing, and the faith journey of each Child participating in Church ministries.

By creating welcoming and culturally safe opportunities for families and community members, the Church can encourage open communication, strengthen relationships, and foster a shared commitment to child safety and wellbeing. These Guidelines seek to help Leaders, Staff and Volunteers at our Church engage effectively with the Families and Communities to whom we minister by giving practical examples of actions we might take to achieve this.

Informing and Including Families and Communities

The Safe Spaces Team and Ministry Leaders play an important role in ensuring accessible, clear and culturally safe Child Safe safeguarding information is available so families and community members feel informed and included in the safeguarding of their Children. Some examples of how we might seek to do this include:

- Ensure the Church's Child Safe safeguarding policies, Staff and Volunteers' Codes of Conduct, and reporting procedures are in plain language (and, where relevant, in translated format) and are available on the Church's website.
- Ensure the Church's Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing is displayed and promoted, including who and how to report concerns or give feedback
- Share your Church's Child Safe safeguarding commitments during program registration, orientation or at the beginning of key ministry events.
- Provide annual reports at Church Members' Meetings to update members on child safe safeguarding implementation, requirements and barriers.
- Provide information about Reportable Conduct and/or the Complaints and Concerns Procedure in family-friendly and culturally safe formats.
- Share updates with families and communities (where relevant) about how their input has informed changes to policies, programs or environments.

Engaging and Collaborating with Families and Communities

Meaningful and respectful engagement with families and communities supports shared responsibility for Child Safety and Wellbeing and can make a significant difference to the experiences of Children participating in Church ministries. Creating safe and welcoming opportunities for family and community involvement helps strengthen safeguarding practices across the Church. Some examples of how we might seek to do this include:

- Offer opportunities for families to contribute ideas and feedback on child safety practices and improvements.
- Invite family or community members to join annual Safe Spaces reviews or advisory groups.
- Train Staff and Volunteers to listen well, be culturally sensitive, and respond appropriately to suggestions.
- Where relevant, engage with and build relationships with Elders and families from Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and other involved cultural groups to strengthen child safe safeguarding practices.
- Staff and Volunteers should be respectfully curious when seeking to interpret feedback that relates to culture or lived experience.