



commission for
children and young people
and child guardian

Safe environments for young people

Child protection - managing the risks

Managing risks to protect children and young people

A shared commitment to child-safe environments

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian promotes and protects the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people in Queensland, particularly those most vulnerable.

Child protection is a government priority. Child abuse statistics are too high and the impact on children, their families and communities, can be devastating.

Preventive strategies contained in the Commission's new legislation recognise the vital role employers and businesses play in creating safe environments for children and young people.

What does Queensland law require?

The *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000* requires those carrying on regulated businesses or employing someone in regulated employment (i.e. those categories of businesses and employment in which people require a blue card) to develop and implement an annual risk management strategy.

The purpose of the risk management strategy is to promote the wellbeing of children and young people in contact with regulated businesses or employment, and protect them from harm.

The strategy needs to outline screening requirements and take all paid and volunteer employees into account, including those who:

- have begun employment pending the outcome of their blue card application
- hold a blue card
- work in regulated employment but are not required to hold a blue card, and
- the employer has been advised are having their blue card status reassessed by the Commission due to a change in criminal history.

An employer or person carrying on a regulated business who fails to put a child protection risk management strategy in place is committing an offence and may be fined.

Managing child protection risks

A risk is anything that can cause harm or loss to a child or young person in an organisation.

The *Child Protection Act 1999* defines harm as 'any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing'.

Harm may be caused by:

- physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect or
- sexual abuse or exploitation.

Risk management is identifying and assessing all potential sources of harm, and taking steps to decrease the likelihood that harm will occur.

The aim is to prevent things from going wrong, limit the amount of harm possible and reduce an organisation's liability if harm does eventuate¹.

Framework for a Child Protection Risk Management Strategy

Research points to three key elements of an environment where consideration of the wellbeing and safety of children and young people needs to be a priority:

- commitment to a child-safe culture, made explicit in a child protection policy
- capacity of the people - staff, volunteers, parents and children- to prevent harm, and
- consistent procedures for selecting and managing staff and guiding activities.

The Commission has built a Child Protection Risk Management Framework to illustrate the measures considered vital to create safe environments for children and young people.

¹ Graff, Linda A. (2003). *Better Safe...Risk Management in Volunteer Programs & Community Service*, Ontario, Canada, Linda Graff and Associates Inc.

Using the framework

The framework allows employers and people in regulated business to consider whether their current child protection practices are thorough enough to meet the new requirements.

This includes policies and procedures, information and training, employment practices and other risk controls.

Risk management strategies will vary in scope and detail depending on an organisation's size and complexity, the type of activities or services provided for under 18's, and the age and maturity of the children and young people involved.

The risk management process

The Australian and New Zealand Standard for Risk Management² outlines a seven-step process to help organisations manage the risks of harm to children and young people.

1. Establish the context

Clarify objectives and areas of operation where risks may occur

2. Identify the risks

Establish what the risks are in each area and how they may happen

3. Analyse the risks

Determine their likelihood and the magnitude of consequences

4. Evaluate the risks

Decide what risks are acceptable considering costs and benefits

5. Treat the risks

Determine risk-reducing actions and who is responsible for them

6. Review and revise risks and control measures

Detect and manage new risks

7. Communicate and consult

At each step, to build commitment and increase compliance.

How child-safe is your organisation?

Ask yourself the following questions. If you answer 'no' or 'not quite' to any, you need to act.

- Is your commitment to children's safety and well-being set out in policy guidelines?
- Do you have a Code of Conduct that sets standards for interacting with children?
- Do you maintain a child-friendly culture by screening and selecting appropriately skilled staff who respect the needs and rights of children and young people?
- Are staff, volunteers, children and their parents informed about child abuse and your child protection policy and trained to follow procedures and document incidents?
- Do you identify and assess risks of harm to children in all areas of your operations and ensure that risk controls are understood, put in place and regularly updated?

Developing a risk management strategy

Create a safe environment for children by:

- building commitment and openness - focus on your duty of care
- working together to identify risks - including potential sources of harm
- assess how likely these risks are to occur and the consequences for children and your organisation
- evaluate the risks - target the highest risks
- agree on and document risk-reducing measures, i.e. selecting and managing staff and activities and handling disclosures of harm, and
- keep your risk management strategy alive - renew, review and learn from 'near misses'.

You will add value to your organisation by making children's wellbeing and support your top priority.

² Adapted from Australian and New Zealand Standard for Risk Management AS/NZS 4360:2004

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