



# SETTING UP A CHILD CARE SERVICE IN YOUR CHURCH

INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES TO HELP SET UP A QUALITY CHILD CARE  
SERVICE IN YOUR CHURCH.

Psalm 127:3

**"Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him."**

Church based playgroups and other church based child care services present great opportunities for parents and children to develop relationships in a Christ-like environment.

With any activity involving children, Churches have a duty to keep children safe while they are on the premises. Risk Management identifies ways to minimise the impact of those risks to help keep our children safe while in our care.

## Disclaimer

The information and advice within this document is extracted by Department of Local Government and Communities Setting up a Creche and from COCWA Safe. It is intended as a guide only for churches who operate a child care service.

Child Care Services (CCS) at church are short-term or one-off care provided for children. Parents/Caregivers can either be involved in the session; partaking in another activity on the premises or offsite for the duration. Activities can include:

- Creche
- Sunday School
- In house Playgroup
- In house KidsClub

Providing a child care service can allow churches to:

- increase the opportunity for parents/caregivers to participate and engage
- create a community atmosphere
- increase membership and use of facilities
- create opportunity for sharing the love of Jesus

## WHY OFFER A QUALITY CHILD CARE SERVICE?

Providing a quality child care service allows parents/caregivers to feel confident that their children will be safe and well cared for while under the supervision of church leaders and volunteers.

A quality child care service should provide:

- a safe, healthy and welcoming environment for children where interactions between leaders, volunteers, children and parents/caregivers are warm and positive
- opportunities for children to play with equipment and activities suited to their age and interests
- opportunities for children to experience positive social interactions with other children and adults

## BEST PRACTICE

To safeguard your service and ensure best practice, it is recommended you consider:

- the appropriate age group to which your programme is suited
- the number of hours your child care service will run for
- leaders and volunteers have appropriate training and experience
- leaders and volunteers have been screened

## WORKING WITH CHILDREN

The Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004 has introduced compulsory criminal record checking for people who work with children in a paid, unpaid and volunteer capacity.

Anyone over the age of 18 must hold a valid Working with Children Check.

Answers to FAQ's can be found here <https://workingwithchildren.wa.gov.au/resources/publications/faqs#:~:text=I%20am%20under%2018%20years,years%20old%20who%20are%20exempt..>

## DUTY OF CARE

A child care service must provide safe care for children while their parents are either participating in an activity, meeting or event onsite or in the case of some KidsClub, while the child is in the sole care of the church while their parent/guardian returns at a later time to collect the child.

Duty of Care is a duty to take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions that you could reasonably foresee would be likely to injure a person for whom you have a responsibility, or some relationship towards. To fulfill a duty of care a child care service might consider whether:

- all children are well supervised and protected from harm
- all furniture and equipment is safe, well maintained and in good repair
- all gates, fencing and doors are secure and child-proof
- emergency procedures are developed and practised
- safe emergency exits are accessible at all times.

Duty of care may be breached if employees, leaders and volunteers behave or act unreasonably. Failure to act may also constitute a breach of duty of care. A breach of duty of care means legal action could be taken against the crèche provider.

## INSURANCE

### PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE

Public liability insurance provides cover in the event the church or an employee/volunteer is negligent, in breach of their duty of care and this negligence leads to physical injury or property damage to a third party. For example, a church may be exposed to a liability as a result of a child being injured by a fall from unsafe playground equipment. This would be a breach of the provider's duty of care. Ensure that the activity is adequately insured. If the activity is an officially sanctioned church activity then staff and volunteers are covered under Churches of Christ Insurance scheme. If it is a third party activity, be sure to ask for their Certificate of Currency and keep it on file.

### WORKER'S COMPENSATION INSURANCE

Legislation requires organisations to have worker's compensation insurance in place for all employees. Failure to do so can result in the employer being prosecuted. Worker's compensation insurance ensures that if a worker is injured or has an accident in the course of their normal duties, they receive medical attention at no cost to themselves and their wages are paid during the time they cannot work.

For more information on insurance, please contact the COCWA office on 9471 8500 or [admin@cocwa.com.au](mailto:admin@cocwa.com.au)

## SAFE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

It is highly recommended that churches ensure they have safe policies and procedures in place for all ministries, in particular, those with children under the age of 18.

**A policy is a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organization.**

**A procedure is an established or official way of doing something.**

The following is an overview, but not limited to, of what needs to be in place for a ministry to operate safely:

- Staff and volunteer screening (WWCC and National Police Checks)
- Child safe policies and code of conduct for all staff and volunteers who look after children
- Incident reports. If a child is injured or an incident occurred, their parent/caregiver must be notified immediately, and a copy of the injury/incident report is to be kept on file for four years
- Emergency evacuations need to be in place and drills run at least once per year
- First aid training- it is recommended that all children's events and activities have at least one person on duty with a valid and current first aid certificate. The church should consider providing first aid training for all leaders and volunteers on a yearly basis.
- First aid kit should be well stocked, not expired and kept out of the way of children
- Safe bathroom procedure in place. It is suggested to have two adults take child/ren to the bathroom or if only one adult is available, to check the bathroom upon entry and then wait outside near the door. Where possible, the parent should take the child to the bathroom
- Effective registration and sign in/sign out system with secure storage of data
- Obtain consent for the use of photographs and videos
- Regular cleaning, disinfecting and maintenance of toys and equipment
- Develop protocols on managing sick and infectious children (e.g Measles, chickenpox etc). This means notifying other parents/caregivers and a period of exclusion for infected child
- Adult/ratio of one adult leader for every four children aged up to two years; one adult leader for every five children aged two to three years; one adult leader for every 10 children aged over three years. It is suggested a minimum of two to three adults be present at all times.

## THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Providing a safe and secure physical environment is important. The following checklist will help you to evaluate the safety of your environment:

- the building is in sound condition. Slip and trip hazards are identified and eliminated.
- there is adequate space, light and ventilation
- heating and cooling equipment is available and in good working order
- entry/exit doors are accessible and child-safe
- there is easy access for wheelchairs and prams
- there is no industrial activity nearby that might emit fumes or particles that pose a risk to children's health
- there is direct access to a telephone
- there is direct access to an outside exit in case of an emergency
- there is an alternative exit in an emergency
- access to hazardous areas such as bodies of water is restricted
- flooring is clean, level and free from hazards
- electrical fittings and power points are child-safe
- heating equipment and fans are safeguarded when in use to prevent access by children
- fire and emergency requirements meet standards set down by the local government authority
- cleaning products are safely stored and locked out of children's reach
- glass areas are shatter proof or protectively screened
- a first aid kit is available and stored in a child-proof cabinet
- there is direct access to toilets suitable for children
- furniture and equipment is suited to the ages of the children e.g. no sharp edges, appropriate size chairs etc.
- suitable nappy changing and hand washing facilities are directly accessible
- food preparation and nappy changing areas are separate, but near to play area or easily accessible
- drinking water is available (inside and outside) for staff and children
- shade is provided in outside play areas
- playground equipment is safe, well maintained and does not pose a risk to children
- fences surrounding the area are adequate and secure to keep children in and strangers out
- a sun safety policy is in place.
- Other groups using the building at the same time- establish protocols to ensure all persons in the building are identified and accompanied where appropriate
- Food service- if your child care service provides food for children and parents/guardians, instruct preparers in how to operate safely including: hand washing, wearing gloves, food temperature control, washing up, storing equipment, cross contamination etc.