

# Guidelines to Churches

on assessing special roles in the church as Child Related  
Schedule B1.2 as part of the Role Requirement Guidelines

## Terminology

For the purpose of this discussion

**Care giver** refers to the parent, guardian or an adult appointed by these persons to care for the child but not an Adult in a church appointed role.

**Child Related** refers to an activity or service where there are heightened child protection risks that require screening, training and the signing of a code of conduct

**Supervised Access** refers to the situation when an adult interacts with a child under the supervision of their care giver.

**Unsupervised Access** refers to situation where a care giver transfers the responsibility for supervision to an adult in a church appointed role.

## Background

Children may participate in ministry activities as part of Adult groups in many different ways. These might include but are not limited to:

- Taking or participating in the prayer
- giving the scripture reading
- giving a special item
- participating in a kid's story
- participating in the praise and worship team
- assisting with Audio-visuals (AV)
- being members of adult choirs

This then raises the question of when might the participation of children in church services or activities warrant Child Protection Risk mitigation?

Adsafe has assessed church organised services and activities that are by the definition of external Child Protection agencies child related and hence requiring risk mitigation measures including the legal requirement of having a Working with Children Check clearance or its equivalent. These specific roles are outlined in Schedule B1.1 in the appendix of the Role Requirements Guidelines and referred to as **Defined Child Related Roles**.

Schedule B1.2 suggests seven additional generic roles that may need risk mitigation depending on the parameters of how the church has set them up. Adsafesafe allows the church board or its equivalent to assess these activities to determine whether risk mitigation is needed. This guideline is to assist the church leadership with this assessment.

## What principles do you use to decide?

### Risk of Abuse

It should be understood that just because a child or children are participating in an Adult environment it doesn't mean that that environment is necessarily child related. The church has many mixed services that involve both children and adults where children might be part of the service but the service is not deemed child related (requiring working with children checks or equivalent for all the adults).

There is a greater risk of abuse of a child when an adult has unsupervised access to the child. This could be time alone out of the view of other adults. If the church ensures that the child's participation in the service is only done in the presence of a group of adults there is little chance of abuse occurring. Care may need to be taken to ensure that an adult doesn't use his or her association or established relationship to arrange secret alone time with the child outside of church activities.

### Supervised Access

It is well understood in our community that when a child is accompanied by a parent, guardian or other adult designated as the care giver that this child is being supervised. In this circumstance persons appointed to church roles do not have supervisory responsibility for the child. This is evident in the following examples:

- parents who don't sign their kids into cradle roll or kindergarten sabbath school but attend with the child instead.
- adult choirs where a child participates with their caregiver.
- a child assisting with the church AV team always in the presence of caregiver.
- a child giving the kids story at church but with no out of hours rehearsal.
- parents attending and caring for an Adventurer age child at an Adventurer Camp except when the child is participating in an activity run by a church appointed counsellor.

### Unsupervised Access

A church may run dedicated services specifically for children. These are characterised by following elements.

- appointment of leaders and assistants to roles by the church community to run these services
- oversight of the child protection risks by the church board associated with each proposed activity
- training of persons in these roles
- screening of persons in these roles
- a commitment by persons in these roles to the behavioural expectations of the code of conduct.
- responsibility for the care of the child is transferred to persons in these appointed roles either formally with a sign-in sign-out mechanism or informally on arrival or at the conclusion of the service the departure of the child for older children.

A service for children may have some children supervised by their caregiver and the remainder who are in the care of persons (at least two) appointed by the church in a child related role. In these circumstance care needs to be taken to ensure that care givers present to supervise their child are not asked to or put in a situation where they are responsible for the other children (not their own.)

Examples of this could include:

- being asked to take someone else's child to the toilet.
- being left in the room with the children when the all the appointed leaders or assistants are called away.

## Children's involvement in Adult groups

It should be noted that the wider community allows child involvement in adult work places without requiring the adults in that work place to have working with children's checks. This is the case at McDonald's that routinely employs children to work in their stores. The work place is designated as "adult" even though a significant number of children are part of their work force. In a church context this notion applies to the mixed services where both adults and children attend such as the main church service, church lunches and church camps. It is generally expected that all children are under the age-appropriate supervision of a care giver at these times. During transition time between services the church community accepts age-appropriate community standards for care giver supervision. This is evident where children up to the age of 10 -12 are collected by the care giver from sabbath school services while older children are allowed to manage the transition time unsupervised. This relies on the notion that times when a large number of people are present child protection risks are significantly reduced. This principle is applied to church services and activities for a mixed audience of both adults and children where children may participate from time to time. This means that risk mitigation needs greater attention when children assist in adult teams more during the out of hours times when the team practices or prepares rather than during public service itself.

Schedule B1.2 proposes the following types of groups that might have heightened child protection risks. Whether they are is dependent on the specific local circumstance and because of this reason Adsafe is not able to make a universal determination (although we are willing to advise). This task is given to the leadership of the local church to assess. Once roles are assessed as Child Related they are to be included on the church's Schedule B1 and adults involved in these groups will need to meet the appropriate requirements.

### *"B1.2 Roles Assessed as Child related*

...

#### *Leadership decisions*

1. ...

#### *unsupervised care of children*

2. Any other role that involves unsupervised care of a child

#### *with access to children while performing regular duties*

3. Praise and worship teams that include children

4. Audio-Visual teams that include children

5. Any other adult teams where children assist

#### *with access to children's information as a regular part of their duties*

6. Any manager of a church database or church website if it stores personal information about children or communicates with children

#### *designated role*

7. Other church sponsored adult ministry volunteers

(Role Requirement Guidelines, Appendix B1, Page B1, B2)

## Circumstances where there are no heightened child protection risks

- where a care giver also attends or participates in the group at the same time as a child. (no unsupervised access)

- where the child doesn't travel to or from practices with adult members of the group (who are not care givers) and only participates in practices and performances with more than two other adults from the group.
- There are no separate practices or preparation times for the group. The group's activities only occur at the time of the adult service.

### Alternative methods to manage risk

If the church leadership determines that there are occasions where an adult in the group will have unsupervised access to a child then risk mitigation measures are appropriate. The Church leadership should seek alternative mechanisms to mitigate the child protection risks before classifying an Adult group as child related and requiring all the adult members of the group to complete training, get a working with children check and sign a code of conduct. These could include:

- seeking to have a care giver also assist with the group.
- ensure that transport to and from practices or preparation times for the child is not dependent on adults from the group and that at least two adults are present at these times.
- designating that both the roles of the leader of the group and a designated assistant are child related. Ensure that they are screened, trained and have signed the code of conduct. The two roles will then be required to supervise all the children involved in the activity or service and during any practice or preparation. This then ensures that access to these children by other adults in the group is always supervised.

### Classify the Adult team as child related

If there are times where an adult in an adult team in the course of their duties have unsupervised access to a child who assists in the team then the adult team's activities should be classified as child related and all the adult members of the team should complete training, have a working with children check clearance or equivalent and sign the code of conduct. Examples of occasions where this is likely to be the case are:

- Church AV team of two, one adult and one child where preparation is done Friday night (with an expectation of other adults present).
- Praise and worship team that includes a child, has practice Thursday night and the child needs transport. (with special consideration about how transport will be managed)
- Junior deacons assisting the church deacon's team with a Sunday clean-up.

### Required Action

1. The church's Schedule B1.2 should be updated with any Church activity that involves children and is assessed by the church as child related.
2. This should be submitted to the board or equivalent for approval.
3. any prospective person who may be appointed to a child related role should be informed of the requirements of the role prior to accepting the role.
4. Prior to first taking on the role compliance to the requirements must be checked.