



Providing a safe environment for young people:

A practical guide to the application of the *May Our Children Flourish – Code of Conduct for Caring for Children* in youth ministry activities, excursions and camps



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How do I use this guide?

This toolkit provides youth ministry leaders with guidelines and forms to help you meet the Archdiocese of Melbourne's expectations for providing a safe environment for young people. It applies to excursions, overnight activities including camps, and any other times you might deal with young people. These guidelines are based on "May our Children Flourish", the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's code of conduct for caring for children, and should be read in conjunction with these protocols. For further information see cam.org.au/caringforchildren.

The information in this guide applies to activities organised by parishes in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, where parents are not present to supervise young people aged under 18 years. This includes activities on parish property, or activities which use a parish's name as the organiser.

If you are ever in any doubt about a situation or have any questions about providing a safe environment for young people, contact the Office of Professional Conduct and Ethics of the Archdiocese of Melbourne on (03) 9926 5630.

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What is a safe environment?

A safe environment is one where young people are protected from physical, emotional and personal harm. When organising an activity, consider the following:

A safe physical environment:

- If you are organising an excursion or camp, select venues which are experienced in hosting young people, and choose campsites accredited by the Australian Camps Association (see auscamps.asn.au).
- There should always be more than one adult leader supervising a group. If your participants include males and females, male and female leaders should be present. On overnight stays, at least two male and two female leaders should be available to supervise.
- Ensure that there is a record of who is present at an activity at all times. It is recommended that a sign in/sign out system be in place to prevent a young person from leaving an activity unaccompanied or collected by an unauthorised person.
- Have a mobile phone accessible at all times.
- At least one of your adult leaders should be trained in first aid. Ensure you have a first aid kit accessible at all times, and check that it is fully stocked. St John Ambulance Australia conduct regular first aid training and can recommend a suitable kit for your group (see stjohn.org.au).
- If a young person has a disability or medical condition, speak with their parents or carer to ensure there is a clear understanding about any special care required, and honestly determine whether your group has the capacity to provide this care. If necessary, invite the parent or other suitable carer to accompany the young person during the activity (the accompanying adult will need to have a Working with Children Check, as well as a Police Check for overnight stays – see page 6 “What checks should leaders have?”).
- Be aware of safe food handling practices, and register any activity involving the sale of food (including fundraisers) with your local council. See health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety for more information.
- Obtain copies of allergy management plans for young people with known allergies. If a participant has a known anaphylactic allergy, ensure that a leader is trained in responding to anaphylaxis, and that the participant has access to their own adrenaline auto-injector (eg. EpiPen) at all times. On excursions or camps, strongly discourage food sharing, and advise any known food allergies to those involved in preparing meals, including venues which provide catering for an activity and parents or carers of participants who may be packing meals.

- Remind young people to protect themselves from the sun and stay hydrated, and insist on sunscreen and hats. Take spare cases of water for outdoor activities.
- Encourage young people and adult leaders to raise any concerns about personal safety.

A safe emotional environment:

- Address young people by name.
- Select leaders who will be positive role models and contribute to a harmonious and nurturing setting which reflects gospel values.
- Older people attending a youth-oriented activity should have a clear purpose for being present. It is appropriate to specify a suitable age-bracket for participation and exclude older people who are not attending in a leadership capacity.
- Respect the privacy of young people. Do not force young people to give personal sharings in conversations or group settings.
- Ensure dignity and respect are shown to young people at all times.
- Acknowledge efforts and not just achievements.
- Encourage young people to tell an adult leader about anything that makes them feel worried, embarrassed or afraid.

Protecting young people:

- Ensure all adult leaders have all relevant checks required by the Archdiocese and state and federal law (see page 6: “What checks should leaders have?”).
- Ensure all young participants and adult leaders have read and signed a code of conduct form (see pages 11 and 12 for sample “Code of Conduct” forms).
- An adult leader should never be alone with a young person. Always remain within eyesight of others.
- Physical punishment is never appropriate. Ensure leaders have agreed on a standard plan for managing inappropriate behaviour, and ensure another leader is present when correcting a young person. If a young person is a danger to themselves or others, parents or carers should be contacted to remove their child. In an emergency situation contact 000.
- When praying with young people, request permission before touching a young person, and pray in teams of two adults.
- No private or excessive touching.
- Avoid showing favouritism or engaging in emotionally inappropriate or age inappropriate relationships.
- Advise young people that if anything is disclosed which is of harm to themselves or others, it cannot be kept confidential.
- Only release young people aged under-18 to known people at the conclusion of an activity. If in doubt, contact the parents or emergency contact to confirm.

What do I need to consider when running an overnight activity?

- Adult leaders accompanying overnight activities are required to have a police check in addition to a Working with Children Check (see page 6 “What checks should leaders have?”)
- Males and females must have access to separate changing areas.
- Under 18s and participants aged over 18 should have access to separate changing areas.
- Males and females must have separate sleeping arrangements.
- Under 18s and participants aged over 18 should have access to separate sleeping areas.
- If adult leaders are supervising in sleeping areas, there must always be more than one adult of the same sex as the participants present.
- Adults should not assist young people with toileting or changing clothes, unless a young person has a disability requiring assistance. In this case, assistance should only be provided by an adult leader of the same sex, and another adult of the same sex should also be present.

Transporting young people

Where possible, it is recommended that young people be transported directly to an activity by parents or carers. If you offer transport for young people as part of your activity ensure that:

- Nominated drivers have submitted a police check within the last three years.
- Permission is obtained from the young person’s parents or guardians.
- Drivers are accompanied by another adult leader and do not drive a young person alone.
- Only fully licensed or P2 probationary license holders (green P-plates) may transport young people; drivers on a P1 probationary licence (red P-plate) should not transport passengers for a youth ministry activity.
- Young people are taken directly to and from a venue as arranged, with no additional stop offs.
- Drivers observe all speed limits and road laws, vehicles are registered and roadworthy, and drivers have minimum third party insurance.



A word on social media and the internet

- It is recommended that a youth ministry engage with young people on social media via a group page or group profile which is administered by a number of adult leaders.
- Adult leaders should avoid having private correspondence with young people on social media. Public posting on walls, or via a shared group profile which can be seen and accessed by others is more acceptable.
- A youth ministry or adult leaders should not initiate friend requests with young people aged under 18.
- Photos posted on the internet should only be done as part of the church or youth ministry’s communications or advertising. Ensure consent is obtained (see page 10 for a parental consent form).
- Do not tag or identify individual young people by name when sharing photos from an activity online. Only approve tags where individuals have tagged themselves.
- For more information on the social networking protocol of the Catholic Church in Australia see <http://mediablog.catholic.org.au/?p=335>



What checks should leaders have?

All adult leaders who regularly lead activities using parish property, name or facilities with young people aged under 18 are required to have a Working With Children Check (WWCC) (registered teachers are exempted). Volunteers can apply for a WWCC online and free-of-charge at workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au. The parish priest or youth ministry coordinator should keep a copy of all leaders' WWCCs on file and note expiry dates.

Adult leaders involved in supervising an overnight activity or transporting young people are also required by the Archdiocese of Melbourne to have a Police Check obtained within the last three years. You can apply for a Police Check by downloading form 820B at police.vic.gov.au. The parish priest or youth ministry coordinator should keep a record of police checks on file.

What information do I need to collect from participants?

If you are running an activity, excursion or camp, you need to collect the following information from young people who will be in your care:

- Personal details
- Medical conditions including allergies and medication
- Emergency contact details
- Parental consent for young people aged under 18 years of age, including consent for photos and video.

Young people should also read and sign a participant code of conduct to ensure they understand expectations for behaviour and maintaining a safe environment.

All documents collected from participants should be securely filed permanently at your parish. Hard copies of documents can be retained, or scans may be made for electronic storage. Hard copies should only be disposed of if electronic copies have been made, and should be destroyed securely by shredding or other means. Be aware that there is legislation pertaining to the collection and storage of personal information - check with your parish to ensure you follow correct protocols.

See the appendix (pages 9-12) for personal details, consent and code of conduct forms you may use for your activity.

What information do I need to collect from leaders?

All adult leaders should provide:

- Personal details including copies of relevant checks
- Medical details including allergies and medication
- Emergency contact details

Adult leaders should also read and sign a leader code of conduct to ensure there is a common understanding of appropriate behaviour for leaders and disciplining inappropriate behaviour from participants. They must also have read the “May our Children Flourish - Code of Conduct for Caring for Children,” and be familiar with any updates (see www.cam.org.au/caringforchildren for the Code of Conduct and latest updates).

All documents collected from leaders should be securely filed permanently at your parish. Hard copies of documents can be retained, or scans may be made for electronic storage. Hard copies should only be disposed of if electronic copies have been made, and should be destroyed securely by shredding or other means. Be aware that there is legislation pertaining to the collection and storage of personal information - check with your parish to ensure you follow correct protocols.

See the appendix (pages 9-11) for personal details, consent and adult leader code of conduct forms you may use for your activity.

What do I do if something goes wrong?

Before departing for your activity, ensure you have collected all necessary information from leaders and participants. Have a contingency plan for any known medical issues, particularly allergies and asthma.

When arriving at a venue, be aware of emergency exits and evacuation plans. Ask staff to brief your group about relevant safety issues.

If something does go wrong:

- Remove the danger if possible, or remove people from the dangerous situation
- Contact 000 immediately in the case of an emergency
- Contact the young person’s parents
- Notify your parish priest about the incident
- Complete an incident report, keeping notes taken at the time of the incident or immediately thereafter, signed and dated (see the appendix page 13-14 for incident report templates)
- Incident reports regarding accidents should be filed at the Parish
- Incident reports regarding allegations of misconduct or breaches of the May our Children Flourish Code of Conduct should be submitted to the Office of Professional Conduct, Ethics and Investigation (contact (03) 9926 5630).

If a situation is possibly criminal, a report should be made to police. Your parish priest should also be informed. If you are not satisfied with the response you have received from your parish priest, contact the Vicar General’s Office on (03) 9926 5677.

If a situation is not criminal, but involves a priest, contact the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's Office of Professional Conduct, Ethics and Investigation on (03) 9926 5630.

If a situation involves sexual abuse within the church, it should be referred to the Independent Commissioner on (03) 9225 7979.

It is not the role of a youth ministry leader to investigate any allegations or serious complaints. If you are ever in any doubt about a situation or have any questions, contact the Office of Professional Conduct and Ethics for guidance on (03) 9926 5630.

Forms

On the following pages are some forms which you can use for your youth ministry's activities:

1. Personal details and medical information form
2. Participant and parent consent form
3. Adult leader code of conduct
4. Participant code of conduct
5. Incident report form – accidents
6. Incident report form – allegations of misconduct / breaches of the code of conduct
7. Organiser's checklist

Do not alter the wording of text of the personal details and medical information form, participant and parent consent form, and adult leader code of conduct, except where indicated on the form. The text of the participant code of conduct is suggested, but may be modified for your group and activity.



PERSONAL DETAILS AND MEDICAL INFORMATION FORM

Participant details

Participant name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Gender: _____

Address: _____

Contact phone no.: _____

Email address: _____

For adult leaders

Copy of Working with Children Check attached:

Copy of Police Check attached:

Parent/Guardian details (for participants aged under 18)

Parent/Guardian name: _____

Relationship to participant: _____

Address: _____

Contact phone no.: _____

Emergency contact details

Emergency contact: _____

Relationship to youth: _____

Address: _____

Contact phone no.: _____

Medical details

Medicare no.: _____

If applicable, please provide us with the following details:

Private health insurer: _____

Private health membership number: _____

Ambulance membership number: _____

Please advise us of any medical conditions including asthma, medications, allergies, special dietary requirements or any other information we should know about you/your child's needs to ensure you/your child's safety throughout the camp: _____

Please advise of any special arrangements regarding picking up your child at the end of the activity:

PARTICIPANT AND PARENT CONSENT

Participant name: _____

(Please circle appropriate option depending on age of participant.)

I, _____ consent to /consent to my child (if under the age of 18)
_____ attending and participating in **[name of activity, date and location of activity]**

In the event that you are unable to communicate with me, or my nominated emergency contacts, I consent for me/my child to receive any such medical or surgical treatment as may be deemed necessary and I agree that any such treatment will be at my expense. I have informed you of any allergies or other medical conditions of me/my child relevant to this activity and will make any necessary medication available.

I also consent to a photograph or video image of me/my child being used without acknowledgement, remuneration or compensation, in publications (print, websites, DVDs, CDs, etc.) and/or presentations of **[name of Parish/Youth Ministry]** or the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne **[and in particular in [name of publication/presentation]]**.

As a youth/parent of a youth attending the **[name of activity]**, I have read, understood and support the Participant Code of Conduct.

Signature of participant OR parent/guardian (required if participant under 18 years of age)

Print name

Relationship to participant

Participant signature

Date

ADULT LEADER CODE OF CONDUCT

All adult leaders are required to have read and be familiar with the May Our Children Flourish Code of Conduct for Caring for Children. See cam.org.au/caringforchildren for the Code of Conduct and latest updates.

I will:

- Conduct myself in a Christian manner through language, dress and behaviour and be a positive role model to promote the values of the Catholic Church through my words and actions.
- Act in accordance with federal laws, and the laws, regulations and rules of the State/Territory in which the activity is hosted.
- Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Avoid all forms of discrimination and respect the dignity of each person without regard to economic status, age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or physical or mental abilities.
- Use positive reinforcement and communication rather than criticism, unhealthy competition, or comparison.
- Adhere to emergency plans and evacuation routes appropriate to the venue and adhere to all instructions provided by venue staff.
- Uphold the authority of those responsible for the program or activity in which I am participating and assist them to engage youth participants.
- Ensure there is another adult present in any situations where I am in the presence of minors.
- Seek assistance if a young person's behaviour is causing danger to those around him or her, and if necessary contact police. I will only use physical restraint as a last resort or in an emergency.

I will not:

- Engage in any inappropriate conduct, but especially with minors
- Form inappropriate relationships with a young person; for instance, by placing myself in a position where a young person may come to rely on me emotionally, or by attempting to act as a surrogate parent. It is my responsibility, not the young person's, to set appropriate guidelines and boundaries. I will not show favouritism to any particular young person such as through gifts or continually showing greater attention than is given to others.
- Upload, post on social media or transmit via a mobile device embarrassing or inappropriate photos of myself or others.
- Smoke in the presence of minors, purchase tobacco products for or distribute tobacco products to minors.
- Possess or be under the influence of alcohol while supervising minors or while participating in the activity, or purchase alcohol for or distribute alcohol to anyone under the age of 18 years.
- Use, purchase, possess, distribute, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Purchase, download, possess, or distribute pornography.
- Participate in, or tolerate behaviour which humiliates, ridicules, threatens or degrades others.
- Use physical discipline in any way for behaviour management of others. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This includes but is not limited to slapping, pinching, shaking, hitting or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviour of a minor.
- Use rude or offensive language in the presence of others.

I hereby represent that I am not currently being investigated for, nor have I ever been convicted of an offence against any person whether an adult or minor (including but not limited to murder, assault, battery, sexual assault, injury to a minor, and abandoning or endangering a minor); I have never been terminated from employment or a volunteer position for reasons related to allegations of physical or sexual abuse by me; nor have I sought or received any medical, physical, or psychological treatment for reasons involving physical or sexual abuse by me. I understand that should my response to any of the statements above change, I am obligated to inform **[name of activity organisers]** immediately. Moreover, I understand that should I admit to or be found guilty of an incident of sexual misconduct or other offence against any person (as noted above), or if it appears that an alleged claim is substantiated; my involvement with the activity shall be immediately terminated.

Further, I understand that my failure to agree to and abide by the Adult Code of Conduct will bar me from participating in the activity. I have read the above Code of Conduct and agree to follow it. I understand that if the Code is breached then the **[name of activity organisers]** may:

- Report my misconduct to local statutory authorities, if the breach in any way violates local ordinances or laws
- Dismiss me from the activity
- Ban me from involvement in future events

Signature: _____

Date: _____

PARTICIPANT CODE OF CONDUCT

As a participant in the **[Youth Ministry name and activity]**, I understand and agree to the following in order to ensure a positive experience for all involved. I will:

- Treat all with respect and kindness and listen to what others have to say.
- Treat other people's personal space and property, and the venue property with respect.
- Show respect during group activities, prayer time and Mass by not causing disruptions and not talking unless called on to respond.
- Wear modest clothing.
- Pay attention to and follow instructions given to me by the leaders at all times and will make sure leaders knows my whereabouts at all times.
- Participate and contribute in a positive way in all group activities
- Not enter the room of a person of the opposite gender.
- Not use rude or offensive language
- Not hurt, abuse, bully, or form inappropriate relationships
- Not use, possess or be under the influence of tobacco, alcohol, or banned drugs, or misuse other medication.
- Tell an adult leader about anything that may make me feel worried, afraid or unsafe.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

INCIDENT REPORT FORM – ACCIDENTS AND MISHAPS

All critical incidents must be reported. Critical incidents include those involving a lost person, medical illness requiring hospitalisation, death of a person, transport breakdown/problems/accident, major public emergency, significant lost property or any other serious incident.

Date/time of incident: _____

Names of people involved: _____

Brief description of incident and causative elements: _____

Outcome of incident and follow up required: _____

Parents / emergency contact notified (please circle): Yes No Not required

Name of person reporting incident: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of witness to the incident: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

INCIDENT REPORT FORM – ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT AND BREACHES OF THE CODE

This Confidential Incident Recording Form is part of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's Code of Conduct for Caring for Children. This form may be used by anyone who wishes to record any incident or breach of the Code of Conduct, make a complaint or report any issue of concern regarding children in a parish or agency of the Archdiocese of Melbourne. It should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct, and in particular, section 3: Dealing with Breaches and Matters of Concern.

Details of person completing this form

Name: (surname last and in CAPITALS) _____

Position in parish or diocesan agency: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (home) _____

Telephone (work) _____

Telephone (mobile) _____

Details of person making the disclosure

Name: (surname last and in CAPITALS) _____

Position in parish or diocesan agency: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (home) _____

Telephone (mobile) _____

Details of alleged perpetrator (if applicable)

Name: (surname last and in CAPITALS) _____

Position in parish or diocesan agency: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (home): _____

Telephone (mobile): _____

Relationship to person making the disclosure: _____

Date of completion of this form: _____

Date of incident/s or matter (if applicable): _____

Details of incident or matter: (please be as descriptive as possible, include dates, locations, full names, names of any witnesses etc). _____

What action have you already taken? _____

Who have you informed – name, title (if relevant) and date _____

Signature of person completing this form: _____

PROVIDING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE – ORGANISER CHECKLIST

Planning

- Suitable venue

For overnight activities:

- Suitable sleeping arrangements for males and females / under 18s and over 18s
- Suitable changing arrangements for males and females / under 18s and over 18s

- Adequate number of leaders
- Assigned First Aid officer
- Allergy management plan
- Report dietary and other special requirements to venue

Information collection

- Working with Children Checks for all adult leaders
- Police checks for all adult leaders (overnight activities and drivers only)
- Code of conduct forms for adult leaders
- Personal details and medical information form for all participants
- Code of conduct forms for participants

Packing List

- First Aid kit
- Mobile phone
- Water for outdoor activities
- Copies of all participant personal details and medical information form
- Blank copies of incident report forms


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