



Sisters of Saint Joseph
of the Sacred Heart

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Child Safeguarding Policy

Policy Name	Child Safeguarding Policy		
Version	v.1.0	Approved by the Congregational Leadership Team on	February 2021
Responsible person	Safeguarding Co-ordinator	Scheduled review date	February 2024



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Mission Statement

The Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart continue God's mission by immersing themselves in the midst of life to empower others and bring hope.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart (**SOSJ**) is committed to fostering communities and a culture of safeguarding that recognises and upholds the dignity and rights of all children.
- 1.2 SOSJ has a zero tolerance of child abuse. It will be guided by its Child Safeguarding Commitment Statement and broader values and strategic vision.
- 1.3 This policy sets out SOSJ's safeguarding approach and relevant responsibilities in accordance with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

2. Scope

- 2.1 Everyone is responsible for creating and maintaining a child safe culture.
- 2.2 This policy applies to every person in relationship with SOSJ including Congregational Leadership, Sisters in nominated roles, lay employees, clergy in nominated roles, and formal volunteers (**Workplace Participants**). This policy also applies to Sisters, Josephite Affiliates, members of the Child Safeguarding Committee and the Business Advisory Council.
- 2.3 It applies to all aspects of SOSJ's work in Australia including activities within SOSJ's lands, buildings, pilgrimages and SOSJ's ministries.

3. Roles and responsibilities

- 3.1 As the Church Authority, the Congregational Leader is responsible for and may delegate to the Congregational Leadership Team:
 - (a) approving safeguarding policies and procedures;
 - (b) developing strategies to embed a culture of child safety at SOSJ;
 - (c) periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and, if considered appropriate, revise those strategies;

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- (d) ensuring child safety is a regular agenda item at Congregation Leadership meetings;
 - (e) creating and maintaining an organisational culture where children's best interests are at the heart of the organisation;
 - (f) appointing the Child Safeguarding Committee and Safeguarding Co-ordinator;
 - (g) providing support to the Child Safeguarding Committee;
 - (h) providing verbal and written reports to the Congregation about SOSJ's child safe performance;
 - (i) implementing and overseeing the child safeguarding strategy;
 - (j) raising any significant matters of concern with the Congregation and / or Workplace Participants as appropriate;
 - (k) ensuring child safeguarding occurs at an operational level;
 - (l) complying with requirements as head of the entity under relevant state-based Reportable Conduct Schemes;
 - (m) overseeing investigations of child safety complaints and any disciplinary action against Sisters and Workplace Participants as needed and in consultation with the Manager, People and Culture; and
 - (n) clearly communicating to all Sisters and Workplace Participants, the role, responsibility and makeup of the Child Safeguarding Committee and the Safeguarding Co-ordinator.
- 3.2 The Child Safeguarding Committee will be made up of members with a range of different professional expertise and will be responsible for:
- (a) advising and supporting the Congregation on all matters relating to safeguarding;
 - (b) advising on a Safeguarding Implementation Plan;
 - (c) advising the Congregational Leader on safeguarding aspects related to the Risk Management Policy and Framework (in consultation with any risk committee); and
 - (d) coordinating annual self-audits at a local level.
- 3.3 The Safeguarding Co-ordinator and / or the Professional Standards Officer will have specialised knowledge and expertise in safeguarding and be responsible for:

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- (a) providing advice and counsel to the Congregational Leadership Team on all matters relating to safeguarding;
 - (b) being conversant with relevant legislative requirements and ensuring the entity is compliant;
 - (c) assisting the Child Safeguarding Committee with identifying safeguarding risks and putting in place safeguards in accordance with the Risk Management Policy and Framework;
 - (d) managing or having oversight of the entity's complaint handling procedures;
 - (e) responding to child safety complaints and concerns, with support from the Child Safeguarding Committee;
 - (f) developing SOSJ's safeguarding policies and procedures in consultation with the Congregation and Child Safeguarding Committee;
 - (g) co-ordinating and / or facilitating safeguarding training and education to all Sisters and Workplace Participants at SOSJ in accordance with the Recruitment and Induction Policy and Procedure; and
 - (h) being proactive in safeguarding initiatives.
- 3.4 All persons listed at 2.2 of this policy, share responsibility for preventing child abuse and creating and child safe culture and are required to:
- (a) comply with this policy and the Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct;
 - (b) uphold SOSJ's value and commitment to child safety, including its zero-tolerance approach;
 - (c) respect the human rights of all children;
 - (d) complying with SOSJ's duty of care to children and workplace health and safety obligations;
 - (e) promote the safety, wellbeing, participation and empowerment of all children in our care, taking into account children with a disability, First Nations children and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
 - (f) take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse, including listening and responding to the concerns of children;
 - (g) ensure any allegation of abuse is appropriately reported to regulatory authorities and SOSJ in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Safeguarding Complaints Handling Policy and Reporting Procedure; and

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- (h) provide an environment where all individuals associated with SOSJ feel encouraged to play an active role in developing a culture of risk minimisation and child safety.

4. Definitions

Child	An individual under the age of 18 years unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child.
Child abuse	Child abuse includes: (a) any act committed against a child or in the presence of a child involving: i. a sexual offence; or ii. the offence of grooming; (b) the infliction of physical violence on a child or in the presence of child; (c) the infliction of serious emotional or psychological harm on a child; or (d) serious neglect of a child.
Child - connected work	Work that is authorised by the Congregation and is performed by an adult in connection with SOSJ while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.
Child Compliance Checks (State based)	Checks required within each state or territory, detailing a person's suitability to work with children.
Congregation	The Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart is a religious Congregation of pontifical right dedicated to apostolic works (Constitutions of SOSJ, Chapter 1, Article 1, 2009).
Church Authority	The canonical steward in relation to a particular Catholic entity.
Josephite Affiliate	Women and men Affiliates share in SOSJ charism and participate with SOSJ in spirituality and mission according to their individual Memorandum of Affiliation (SOSJ General Directory 2019).
Leaders and Managers	Sisters in leadership and lay employees in management roles.
Sister	For the purposes of this policy, 'Sister' refers to a woman who has taken public vows dedicating herself to apostolic works, under the order of Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart.

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Volunteer	Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain. Formal volunteer positions require recruitment, induction and training. Persons are recognised by SOSJ as a formal volunteer, following their regular and consistent volunteering service or for a specific volunteering event.
Workplace Participant	Congregational Leadership, Sisters in nominated roles, lay employees, clergy in nominated roles and formal volunteers.

5. Responding and reporting

- 5.1 All Sisters and Workplace Participants should be aware of red flags and indicators of abuse. In particular, Workplace Participants should recognise the diverse circumstances and experiences of the children that SOSJ interacts with.
- 5.2 SOSJ recognises that children with a disability, children from a cultural or linguistically diverse background and First Nations children are particularly vulnerable to abuse.
- 5.3 All complaints and concerns involving both current and historical allegations of child safety should be directed to a Safeguarding Co-ordinator at [childsafeguarding@sosj.org.au, or via telephone (+61) 0488 041 015].
- 5.4 SOSJ takes all complaints and allegations of child abuse seriously and will address these in accordance with the Safeguarding Complaints Handling Policy and Reporting Procedure. All persons listed at 2.2 of this policy are expected to comply with this.

6. Recruitment and training

- 6.1 Child safeguarding is a critical consideration in any recruitment process. SOSJ is committed to child safeguarding and implementing its zero-tolerance approach to child abuse in all aspects of its advertising, recruitment and screening for Workplace Participants.
- 6.2 All recruitment must comply with SOSJ's Recruitment and Induction Policy and Procedure.
- 6.3 SOSJ will also ensure that all Workplace Participants undertake regular training on child safety and their obligations, including during induction and refresher training at least every three years. SOSJ will also provide members of the Child Safeguarding Committee and the Safeguarding Co-ordinator with ongoing support and professional development relevant to their role. Training will take place in accordance with the Recruitment and Induction Policy and Procedure.

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- 6.4 Child safeguarding will also be part of professional supervision processes and annual performance reviews.

7. Risk management

- 7.1 SOSJ recognises the importance of identifying, monitoring and mitigating risk to children.
- 7.2 SOSJ will:
- (a) consider actual and potential risks relating to children as part of its overall risk management strategy;
 - (b) seek to achieve ongoing risk assessment to identify and mitigate risk in all SOSJ environments, taking into account the age and needs of the children, the nature of the activities undertaken and the particular risks they might present;
 - (c) promote understanding by all persons listed at 2.2 of this policy, of SOSJ's expectations in relation to behaviour and conduct when interacting with children and the consequences of failing to abide by those expectations;
 - (d) provide ongoing training (at least annually) and support for all Sisters and Workplace Participants;
 - (e) require appropriate human resources policies to assess potential Workplace Participants to be put in place with a safeguarding focus, as documented in SOSJ's Recruitment and Induction Policy and Procedure; and
 - (f) comply with SOSJ's Risk Management Policy and Framework.

8. Community engagement

Empowering children

- 8.1 SOSJ recognises the importance of engaging with and empowering children. When ministering to children, it will endeavour to put in place age-appropriate strategies to proactively:
- (a) engage with children;
 - (b) seek children's views;
 - (c) consult with children about decisions that affect them; and
 - (d) consult with children about what makes them feel safe and how this can be recognised and implemented by SOSJ.

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- 8.2 SOSJ will inform children of their rights, particularly the right to be safe from abuse, safe and respectful relationships and where they can go if they have any concerns. This will be done in an age-appropriate manner.

Community partnership

- 8.3 SOSJ appreciates the importance of partnering with families, parents, carers and the broader community to create a child safe environment. SOSJ will encourage the community to take an active role in child safety by:
- (a) ensuring this policy, its Child Safeguarding Commitment Statement and other relevant child safeguarding information, are publicised on its website and easily accessible;
 - (b) promoting open dialogue with families and its community;
 - (c) providing families and its community with the contact details of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator;
 - (d) reporting on the findings of relevant reviews of safeguarding policies, procedures and practices to stakeholders, including safeguarding audit reports relating to SOSJ's compliance with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards; and
 - (e) actively promoting child safety campaigns and child abuse prevention in its community.

9. Information sharing and record keeping

- 9.1 It is important that all Sisters and Workplace Participants maintain the confidentiality and privacy of children, adult survivors and respondents at SOSJ. SOSJ will collect, use, disclose and hold personal information in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and requires all Sisters and Workplace Participants to comply with its Privacy Policy.
- 9.2 All reports of alleged abuse or harm, or risk thereof, must be recorded in accordance with the Safeguarding Complaints Handling Policy and Reporting Procedure, and Safeguarding Information Sharing and Record Keeping Policy.

10. Breach of this policy

- 10.1 Any breach of this policy will constitute misconduct and SOSJ may take appropriate disciplinary action, including up to (however is not limited to), guidance or specialised help, education or training, counselling and / or suspension, termination of engagement or dismissal from employment, service or involvement with SOSJ.

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11. Review

- 11.1 A review of this policy shall be conducted every three (3) years or earlier if required, such as due to changes in legislation.
- 11.2 The Congregational Leader is responsible for ensuring that this policy is reviewed and updated as needed.

12. Related policies, procedures, documents and legislation

12.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following related documents:

- (a) Child Safeguarding Commitment Statement
- (b) Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- (c) Risk Management Policy and Framework
- (d) Safeguarding Complaints Handling Policy and Reporting Procedure
- (e) Safeguarding Information Sharing and Record Keeping Policy
- (f) Privacy Policy
- (g) Recruitment and Induction Policy and Procedure
- (h) Managing Underperformance and Disciplinary Policy
- (i) Social Media Policy
- (j) Performance Planning and Review Policy and Procedures
- (k) Integrity in the Service of the Church
- (l) Integrity in Ministry

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Signature:

M. M. Cavanagh

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