



Brigidine Southern Cross Community Australia

Risk Management Strategy

1. INTRODUCTION

The Brigidine Sisters are committed to providing a safe environment that minimises the potential of abuse or harm to children and adults at risk. The Risk Management Strategy supports the practical implementation of this commitment alongside the Brigidine Sisters' Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct and Complaint Handling Policy. It has been approved and endorsed by the Brigidine Sisters Congregational Leadership Team (also referred to as the CLT or "Church Authority").

The Risk Management Strategy complies with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (the Standards), which outline requirements for Catholic entities across Australia to promote the safety of children and adults at risk through implementing policies and strategies to prevent, respond to and report concerns regarding abuse and harm.¹ This document also applies the relevant legislation in the various Australian states as applicable.

The Risk Management Strategy will be published on the Brigidine website together with the related safeguarding policies and be proactively communicated to all personnel engaged by the Brigidine Sisters to provide services or ministry to children and adults at risk.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the approach the Brigidine Sisters (also referred to as "the Church authority") take to safeguarding children and adults at risk. It outlines how we, the Australian members of Brigidine Southern Cross Community, aim to prevent, identify, and respond to concerns about abuse that may arise within our operations in Australia.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of the Risk Management Strategy is to document the strategic approach taken by the Church Authority to identify and minimise risks to the safety of children and adults at risk. Its Appendices include practical tools to help those applying these strategies:

- Appendix A: Sample job interview questions

- Appendix B: Sample referee questions and checklist
- Appendix C: Pre-employment Screening Checklist and forms
- Appendix D: Risk Assessment tool

These strategies apply to our sisters, employees, volunteers, and any contractors providing a service to children or adults at risk, in any location in Australia, including, but not limited to, physical premises or environments under the Brigidine Sisters' control and/or management, homes of religious and clergy, the arrangements for live-in carers/caretakers and ministry or services conducted in open spaces or through an online environment. Nothing in this document affects the expectations outlined in other Congregational documents.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Brigidine Sisters CLT has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Risk Management Strategies.

All personnel engaged in ministry or services by the Church Authority share day-to-day responsibility for identifying and minimising risks to the safety of children and adults at risk by observing and complying with the Risk Management Strategy. As part of their initial safeguarding induction and refresher training, personnel will be familiarised with the Risk Management Strategy, as appropriate to their role, and supported to understand and fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.

4. STRATEGIES FOR IDENTIFYING AND MANAGING RISKS

The following strategies will be implemented by the relevant Brigidine Sisters Leader to identify and manage risks.

Recruitment Strategies for Safe and Suitable People to have Contact with Children and Adults will Include:

- Job advertisements, role descriptions, requests for volunteers and appointments of religious and clergy to ministry will contain the following statement:

The Brigidine Sisters are committed to safeguarding children and adults at risk and have a zero-tolerance policy to abuse. We have robust recruitment procedures to select suitable people and provide our personnel with ongoing training and support to meet their safeguarding obligations. Our recruitment procedures include safeguarding screening for suitability for the role.

- Applicants for all roles, including volunteers,¹ will be required to disclose whether they have been the subject of any criminal or disciplinary proceedings relevant to safeguarding

¹ In this section, 'volunteer' means any individual who provides an unpaid service to the Brigidine Sisters on a more than occasional basis. It does not include individuals who are involved as volunteers in one-off events and are supervised at all times by another appropriately screened adult. It may include other religious or clergy even if they are engaged with a stipend.

- At least two recent verbal referee checks will be obtained for all applicants, including volunteers. Referees may be former or current employers (paid or volunteer). Referees will be asked specific questions about the person's suitability to have contact with children and adults at risk, including (but not limited to) whether they have been the subject of previous relevant allegations or disciplinary proceedings. The identity of referees will be verified with the referee, where possible by telephone. **Appendix B** includes sample referee questions and a referee checklist.
- Any interviews held for positions during the recruitment process will include safeguarding questions to assess the applicant's understanding and commitment to safeguarding principles and culturally safe practices, that reflects their expected level of contact with children and/or adults at risk. **Appendix A** includes sample interview questions.
- Pre-employment screening checks will be completed and documented. Any person in a role required by law to have clearance through the relevant State or Territory government authority will have their clearance verified prior to being permitted to have contact with children or adults at risk (for example a NSW Working with Children Check or a NDIS Worker Screening Check).² A Police Check/National Police Certificate may also be required for some roles. See **Appendix C for a pre-employment screening checklist**. The result of the screening process may be subject to a risk assessment to assess the suitability of the applicant to be engaged. A risk assessment tool is attached at **Appendix D**.
- The Brigidine Sisters Leader will securely record and store all recruitment information, including disclosures of criminal history/disciplinary proceedings, references, and pre-employment screening checks.

Appointing Personnel to Roles:

- All personnel are required to sign a safeguarding acknowledgement, before commencing employment then bi-annually, of their agreement to comply with the Brigidine Sisters' Code of Conduct.
- Personnel appointed to roles will be required to undertake the appropriate safeguarding induction suitable to their role.
- The Brigidine Sisters Leader is responsible for monitoring the status of Working with Children Checks, and any other background checks, as relevant for personnel to ensure they remain current.
- Prior to contracting a third party to deliver services to children or adults at risk, the Brigidine Sisters Leader will confirm the third party has understanding and safeguards in place to provide any services to children or adults at risk.

5. SUPPORTING PERSONNEL TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK

The Brigidine Sisters Leader recognises that our people play a critical role in keeping children and adults at risk safe. Personnel are supported to fulfil these responsibilities in

² A person is generally permitted to work with children if they have applied for a clearance, however, you must ensure that the outcome of the application is checked and that their work with children is more closely supervised until the clearance has been given. You need to be clear on any restrictions on individuals working with children while an application is pending in your jurisdiction

the following ways:

- Providing initial and refresher safeguarding training to all personnel as relevant to their role. This will include, although not limited to, information about safeguarding and indicators of abuse, reporting obligations, the Church Authority's safeguarding policies, and reporting concerns about safety to children and adults at risk.
- Induction and refresher training and information will at times utilise government and other suitable providers' safeguarding training, when appropriate.
- The Brigidine Sisters Leader maintains a Ministry Register that identifies and records the level of safeguarding training and information that all personnel are to undertake suitable to their role. The Brigidine Sisters Leader will update the Ministry Register each year to monitor and ensure the training is undertaken.
- Refresher safeguarding training will be provided to personnel every two years.
- Ensuring that those appointed to leadership positions of the Church Authority attend ongoing professional development, professional/pastoral supervision, and annual performance appraisals as suitable to their positions. At a minimum, they will participate in not less than 6 hours of professional/pastoral supervision per year.
- All personnel are informed through the above induction and training of the internal reporting process if they have any concerns about misconduct or abuse towards a child or an adult at risk. They will also be informed of the process to follow if someone discloses an allegation of abuse to them.
- Brigidine sisters who are retired from active ministry will receive safeguarding information that is appropriate to their situation and their capacity.

6. CREATING AND MAINTAINING SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

The Brigidine Sisters will strive to maintain safe environments for all people through implementing the following practices:

- Adults at risk (or their families/carers, where appropriate) will be provided with accessible information about their right to be safe and how to speak up about problems or concerns
- Physical premises or environments under our control and/or management will be assessed and regularly monitored for safety hazards, and where identified, will be promptly mitigated
- When the Brigidine Sisters become aware that a person (other than personnel) attending or residing in any of its services or activities poses an unacceptable risk to others, the risks posed by the person's ongoing involvement in the service or activity will be appropriately managed.
- Personnel will use appropriate and safe online applications
- Personnel must report any incident that raises concern for the safety of a child or adult at risk as per the Complaint Handling Policy, as soon as practicable