

8. Communication and support

What do I need to do?

Your organisation must have strategies for communication of your risk management strategy and support. Strategies for communication and support must include -

- written information for parents, employees and volunteers that includes details of your organisation's risk management strategy or where the strategy can be accessed; and
- training materials for employees and volunteers which
 - help identify risks of harm and how to handle disclosures or suspicions of harm; and
 - outline your organisation's risk management strategy.

Why do you need to have strategies for communication and support?

Your child and youth risk management strategy will be most effective when it has been successfully communicated to all people involved with your organisation. If parents/carers, employees, volunteers, children and young people are actively involved in developing your organisation's policies and procedures, they will be more likely to accept, support and adhere to them. This will then build a culture which recognises and values the importance of upholding safeguards for children.

An effective strategy for communication and support will

- ensure that all people in your organisation are aware of their responsibilities and understand what is acceptable behaviour for interacting with children
- enable people to feel comfortable addressing issues of concern
- highlight the importance of your organisation's commitment to protecting the safety and wellbeing of children in your service environment, and
- reduce the likelihood of breaches of your risk management strategy.

How should you draft strategies for communication and support?

Communication

You must consider strategies to ensure effective communication about your risk management strategy within your organisation. This starts with ensuring that all stakeholders are consulted (especially children and young people) in the development and review of your strategy. This will assist to build an understanding of the importance of the strategy and build a culture which recognises and values the importance of upholding safeguards for children.

IDEAS TO GET PEOPLE INVOLVED

- Run a brainstorming session to identify the risks which are particular to your service environment and think about ways that those risks can be reduced.
- Present your strategy to all people involved in your organisation, particularly parents, and actively seek their feedback.
- Feature a 'policy of the month' where people in your organisation are encouraged to become familiar with the policy and provide feedback they consider appropriate.

Every organisation is different. Your organisation should also consider which methods of communication will be most suitable for your organisation.

COMMUNICATION METHOD IDEAS

- Provide compulsory induction covering the risk management policies and procedures for all paid employees and volunteers.
- Deliver regular information sessions for people involved with your organisation in relation to your risk management strategy (these could be incorporated into other sessions you hold for staff and parents).
- Implement specific strategies to encourage the participation of children and young people to make sure they understand how to keep themselves safe and what to do if they feel unsafe.
- Provide information about the various policies and procedures in your newsletter or other publications, and seek input and feedback.
- Utilise bulletin boards and posters (e.g. with your code of conduct) to visually promote your organisation's commitment to safe and supportive environments for children and young people.
- Provide a copy of your risk management strategy (or information about where it can be accessed) as part of any resources you provide to people (e.g. staff handbook/induction materials, parent/carer handbook, handbook for children and young people).
- Schedule regular and mandatory training for staff in relation to the various policies and procedures which make up your strategy, with a particular focus on managing disclosures or suspicions of harm.
- Consider if there are any aspects of your strategy which can be incorporated within professional development and performance plans.
- Subscribe to relevant industry journals and training materials for staff.
- Provide relevant individuals with information to understand their obligations as a blue card holder. A range of information sheets are available on the [Blue Card Services website](#).

Support

Staff may require support to deal with issues such as behaviour management, stress, conflict, bullying, child protection concerns, breaches of the risk management strategy and dealing with disclosures or suspicions of harm. If staff concerns are not addressed effectively, your organisation's ability to provide a safe and supportive environment for children and young people may be affected. Therefore, it is extremely important to consider how your organisation will support staff when they are experiencing difficulties. You should then actively communicate the types of support services you offer.

Other people involved in your organisation such as volunteers, parents and children and young people may also require support to assist with managing concerns. Your organisation should ensure that it is prepared to provide or facilitate required support services to all people involved with your organisation.

SUPPORT METHOD IDEAS

- Appointing internal support service officers or workplace health and safety officers.
- Partnering with external support and counselling services.
- Implementing mentoring programs using mentors which are either internal or external to your organisation.
- Mediation or other alternative conflict resolution techniques.
- Coaching.
- Providing additional training.