



5 Questions parents can ask about safeguarding

BB1

BB2

BB3

BB4

Building blocks of
safeguarding
culture.

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Content Warning: This resource includes references to abuse, sexual abuse and trauma. Please read at your own pace and stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable. Support is available through Blue Knot (1300 657 380), Lifeline (13 11 14), Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) and 13 YARN (13 92 76).

As parents and carers, we place significant trust in the organisations and services that support our children, from childcare and schools to sports clubs, performing arts programs, tutoring services and community groups. These types of organisations and services are required by law to have strategies to keep your children safe from abuse. Understanding how these organisations approach safeguarding can help you make informed decisions about your child's participation and wellbeing.

This factsheet provides five key questions that you can ask to give you greater confidence that the people and organisations caring for your child are taking steps to keep them safe.

1. What are your policies for keeping children safe?

- Can you see the organisation's commitment to keeping children safe from abuse e.g. through information sheets or posters displayed?

What this can tell you

How the organisation approaches safeguarding; what they prioritise; whether they have a transparent approach to safeguarding.

What you should see/hear

- Policies are in place and up-to-date – at a minimum a safeguarding policy and a Code of Conduct.
- Information is accessible, transparent and visible e.g. posters, website.
- You're given policies if you ask – and there is no issue or drama about it.

Red Flags

Policies aren't accessible for parents; staff are cagey, avoid answering, or cannot answer your questions.

2. How do you make sure staff are safe and suitable?

- What does the organisation look for when recruiting staff and volunteers?
- How do they screen and ensure ongoing suitability?

What this can tell you

Whether the organisation focuses on safeguarding when recruiting and whether suitability is reviewed and checked on an ongoing basis.

What you should see/hear

- Safeguarding is a focus in recruitment e.g. interview questions for green and red flags.
- All staff have working with children checks.
- There are multiple referee checks that always include the current supervisor.
- There is follow-up e.g. on unexplained gaps in work history, unusual answers to questions.
- Action is taken when workers break the rules.

Red Flags

The organisation relies on an initial working with children check or checks by recruitment agencies without doing its own assessments or digging further to understand a person's motivations for working with children or vulnerable clients.

3. How do you make sure staff know how to practise safeguarding?

- *Can all staff answer safeguarding questions?*
- *Do staff know the policies?*
- *Can you see policies being used day-to-day?*

What this can tell you

Whether safeguarding concepts are understood and applied by staff on an everyday basis.

What you should see/hear

- Management can tell you about how staff are trained in safeguarding.
- Staff know about safeguarding and are confident telling you how they keep children safe.
- Staff know the policies and provide them to you.

Red Flags

Management brushes off questions about training. Staff rely on policies they can't explain.

4. How do you manage/monitor interactions between staff and children?

- *Are rules on personal devices at work enforced?*
- *How do you ensure safe physical contact between staff and children e.g. nappy changes?*
- *Is babysitting allowed?*

What this can tell you

How the organisation ensures safe behaviour with children and maintains professional boundaries.

What you should see/hear

- Rules for taking photographs/use of personal devices are strictly enforced.
- Staff can explain and maintain professional boundaries.
- There are rules for physical contact e.g. lap sitting, toileting – and these are enforced.
- Interaction outside the service is not permitted e.g. babysitting, socialising, social media, giving lifts to children.

Red Flags

No rules on physical contact or outside contact, including online. Rules aren't enforced.

5. Who can we talk to if there's an issue? What happens after an adult or child raises a concern?

- *Is the process easy – e.g. can you or your child raise concerns with any staff member?*
- *Is the process open and transparent?*
- *Do all staff understand what to do if someone raises a concern?*

What this can tell you

Organisations that value feedback are more likely to take safeguarding seriously. It is also important that staff know what to do if something goes wrong and a child or parent tells them about it.

What you should see/hear

- You feel assured that any feedback will be taken seriously and acted on.
- Staff are trained to deal with concerns from children and/or reports from adults.
- Staff know how to respond well and understand what their reporting obligations are.

Red Flags

People don't know what to do with feedback or there are onerous requirements to make a complaint. You aren't taken seriously or there is no action when you raise a concern – including minor issues unrelated to safeguarding.

Remember

Don't be afraid to ask these questions and keep asking if you aren't satisfied.

An organisation that cares about safeguarding will happily answer your questions – it's a red flag if staff won't.

Contact us if you have any questions or would like more information
info@bbsafe.com.au