



POLICY TITLE:	<u>PREVENTION OF ABUSE, NEGLECT AND EXPLOITATION</u>
POLICY NUMBER:	A31
SECTION:	Family Support
DATE APPROVED:	September 2003
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POLICY OVERVIEW

Xavier Children's Support Network is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young adults with disabilities and achieves its objectives through vigilant prevention and protection practices as prescribed by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference and legislation.

Xavier implements the four mandatory strategies of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane:

1. Safe recruitment and selection practices – helping prevent those who pose a risk to children and young adults with a disability from holding positions of trust.
2. Adhering to the code of ethical behaviour – having clear guidelines that set out what is and is not acceptable behaviour as an essential part of keeping children and young adults with a disability safe.
3. Operating safe activities for children – to help ensure a safe environment for children.
4. Mandatory reporting of harm or suspected harm.

Abuse, neglect or exploitation of a child or young adult with a disability while in the care of Xavier staff is not tolerated.

Management, staff, children, their families, friends and carers and the community as a whole play a significant role in preventing the occurrence of abuse, neglect or exploitation. Any concerned person should make a report or allegation without fear of retribution or reprisal.

Xavier is committed to:

- The prevention of abuse, neglect and exploitation by the implementation of specific strategies
- Responding appropriately to reports of alleged cases of abuse, neglect or exploitation of a child or young adult with a disability
- Reporting suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of a child or young adult with a disability.



Xavier has clear, accessible and accountable processes for preventing abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and young adults with a disability by a Xavier staff member (including contractors and volunteers).

Abuse, neglect and exploitation can take many forms. Xavier staff orientation and ongoing training assists staff to be aware of common indicators and improves their ability to recognise and respond to them appropriately. Xavier acknowledges that indicators of abuse, neglect or exploitation are to be treated as allegations. Any person accused of abusing, neglecting or exploiting a child or young adult receiving Xavier care services is entitled to be afforded the opportunity to respond adequately to the allegations.

Xavier recognises the increased vulnerability of children and young adults with disabilities and their potential difficulties in communicating incidents of abuse, neglect or exploitation. Xavier's strategies and responses reflect these complexities:

- Pre-screening of staff by the Public Safety Business Agency (PSBA).
- Debriefing and supervision opportunities for individual staff or teams.
- Adhering to medication charts and documented procedures.
- Ongoing staff orientation, training and education and the Employment Assistance Program.

Xavier implements the Xavier Children's Support Network Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Implementation and Accountability Strategies, as agreed with the Archdiocesan Safeguarding Officer.

RISK AND TOLERANCE

Areas of risk	Risk controls
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suspected or actual abuse, neglect or exploitation by Xavier care worker• The risks factors for abuse, neglect and exploitation are not assessed, reviewed or monitored, leading to an event of abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prevention of abuse neglect and exploitation Policy, Resource and Information Guide, training and information (various), Management demonstrated commitment, WHS Policies and procedures, Critical Incident Reporting Policy• Criminal history screening procedure, training in risk factors, risk register and continuous improvement, Xavier's Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable adults Implementation and Accountability Strategies



INTEGRATION WITH POLICY FRAMEWORK

Xavier's Prevention of Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Policy is aligned with the following Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane Policies and Codes of Conduct:

- Safeguarding Policy Document
- Safeguarding Policy Support Document
- Code of Ethical Behaviour for Employees and Volunteers Who Work in the Service of the Church.

The Prevention of Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Policy is integrated with the following Xavier Children's Support Network policies and strategies:

- Risk Management Policy
- Reporting a Critical incident Policy
- Criminal History Screening Policy
- Staff Training and Development Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Direct Service Delivery Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Compliance Policy
- Xavier Children's Support Network Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Implementation Strategies.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- The Board has oversight of the Prevention of Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Policy.
- The CEO implements systems and procedures to prevent incidences or allegations of abuse, neglect or exploitation of children or vulnerable adults by Xavier employees (including contractors and volunteers).
- The CEO implements the Prevention of Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Procedure and integrates it into the accountability of executive, management and supervisory roles.

Review

- The Board reviews the Prevention of Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Policy on a bi-annual basis.
- The CEO reviews and advises the board of changes to legislative or regulatory compliance requirements.

Monitoring

- The Board monitors the Prevention of Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Policy on an ongoing basis.
- The CEO reports to the Board on the performance of monitoring systems and processes to prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and vulnerable adults by Xavier employees (including contractors and volunteers).



RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Board is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of systems and processes for preventing abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and young adults with disabilities by Xavier staff.
- The CEO reviews, and acts upon, incidents or allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation of children or young adults receiving Xavier services.
- The CEO reports to the Board on the performance of monitoring and reporting systems and processes to prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and young adults with a disability.
- Each member of staff has a responsibility to uphold the highest ethical standards, conduct and behaviour and to ensure that all their conduct, behaviour and actions are not, and are not likely to be perceived as, incidents of abuse, neglect or exploitation. If any member of staff is unsure as to whether their conduct, behaviour or action is, or is likely to be perceived as, an incident of abuse, neglect or exploitation, they should notify their supervisor immediately.

COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

Xavier Children's Support Network will communicate and consult with its stakeholders on its approach to responding and preventing incidents and allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and vulnerable adults.

Xavier provides orientation sessions and ongoing training to all staff so that they understand what constitutes abuse, neglect and exploitation and how to discharge their responsibilities in relation to duty of care, individual needs, challenging behaviours, medical procedures and managing stress.

Xavier provides on-call support for isolated staff and all staff receive ongoing training in Xavier's Code of Conduct.

Policy revisions and updates are communicated to staff as and when necessary.

Richard Littler

Richard Littler
CEO



PREVENTING ABUSE, NEGLECT AND EXPLOITATION PROCEDURE AND TERMS

Sources:

<https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/disability/support-services/service-providers/preventing-responding-abuse-neglect-exploitation/identifying-abuse-neglect-exploitation/>

Archdiocese of Brisbane safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Prevention and Protection Policy

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Purpose and scope

To outline Xavier's prevention strategies and response mechanisms following reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Strategies for the prevention of abuse, neglect and exploitation

Xavier staff orientation and ongoing training assists staff to be aware of common indicators of abuse, neglect or exploitation, and improves their ability to recognise and respond to them appropriately.

Xavier acknowledges that a single instance of conduct or behaviour does not, in all cases, indicate abuse, neglect or exploitation and a Xavier staff member (including a contractor or volunteer) accused of abusing, neglecting or exploiting a child or young adult receiving Xavier care services is entitled to be afforded the opportunity to respond adequately to the allegations.

Recruitment

The Safeguarding Recruitment Statement available from Archdiocesan Human Resources will be added to all advertised positions.

The use of specific interview questions designed to screen unsafe candidates will be used throughout selection processes. Assistance is available from the Archdiocesan Human Resources Office.

Screening

All new employees (including contractors and volunteers) will be required to undertake the Xavier Screening requirements and as required thereafter.

Training

At induction, all staff will be provided with this Policy and will be required to sign the Code of Conduct

All staff will receive a copy of the 'Integrity in the Service of the Church'.

All new staff will receive training in identification of abuse, neglect and exploitation within the probationary period and annually thereafter.

Training will cover topics including definitions, indicators and signs and risk factors.



Definitions: Harm, Self-harm and Abuse

Abuse, neglect and exploitation can take many forms. Being aware of common indicators may improve your ability to recognise and respond to them. Those who work in the service of the church should be clear as to the meaning of **harm** and **abuse**.

Harm

is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; or sexual abuse or exploitation. It may be caused by a single act, omission or circumstance; or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.

Self-harm

is deliberate and voluntary physical self-injury (that is not life-threatening and is without any conscious suicidal intent) in an attempt to cope with strong feelings such as anger, despair or self-hatred.

Abuse

is intentional acts by a person with responsibility for another person causing significant physical injury, or other behaviour which causes serious physical pain or mental anguish without any legitimate care or disciplinary purpose as judged by the standards of the time when the behaviour occurred.

Indicators and signs of abuse, neglect or exploitation

Cultural abuse

Cultural abuse is that abuse received primarily because of a person's cultural background. It can be an outcome of discrimination and harassment and can take different forms including emotional, psychological or social abuse.

Psychological/emotional abuse

Psychological/emotional abuse happens when a child's social, emotional or intellectual development is damaged or threatened. It can include constant rejection, teasing or bullying, yelling, criticism, exposure to domestic or family violence.

Physical indicators:

- speech disorders
- in the case of a child, lags and/or regression in physical development, failure to thrive

- injuries sustained from self-harm or abuse
- suicide attempts
- anxiety attacks.

Behavioural signs:

- self-harm or self-abusive behaviours
- challenging/extreme behaviours
- excessive compliance to staff
- very low self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness
- clinical depression
- marked decrease in interpersonal skills
- extreme attention-seeking behaviour.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is when a child suffers physical trauma or injury that is not accidental. It doesn't always leave visible marks or injuries. What matters most is the act itself that caused the trauma or injury. Physical abuse can include: hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, biting, poisoning.

Physical indicators:

- unexplained cuts, abrasions, bruising or swelling
- unexplained burns or scalds, cigarette burns
- rope burns or marks on arms, legs, neck, torso
- unexplained fractures, strains or sprains; dislocation of limbs
- bite marks
- dental injuries
- ear or eye injuries.

Behavioural signs:

- avoidance of particular staff, fear of a particular person
- sleep disturbances
- changes in behaviour (eg unusual mood swings, uncharacteristic aggression)
- changes in daily routine, changes in appetite
- unusual passivity, withdrawal
- self-harm, suicide attempts
- inappropriate explanations of how injuries occurred
- excessive compliance to staff.



Sexual abuse

Sexual Abuse is sexual assault, sexual harassment or any other conduct of a sexual nature that is inconsistent with the integrity of the relationship between Church personnel and those who are in their pastoral care.

Sexual abuse includes sexual behaviour involving the person and another person in the following circumstances:

- The other person bribes, coerces, exploits, threatens or is violent toward the relevant person.
- The relevant person has less power than the other person.
- There is a significant disparity between the relevant person and the other person in intellectual capacity or maturity.

Sexual abuse can be physical, verbal or emotional and can include: having any kind of sexual contact with a child, rape, incest, having sexual relations with a child under 16 years, talking in a sexually explicit way that is not suitable for a child's age,

Sexual abuse also includes sending obscene mobile messages or emails to a child, persistently intruding on a child's privacy, showing pornographic material to a child or forcing them to watch a sexual act, child prostitution.

Physical indicators:

- direct or indirect disclosure of abuse or assault
- trauma to the breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs
- difficulty walking or sitting
- pain or itching in genital and/or anal area; bruising, bleeding or discharge
- self-harm, abuse, suicide attempts
- torn, stained or blood-stained underwear or bedclothes
- sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy
- unexplained money or gifts.

Behavioural signs:

- sleep disturbances
- changes in eating patterns
- inappropriate or unusual sexual behaviour or knowledge
- changes in social patterns
- sudden or marked changes in behaviour or temperament
- anxiety attacks, panic attacks, clinical depression
- refusal to attend usual places (eg work, school, respite)
- going to bed fully clothed



- excessive compliance to staff.

Chemical abuse

Physical indicators:

- withholding of prescribed medication
- abuse of prescribing rights by staff/over-administration of medication.

Behavioural signs:

- persistent over-activity
- unusual levels of confusion/disorientation.

Financial abuse

Physical indicators:

- no access to, or unwarranted restrictions on, personal funds or bank accounts
- no records, or incomplete records kept of expenditure and purchases
- no inventory kept of significant purchases
- person controlling the finances does not have legal authority
- misappropriation of money, valuables or property
- forced changes to a person's will
- persistent failure to produce receipts
- receipts indicating unusual or inappropriate purchases.

Behavioural signs:

- person has insufficient money to meet normal expenses
- person is persistently denied outings and activities due to a lack of funds.

Denial of access to legal system/remedies

Physical indicator:

- consistent denial of telephone or Internet access.

Behavioural signs:

- person does not seek privacy to undertake activities normally undertaken in private
- person indicates they have no-one to speak to about things they are unhappy about.

Systemic abuse

Physical indicators:

- no program or inadequate/inappropriate program developed for client
- not endeavouring to use staff of the same gender to perform personal duties for clients
- providing staff with insufficient training on duty of care and policies and practices related to preventing abuse.

Behavioural signs:

- person is persistently provided support that does not meet the requirements of their service package
- person refuses part of their service support due to feeling uncomfortable with particular staff members.

Neglect

Neglect occurs when a child's health and development are affected because their basic needs are not met. These needs include: food, housing, health care, adequate clothing, personal hygiene, hygienic living conditions, medical treatment, adequate supervision.

Physical indicators:

- physical wasting, unhealthy weight levels
- poor dental health
- food from meals left on face and/or clothes throughout the day
- dirty, unwashed body and/or face, body odour
- person always wearing the same clothes
- ill-fitting and/or unwashed clothes
- person is always over- or underdressed for the weather conditions
- food is consistently poor quality, insufficient, inedible and/or unappetising.

Behavioural signs:

- constant tiredness
- persistent hunger
- unexpectedly poor social/interpersonal skills
- signs of loss of communication and other skills
- staff member, service provider, carer or support person consistently fails to bring the person to appointments, events, activities
- person is persistently denied opportunities to socialise with others in the community.

Family (or Domestic) Violence

happens when one person in a relationship uses violence or abuse to control the other person. It is usually an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling a partner through fear. Abuse in this context can include: physical abuse, emotional abuse (criticising), verbal abuse (yelling shouting, swearing), stalking and harassment, financial abuse (withholding money), damaging property to frighten you, social abuse (isolating), spiritual abuse (forcing you into or stopping you from spiritual practice), sexual abuse, depriving you of the necessities of life such as food, shelter and medical care.

Risk Factors

Below are a number of characteristics that should be considered in assessing a person's exposure to risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation. An assessment of circumstances might then help disability services staff to develop strategies to reduce risk.

Service characteristics

- Segregated service environments (eg residential care facilities, sheltered employment)
- Overcrowding
- Incompatibility between residents and/or co-workers or other service users
- Clients not valued and respected
- Tolerance of violence
- Lacking quality management systems
- High staff turnover

Family characteristics

- Low levels of attachment between family members (parent–child, sibling relationships)
- Past or current substance abuse
- Perceived caregiver stress
- Social isolation
- Power and control issues
- Poor health and wellbeing, including social determinants such as low income, inadequate housing etc.
- Negative attitudes towards people with disability demonstrated by family members
- High levels of dependency (either on or by the person with a disability)



- Lack of awareness and use of formal supports
- History of family violence and attitudes suggesting a tolerance of family violence

Individual characteristics

- Social isolation and lack of close relationships
- Communication difficulties
- Challenging, disruptive, reckless and/or risky behaviour
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Learnt over-compliance or complete dependence on caregivers
- Limited physical mobility
- Limited sense of personal power, low self-esteem
- Low income or restricted access to resources
- Limited sex education or age-appropriate sexual experiences
- High tolerance of violence
- Lack of self-protection skills
- Limited life experiences
- Lack of knowledge of rights

This list of characteristics is not exhaustive and other factors may also contribute to or increase a person's risk.

A number of people with disability have significant communication and sensory issues, and as a result may have difficulty raising concerns about incidences of abuse, neglect and exploitation. It is essential that people with communication and sensory issues are provided with appropriate communication tools.