



# Obligations of Ministry Agents

C/2.1.5

## Purpose

Outlines the obligations for Ministry Agents to comply with the Safe Ministry with Children (SMC) [Policy](#).

## Scope

This procedure applies to all ministry agents in the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod. Lay Preachers should refer to [Obligations of Lay Preachers](#).

## Legislative requirements

The *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (QLD)* and the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020 (QLD)*, *National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) 2013*, *Disability Services Act 2006* and *Disability Services Regulation 2017* have specific screening requirements for all persons working or volunteering with children and working or volunteering with disability services. All regulated businesses and regulated organisations must have a child and youth risk management strategy. The Safe Ministry with Children (SMC) [Policy](#) is the Synod's child and youth risk management strategy and aligns with the ten (10) National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, the Uniting Church in Australia's (UCA) [Child Safe Screening National Policy Framework 2020](#) and the UCA [National Child Safe Policy Framework 2022](#) and details ongoing communication and support requirements for lay workers and volunteers.

## Mandatory reporting

The [Mandatory Reporting Process for Ministry Agents](#) outlines the steps to take when reporting incidents of suspected abuse, grooming or neglect, using the [Template for Complaints and Allegations](#) and the [Guide for Reporting Child Safety Concerns](#) if applicable. This will ensure you are meeting your legal obligations and fulfilling your duty of care to the children involved in your activities. A copy of each of these documents is available on the synod [website](#).

## Definitions

### 1. Child-related role

A person is 'working or volunteering with children' under state legislation if that person undertakes a volunteer activity as defined below:

- 1.1. The volunteer or lay worker is aged 18 years or over.
- 1.2. All First Aid Officers are required to hold a valid linked blue card or exemption card, in case emergency first aid treatment is required for anyone under 18 years of age.
- 1.3. All religious representatives, including persons studying to be a religious representative.
- 1.4. Child-related activities are those activities or programs which are provided only or mainly to children.
  - 1.4.1. Note that worship services and other activities aimed at only or mainly adults or families, are not child-related activities, with the exception of some tasks that meet the threshold of a 'religious representative' defined in *Section 3*.
- 1.5. If your role is not a child-related role, but you start supervising a volunteer under the age of 18. For example:



- 1.5.1. You coordinate the property maintenance. You do not usually need a blue card in this role, as this is not a child-related activity.
- 1.5.2. However, this year you have a volunteer aged 16 that has commenced volunteering, and whom you oversee.
- 1.5.3. You are now undertaking a child-related role, as you are directly supervising this volunteer's work, and the volunteer is under 18.

## 2. Volunteer

- 2.1. A person is a volunteer, for child-related activities, if that person is aged over 18 years, and undertakes a volunteer activity on a regular basis, such that:
  - 2.1.1. The person undertakes a volunteer task, on more than 7 calendar days per year; or
  - 2.1.2. The person is scheduled to undertake a volunteer activity or task on a regular basis, ie is part of a roster for that volunteer task or activity

## 3. Threshold as a 'religious representative'

- 3.1. Under the Act, all persons considered to be a 'religious representative' must hold a valid linked Blue Card or Exemption Card. This includes a person who is training to become a religious representative. The roles of lay preacher and ministry agent both require a blue card, as under the Act these roles are defined as a 'religious representative'.
- 3.2. Once the following threshold has been reached, the person is required to hold a Blue Card or Exemption Card as a religious representative and must complete additional Lay Training specific to this role. This requirement remains the same for congregations which do not offer child-related activities.
- 3.3. **The threshold** - Once a volunteer performs the following ministerial functions **on more than seven days in a calendar year**:
  - 3.3.1. Preach and/or lead worship in their own congregation; or
  - 3.3.2. Preach and/or lead worship in any other worship services (including weddings and funerals);  
or
  - 3.3.3. Preside at the sacraments; or
  - 3.3.4. Perform any systematic pastoral care
- 3.4. For example, a person is not a lay preacher as defined under *The Uniting Church in Australia Regulation 2.2.3*. However, for this example, the person takes on one or more of the above tasks or roles (*Section 3.3 above*) on a regular or ongoing basis as there is no ministry agent in placement at their congregation. In this example, the person has taken on extra tasks, but is not a lay preacher. This person must comply with the additional requirements described above, as they are now considered a 'religious representative'.

## Obligations

### 4. Compliance

- 4.1. All ministry agents must comply with the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (the Act) and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020 (the Regulation) and hold a valid linked blue card appropriate to their role.
  - 4.1.1. You must not use a volunteer blue card for paid child-related work.
  - 4.1.2. The General Secretary reserves the right to stand aside any ministry agent, with or without payment, if the ministry agent is not in possession of a valid blue card.
- 4.2. Failing to hold a valid blue card or exemption card is a breach of the SMC Policy as well as a breach of legislation. Following the [Safe Church Breach Procedure](#), complete a [Breach Report](#), recording the breach in a [register](#).



- 4.3. For more information, refer to [Blue Card Guidance Notes for Ministry Agents](#), particularly in relation to penalties that may apply.
- 4.4. All ministry agents must comply with the SMC Policy and the Person of Concern (POC) [Policy](#).
- 4.5. All ministry agents must complete and sign a [Ministry Agent Statement of Commitment](#) annually, committing to the SMC Policy and Safe Ministry.
- 4.6. Failing to annually complete and sign a Ministry Agent Statement of Commitment is a breach of the SMC Policy. Following the [Safe Church Breach Procedure](#), complete a [Breach Report](#), recording the breach in a [register](#).

#### Training

- 4.7. All ministry agents must comply with the [Safe Church Training Procedure](#). The following training sessions must be completed annually by each ministry agent:
  - 4.7.1. Module 2 – SMC face-to-face Ministry Agent Training
- 4.8. All ministry agents should complete at least one hour of external training each year, additional to Code of Ethics training (see *Section 6* of the Safe Church Training Procedure).
- 4.9. The following training sessions must be completed upon/prior to appointment and then every 2 years by each ministry agent:
  - 4.9.1. Module 1 - SMC Ministry Agent Training
  - 4.9.2. Module 7 - Responding to a Person of Concern (POC)
  - 4.9.3. Module 12 – Providing Safe Online Ministry
  - 4.9.4. Module 13 – Practising Shared Guardianship (Preventing Abuse)
- 4.10. Failing to comply with the Safe Church Training procedure is a breach of the SMC Policy. Following the [Safe Church Breach Procedure](#), complete a [Breach Report](#), recording the breach in a [register](#).

#### Mandatory Reporting

- 4.11. All ministry agents must follow the [Mandatory Reporting Process for Ministry Agents](#), and report all suspected neglect, abuse, sexual abuse and grooming, using the [Template for Complaints and Allegations](#) and the [Guide for Reporting Child Safety Concerns](#) if applicable.
  - 4.11.1. The maximum penalty for **failing** to report a reasonable suspicion of a child sexual offence is 3 years' imprisonment.

## Ministry Agents in a placement, paid stipend or providing supply

### 5. Requirements

- 5.1. You must comply with the obligations in *Section 4* above. Pre-filled [forms](#) are available on the Synod website.
- 5.2. Due to your covenantal relationship with the Church, you are determined under the Regulation as conducting your own regulated business (child-related business) as a religious representative:
  - 5.2.1. Ministry agents remunerated by stipend
  - 5.2.2. Ministry agents eligible to be remunerated by stipend
  - 5.2.3. Retired ministry agents available for supply
  - 5.2.4. Ministry agents awaiting placement
- 5.3. Therefore, you are required to hold a valid business blue card, including for periods where you are providing supply.
- 5.4. You **must** complete and sign a ministry agent [statement of commitment](#) to safe ministry on an annual basis. This ensures that as a person carrying on a child-related business, you have a current child and youth risk management strategy in place in each year.



- 5.5. Failing to have a child and youth risk management strategy in place each year, while carrying on a child-related business is a breach of the SMC Policy as well as a breach of legislation. Following the [Safe Church Breach Procedure](#), complete a [Breach Report](#), recording the breach in a [register](#).
- 5.5.1. Failing to have a child and youth risk management strategy in place each year may result in a fine for the individual of \$2,757 (20 penalty units).

## Ministry agents working in another organisation

For example, a ministry agent employed by Education Queensland as a Chaplain

### 6. Requirements

- 6.1. You must comply with the obligations in *Section 4* above. Pre-filled [forms](#) are available on the Synod website.
- 6.2. All ministry agents working in another organisation must hold a valid, Paid Blue Card, **and** must also comply with any specific blue card requirements when working with that organisation. Failure to do so may result in further penalties from that organisation.
- 6.2.1. As an example - you may be stood aside from your role as a ministry agent for the Uniting Church **and** receive a fine from the organisation which had employed you.

### Training

- 6.3. All ministry agents working in another organisation, must ensure that they complete all other training required by that organisation.

### Mandatory Reporting

- 6.4. All ministry agents working in another organisation must also:
- 6.4.1. Comply with the organisation's reporting requirements,
- 6.4.2. Report all suspicions or knowledge of abuse, following the reporting guidelines of that organisation,
- 6.4.3. Keep written records of all instances where you have complied with these reporting obligations. For example, a ministry agent employed by Education Queensland as a Chaplain, must follow the Education Queensland guidelines for reporting suspicions or knowledge of abuse, and keep a record that they have complied with Education Queensland reporting guidelines.

## Ministry agents engaged as employees

This section refers to ministry agents who are not in a placement but are engaged as an employee and paid a wage.

### 7. Requirements

- 7.1. You must comply with the obligations in *Section 4* above. Pre-filled [forms](#) are available on the Synod website.
- 7.2. All ministry agents engaged as employees **must** hold a valid, Paid Blue Card. You must not use a volunteer blue card for paid child-related work.



### Ministry agents engaged as volunteers

This section refers to ministry agents who are not in a placement but are who are engaged on a volunteer basis.

#### 8. Requirements

- 8.1. You must comply with the obligations in *Section 4* above. Pre-filled [forms](#) are available on the Synod website.
- 8.2. All ministry agents engaged as volunteers must hold a valid, Volunteer or Paid Blue Card.

### Religious representatives

This section refers to ministry agent candidates, and any person who is training to become a religious representative.

#### 9. Requirements

- 9.1. You must comply with the obligations in *Section 4* above. Pre-filled [forms](#) are available on the Synod website and hold a valid linked blue card or exemption card.
- 9.2. Students and trainees should apply for a volunteer blue card as soon as possible after enrolling in a course to become a religious representative.

### Information and support

Information and support can be obtained from the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer on 07 3377 9833 or [safechurch@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:safechurch@ucaqld.com.au)

Most training materials are now available online, using the Synod’s Learning management System (LMS) [edUCate](#). For information or support to access online training, please contact the [Learning and Development Team](#): 07 3377 9990 or [learning@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:learning@ucaqld.com.au)

### Revisions

Document number		C/2.1.5			
Version	Approval date	Approved by	Effective date	Policy owner	Policy contact
5.0	23.09.2022	Strategic Risk Manager	23.09.2022	ED Strategic Resources and Assurance	Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer
Next scheduled review		23.09.2027			