

# A Parent's Guide to Choosing Child-safe Child-friendly Programs

Every day children and young people around NSW spend time with adults outside their home at places such as schools, childcare centres, youth refuges, sporting clubs, music groups, church groups and hospitals.

Like you, we want kids to be safe and happy.

And as a parent, you play a vital role in helping organisations be safer and friendlier places for children and young people.

This guide will help you decide how Child-safe Child-friendly an organisation, activity or program is for your child.

*What do we mean by Child-safe Child-friendly?*

► **CHILD-SAFE** means taking steps to help keep children safe from physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

► **CHILD-FRIENDLY** means kids are valued, respected and included so they feel confident someone will listen.

You can feel more confident about choosing the best program for your child by doing three important things:

**Asking Questions about the service:** Before choosing an activity or service you should ask what they do to help protect kids using their service. Talk with staff and ask them about child protection policies, staff recruitment, training and supervision and codes of conduct. You could also ask how are complaints handled, do they welcome parent and children's involvement, are kids asked for their ideas and suggestions?

Remember by asking an organisation about their policies and practices you are also encouraging them to

develop these policies so they become more Child-safe Child-friendly.

**Look Around:** Take time to observe how staff respond to kids' needs and how staff treat one another. Are children greeted by name when they arrive? Ask yourself if your child feels happy, safe and involved in this environment? Drop in at unexpected times to check this out. Ask other parents what they think about the service or activity.

**Talking to your child:** Regularly ask your child about their experience of a program and how they feel about it.

An organisation that is Child-safe Child-friendly will welcome your questions and encourage parent and carer participation.

**Over the page are some QUESTIONS TO ASK:**

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Questions:	A good organisation should:
<p><b>What sort of things do you do to make sure your staff and volunteers are safe to work with kids?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Welcome questions about staff and volunteer selection.</li> <li>▶ Explain what type of background checks are completed on staff such as, police checks and a Prohibited Employment Declaration, Working With Children background check or a Certificate for Self Employed People.</li> <li>▶ Describe their recruitment process and how references are required and thoroughly checked.</li> <li>▶ Promote and advertise their rigorous employment and screening processes.</li> <li>▶ Have appointed a Child Safety Contact Person.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What training is offered to your staff and volunteers?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Regularly provide training to staff on child development, including the health, educational and safety needs of kids.</li> <li>▶ Routinely provide training on child protection issues, so that staff know what to do if they are concerned a child is at risk of harm.</li> <li>▶ Require staff and volunteers to be trained in first aid and keep their skills up to date.</li> <li>▶ Display certificates identifying what training has been undertaken.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What support and supervision is provided to staff and volunteers?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Induct new staff and volunteers to clearly explain the organisation's values and policies.</li> <li>▶ Closely supervise new staff and volunteers during a probationary period.</li> <li>▶ Make sure a senior staff member is available to support new staff and volunteers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What level of supervision do you provide for children in your care?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Maintain good staff to child ratios, which increase during excursions or camps.</li> <li>▶ Have a clear policy on qualified to unqualified staff ratios and male to female ratios, especially on overnight trips.</li> <li>▶ Discourage staff from being in a one on one situation with kids, without another staff member being close by.</li> <li>▶ Have clear policies for toileting and nappy changing of children.</li> </ul>

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Questions:	A good organisation should:
<p><b>Do you have a child protection policy and a code of conduct?</b></p> <p>If so, ask for a copy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Have a written child protection policy.</li> <li>▶ Be able to tell you how the policy works and that staff and volunteers are trained in its implementation.</li> <li>▶ Explain to you the specific areas covered in the policy such as discipline and bullying procedures.</li> <li>▶ Involve kids in the development of the Code of Conduct.</li> <li>▶ Be clear about to whom the Code of Conduct applies and what happens if there is a breach of the code.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Do you have a grievance or complaints policy?</b></p> <p>Ask how it works in making your child safe.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide you with the name of the Child Safety Contact Person who a carer or child can contact if they have a concern.</li> <li>▶ Explain to you the complaints or grievance procedure and what happens when a complaint is made.</li> <li>▶ Have trained staff in the organisation's grievance and complaints policy.</li> <li>▶ Educate kids about who they can talk to if they are concerned or worried about something and what will happen when they raise a concern.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Are carers welcome at any time?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Encourage active parent participation, including allowing carers to come onto the premises at any time.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Are kids asked for their ideas and suggestions?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Actively involve young people in decisions and policies which directly impact on them.</li> <li>▶ Encourage kids to provide feedback on activities and the organisation.</li> <li>▶ Involve kids in developing their own Code of Conduct.</li> </ul>
Look for the following:	Good organisations and staff will:
<p><b>Was your child greeted when they arrived at the organisation or program?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Greet children by their names and ask how they are feeling.</li> <li>▶ Remember something special about your child, such as what activities he or she likes doing best.</li> <li>▶ Get your child involved in an activity and encourage his or her participation with other kids.</li> </ul>

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Here are some THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

Look for the following:	Good organisations and staff will:
<b>How do the staff interact with each other and with senior members of staff?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Behave in a friendly and respectful manner with each other.</li><li>▶ Not argue or have conflict with each other.</li><li>▶ Take pride in their work and their environment by always being enthusiastic and helpful towards each other.</li></ul>
<b>How do the staff interact with the kids?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Stop when approached by children and physically get down to a child's level to listen to what they have to say.</li><li>▶ Talk and engage with children in a respectful way.</li><li>▶ Always respond positively to children and show empathy when a child is upset.</li></ul>

## Listening to and talking with your child

Regularly talking about their day lets your child know you are interested in what they do. This helps kids feel they can tell you when things aren't going well or they have worries.

Here are some questions you might want to ask, perhaps when you're driving home, or if they're helping you around the house, that will help prompt discussion and bigger responses from your child than 'yes' or 'no' answers:

- ▶ **What did you do today with/at...?**
- ▶ **What was the most fun?**
- ▶ **Where did you spend most of your time?**
- ▶ **What sort of things did you do?**
- ▶ **Who did you play with?**
- ▶ **Does everyone play together?**
- ▶ **Was there anything that wasn't fun?**
- ▶ **Were all the adults or big kids helpful?**
- ▶ **What/Who did you like best?**
- ▶ **What/Who didn't you like?**
- ▶ **Would you like to go again?**
- ▶ **What would you like to do next time you are there?**