

Child safety in our Synagogues on High Holidays

Tzedek advises that all Jewish organisations in Australia should have written child protection policies in accordance with state legislation and the national principles for child safe organisations.

There are additional cultural considerations that are important in the development of organisational policies.

During the High Holidays our synagogues are filled with children celebrating this wonderful time in the Jewish calendar.

Synagogues seek to provide a safe and secure environment for the children of their congregations. In the interests of ensuring such an environment, Tzedek recommends that synagogues adopt and operationalise the following guidelines.

Synagogues should:

- Require all children under the age of bar/bat mitzvah to be in a supervised children's program if they are not attending services with their parents.
- Require all staff of supervised children's programs to have a current Working with Children Check.
- Ensure that there are at least two staff members in the room at all times during a supervised children's program. Further, the room in which the supervised children's program is held should never be locked and always easily observable from the outside.
- If a bathroom is not attached to the room in which the supervised children's program is held, staff should escort children to the bathroom in a group, never alone.
- Ensure that all buildings within synagogue premises that are not required for services cannot be accessed.
- Establish and implement a roster for two congregants (who hold current Working with Children Checks) to walk the synagogue grounds and keep an eye out for children who are not attending the service or a supervised children's program.

Tzedek expects that synagogues have broad policies and procedures in place to address the issue of child sexual abuse. These guidelines should therefore be followed in conjunction with the individual policies and procedures. Also, it is expected that appropriate remedial action should be taken if there is knowledge or suspicion of an incident. It is important to emphasise that ALL incidents MUST be reported to the police immediately.