

## The Safe Ministry Training Facilitator

There are few learning environments similar to that of the Safe Ministry Training.

The facilitator is asked to engage with a diverse group of participants from a wide range of ages, backgrounds, interests, roles, and experiences. In many instances participants will have “done this before” e.g. teachers and nurses in the case of child protection training, while still others will have been mandated to attend.

The subject matter is also of a sensitive nature, i.e. duty of care, abuse and risk management. Combined, these factors make Safe Ministry training unique and often challenging.

### Facilitator: Not lecturers or teachers.

The task is taking participants on a journey through sensitive topics and bringing about changed behaviours - ‘turning on lights’ in participants’ heads. Participants include volunteers who may be doctors, lawyers, farmers, teachers and health care workers.

Validate participants’ expertise in the room, draw out people’s ideas and pose questions for discussion.

Facilitators are also agents of culture change. The role is one of gently challenging the status quo by painting a better picture of safer practice in Parishes. Safe Ministry is not maintained by policy and procedures, but rather as individuals, teams and Parishes implement safe practices.

Implementation involves both church workers and clergy changing current practices.

The word “ministry” herein refers to all events, programs and activities run by local Parishes, both on-site and off-site, on weekdays and on weekends, and for people of all ages.

### Helpful hints

This section addresses some common pitfalls and areas of caution.

#### **Watch for the ‘sidetrack’**

It is easy to be sidetracked by a participant’s comment or question, especially in an area about which you are passionate or of which you have special knowledge.

If you find yourself being led off-topic, pause and refocus the group.

At times it will be necessary to respectfully acknowledge that we are talking about sensitive issues, which evoke a range of emotions, and state that we need to keep moving.

Sometimes it may be appropriate to ask the participants to talk to you more about this in a break or at a later time.

#### **Avoid negativity**

Safe Ministry Training contains many sensitive subjects and people often have very negative feelings and, sometimes, things to say.

If they do, be respectful, and avoid 'buying into' negative statements made.

Rather, acknowledge the person's view and then restate the positive reason/s for people facing the issue or acting on the issue.

If you are negative in either your body language or words, the workshop can become a negative experience for the whole group. This includes the use of sarcasm. Avoid it.

Be sensitive and stay positive.

### **Avoid absolute statements**

Given the sensitive subject matter, we must be very careful when using absolute or black & white statements.

Avoid using absolutes like: 'always', 'the only way', 'you must, and 'you must not'.

Not only can absolutes be a hindrance to taking people on a culture change journey, they may also be misleading or incorrect.

The only appropriate time to use an absolute statement is when you are reading from government reports or a piece of legislation.

At all other times use qualified statements like 'in our setting' or 'it is helpful to ...'.

Refer people to the Diocesan Office and to government websites rather than defending an absolute position.

### **Stress levels**

Safe Ministry Training can be stressful for participants and facilitators alike.

Factors such as the weather, physical setting, and personality clashes, can all combine to increase participants' stress levels.

Keep your eyes open to these factors and if one is becoming a real problem address it by re-direction, subtly addressing the issue e.g. the weather, talking to the contact person at the church.

If people are concerned about not finishing activities remind them that the workshop is about awareness-raising, they are here to begin thinking about the topic and that they will need to return to the task in implementing their procedures as a Parish.

### **Technical pitfalls**

If you struggle with technology, ensure you have a plan. Be early and have pre-arranged a technical person to be there at least 45 minutes before starting time if you need such assistance.

Ensure your resources are all in working order, e.g. internet, computers, and sound equipment, before the day of the workshop.

## More Helpful hints....

### **Before the day**

- Pastoral care: ensure that adequate pastoral care is arranged for participants.
- Signing in and accessing the Thinkific platform
- Handouts

### **On the day**

- Setting up the venue
  - Be sure that the tables are angled towards the front.
  - Logging in
  - Internet and sound
- Self-care: Beforehand, consider your needs during the workshop, e.g. water, rest during breaks, etc.
- Breaks
- Record attendees

### **During the training**

- Introduction
- Activities
  - Audio function
  - 'next'
  - video
  - matching
  - Submitting
- Progress bar
- Log in for Level 2

### **At the end of the training**

- Complete the 'Parish Group Training Attendance Record' and email [safeministry@melbourneanglican.org.au](mailto:safeministry@melbourneanglican.org.au) to confirm attendees
- Add the completion dates to the Parish Volunteer and Lay Employee Register

### **Running more training**

- New email address if running another session of the same course