



# Yiyili Aboriginal Community School **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

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## INTRODUCTION

Yiyili Aboriginal Community School (YACS) steadfastly upholds the belief that every child deserves the fundamental rights of safety, protection and nurturing. Our philosophy is firmly rooted in the National Child Safe Organisational Principles (The National Principles), which asserts that a child-safe organisation consciously builds a culture, strategizes and acts to promote the wellbeing of children and to prevent their harm.

According to The National Principles, a child-safe organisation meticulously:

- Establishes an environment where the safety and wellbeing of children are at the forefront of thoughts, values, and actions,
- Emphasises on engaging with and valuing children authentically,
- Constructs conditions that minimize the likelihood of harm to children,
- Develops conditions that maximize the chances of identifying any harm, and
- Responds proactively to any concerns, disclosures, allegations, or suspicions.

In line with these principles, YACS is committed to nurturing a culture that supports the wellbeing of our students and actively works to prevent any harm to them.



At YACS, we prioritise the physical, social, and psychological wellbeing of each child, ensuring their safety at school and extending our support beyond school boundaries. We firmly believe that child protection extends beyond the school premises and into the wider community and we invite community participation in formulating a child protection strategy that is universally effective. We commit ourselves to an annual review and continuous improvement of our policy and procedures, with child safety forming a standing agenda item in our weekly staff meetings.

We take all forms of child abuse seriously, with YACS dutifully committed to fulfilling our legal and moral obligations to report any suspected abuse or harm to children under the Children and Community Services Act 2004 and the Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008.

All verbal reports and documents related to allegations of child abuse are handled with utmost seriousness and confidentiality. We guarantee that appropriate measures will be taken to address any situation in compliance with relevant legislation.

In instances where a teacher identifies and reports suspected child abuse, our policy requires that the principal be notified and consulted about the situation.

We mandate a comprehensive face-to-face induction into the YACS Child Protection Policy and Procedures for all new staff, volunteers, and board members to ensure they fully understand their responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing child abuse.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- To ensure that YACS prevents the opportunities for all forms of abuse as well as setting out for all staff the appropriate responses should abuse occur or be suspected.
- To ensure that all staff employed by YACS and any volunteers at the school are aware of the Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- To ensure that all staff and volunteers are adequately screened, trained and supervised when dealing with children. This includes the requirement of undertaking a “Working with Children Check” for all staff and volunteers.
- To ensure the school curriculum includes comprehensive, culturally-appropriate and age-appropriate protective behaviours and sexual abuse prevention education. This includes students being able to recognise and report abuse, understand power in relationships and developing self-protective strategies and skills.
- To ensure that YACS engages in the prevention abuse as well as the management and responses to disclosures or suspicions of abuse.
- To monitor and evaluate this policy on a regular basis.

## **RELEVANT LEGISLATION OR AUTHORITY**

Children and Community Services Act 2004

Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse) Act 2008

Corruption and Crime Commission Act 2003 (WA)

Criminal Code (Acts Amendment: Sexual Offences’ Act 1992) (WA)

Criminal Code Act 1995 (Commonwealth)  
Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)  
Disability Discrimination Amendment (Education Standards) Bill 2004 (Cth)  
Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)  
Restraining Orders Act 1997 (WA)  
Restraining Orders and Related Legislation Amendment (Family Violence) Act 2016)  
School Education Act 1999 (WA)  
School Education Regulations 2000 (WA)  
Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)  
State Records Act 2000 (WA)  
Teacher Registration Act 2012 (WA)  
Working With Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004 (WA)  
Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Regulations 2005 (WA)

## **STAFF REQUIREMENTS**

YACS is committed to securing Working with Children Checks for all adults who work with children at the school:

**All staff** must abide by the school's **Staff Code of Conduct**.

**Teachers** are required, through the Teachers Registration Board (TRB), to have a police clearance. The Working with Children (WWC) legislation requires them to have a WWC Check.

**Non-teaching staff** are also required to have a WWC check if their usual duties involve contact with children (see details below). School policy can be used to require these staff to have a police clearance.

**Volunteers who are not parents** who have contact with children are also required to have a WWC Check.

YACS also follows the following protocols:

**Mandatory Reporting:** New teachers at YACS are required to undergo training as Mandatory Reporters. This happens at the AISWA-sponsored Professional Learning Conference in Broome each year at the beginning of Term 2. Attendance at this training is mandatory for all new teachers at YACS. If needed, teachers are will be directed to undertake online training, available at [https://moodle.communities.wa.gov.au/file.php/1/PublicCourses/Mandatory\\_Reporter\\_Training/story.html](https://moodle.communities.wa.gov.au/file.php/1/PublicCourses/Mandatory_Reporter_Training/story.html). AISWA Online also provides a course available called Child Abuse Reporting including Mandatory Reporting.

**Non-Mandatory Reporting:** At YACS, other groups of people such as Aboriginal Education Workers, administrative staff and school psychologists are not mandated reporters of child sexual abuse. However, all people working with children at YACS, whether mandatory reporters or not, should continue to report reasonable beliefs about all forms of abuse. These people who work

with children also have a great knowledge of the children in their care and can be included in the consultative process with the teacher in the case of sexual abuse.

## DEFINITIONS AND INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Staff at YACS must be aware of the typical signs of child abuse and neglect. Below is a brief overview; refer to the detailed sections for a complete understanding.

### **Types of Child Abuse:**

1. Physical Abuse
2. Sexual Abuse
3. Emotional Abuse
4. Psychological Abuse
5. Family and Domestic Violence
6. Neglect

Each category has specific signs, though a single sign might not suggest abuse. Signs must be viewed in the child's context and considering the child's age, medical and developmental history, and capabilities. Always take signs seriously and offer assistance when required.

Child Abuse is the harmful treatment of anyone under 18 years, due to action or inaction by a person responsible for the child's care. The harm can include delayed physical and/or intellectual development. It can occur within or outside the immediate family.

**Physical abuse** involves deliberate harm or serious risk of physical harm to a child. This includes but is not limited to actions like punching, kicking, shaking, or excessive physical discipline, and giving a child harmful substance (including alcohol).

**Sexual abuse** refers to exposing children to sexual activity inappropriate for their age or developmental level. This includes direct involvement in sexual acts or witnessing sexual activity.

**Emotional abuse** is a long-term treatment that damages a child's emotional expression. This may include verbal abuse, rejection, bullying, threats, or physical and social isolation.

**Psychological abuse** harms a child's self-esteem, moral development, and intelligence over time. This might be caused by belittling, threats, or making a child feel worthless.

**Family and Domestic Violence** involves witnessing or experiencing violence between family members, which can significantly affect the child's emotional health and development.

**Neglect** is failing to provide adequate care or supervision to the child, leading to injuries or developmental damage. This includes lack of food, shelter, affection, supervision, or medical treatment.

A more comprehensive list of signs and symptoms for each category can be found in Appendix A, in the Department of Communities document "Recognising Child Abuse".

Remember, the abuse may not only occur in the child's family but could also present as bullying behaviour from another student. These instances should be treated seriously and may be addressed through other school policies. The child demonstrating such behaviour may also require assistance.

For students aged 18 and over, while they are legally considered adults and outside the DoC's child protection mandate, schools still owe them a duty of care and must ensure their safety and wellbeing.

This guide is meant to provide quick access to the basics. For a comprehensive understanding, please refer to the detailed sections and participate in our regular training sessions. Reach out to the leadership team if you need help or have any concerns.



## **UNDERSTANDING THE REALITIES OF CHILD ABUSE**

As educators, it's crucial that we're aware of the broader context surrounding child abuse. This understanding allows us to remain vigilant and sensitive to the unique challenges our students might face.

### **Prevalence and Types of Child Abuse in Australia**

During 2020-21, a substantial number of children in Australia were subjects of substantiated abuse and neglect notifications. Out of 192,100 investigations, 72,900 notifications were substantiated, affecting 49,700 children. The most common primary type of substantiated abuse was emotional abuse (55%), followed by neglect (21%), physical abuse (14%), and sexual abuse (10%).

This data underscores the importance of our vigilance in detecting and responding to different forms of abuse.

### **The Unique Challenges of Remote Communities and Indigenous Children**

Children from geographically remote areas, like ours, face unique challenges. They were more than three times as likely as children from major cities to be the subjects of substantiated abuse notifications. This underscores the crucial role we play in maintaining child safety.

Furthermore, Indigenous children face a disproportionately high rate of substantiated abuse, with 14,600 instances (or 43 per 1,000 children). The reasons for this over-representation are complex and multifaceted, involving the legacy of past policies, socioeconomic factors, and cultural differences in child-rearing practices.

### **Long-term Impacts of Childhood Abuse**

Abuse during childhood has lasting repercussions, affecting adults' lives in profound ways. Approximately 2.5 million Australian adults (13%) have experienced abuse during childhood. This has correlated with lower levels of educational attainment, income and life satisfaction, and higher levels of financial stress, poor health, and a greater likelihood of experiencing violence as an adult.

Knowing this, it's clear that our roles extend beyond imparting academic knowledge. We are instrumental in safeguarding the well-being of our students and have a responsibility to detect, prevent, and respond to child abuse effectively.

In the following section, we aim to correct some of the commonly held misconceptions about various forms of child abuse, replacing them with the facts.

1. **Myth:** Sexual abuse is most often perpetrated by strangers.

**Fact:** Most sexual abuse cases are committed by someone the child is acquainted with, such as relatives, family friends, or authority figures.

2. **Myth:** Physical discipline is not considered child abuse.

**Fact:** While discipline is sometimes necessary for children's development, physical discipline that causes harm or injury transforms into physical abuse. There are numerous ways to discipline children without using force.

3. **Myth:** Children often fabricate stories about abuse.

**Fact:** Children rarely lie about abuse. Any changes in their accounts are typically due to coercion, threats, fear of separation from family, or the stress of recounting traumatic experiences.

4. **Myth:** Emotional abuse is less harmful than physical or sexual abuse.

**Fact:** Emotional abuse can be as detrimental as physical or sexual abuse. Persistent emotional maltreatment, such as belittling, threats, and constant criticism, can significantly affect a child's mental and emotional development.

5. **Myth:** Only young children are victims of abuse.

**Fact:** Child abuse can occur at any age, from infancy to adolescence. Even teenagers, despite their increased physical capabilities, can find it difficult to resist an abusive adult, especially if that adult is a trusted figure. Child abuse is an exploitation of power and trust, and it inflicts harm on individuals of all ages.

6. **Myth:** Neglect is not a form of child abuse.

**Fact:** Neglect is indeed a form of child abuse. It involves the consistent failure to provide a child with necessary basic needs such as food, shelter, medical care, and emotional support. It can have long-term damaging effects on a child's wellbeing.

7. **Myth:** Those who were sexually abused as children will invariably become abusers themselves.

**Fact:** While some individuals who were abused as children may perpetrate abuse, many do not. Many factors, including intervention and therapy, can break this cycle.

8. **Myth:** Child abuse predominantly occurs in lower socio-economic families.

**Fact:** Child abuse is not exclusive to any specific socio-economic class, culture, or religion. Individuals who harm children can come from any background or occupation.

9. **Myth:** Children are not affected by domestic violence if they don't witness it directly.

**Fact:** Children do not need to directly witness domestic violence to be affected by it. Even the impact of violence on a caregiver can be deeply distressing to a child.

10 **Myth:** If child abuse is reported, the child will immediately be removed from their family.

**Fact:** Reporting child abuse does not always lead to the child being removed from their family. Often, the aim is to provide support and resources to help parents better care for their children and ensure their safety.

## RESPONDING TO CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE DISCLOSING ABUSE

A child or young person may disclose abuse indirectly or by accident. They may also tell adults about their experience of abuse by making vague comments or through their behaviour.

- **Full Disclosure:** child or young person states verbally what has happened to them **in detail** – this may include details of the person alleged responsible and a history of abuse. In this instance just let the child get to the end of their disclosure without interrupting (unless others can hear them, in which case follow the protective interrupting guidelines below). Afterwards, please write down the conversation in as much detail as possible.
- **Direct Disclosure:** The child or young person verbally communicates their experience of being abused, **very briefly and to the point**, establishes perhaps 'what happened' and 'by who' without many other details. There is no need to question further if abuse has been disclosed. Afterwards, please write down the conversation in as much detail as possible
- **Partial Disclosure:** child or young person gives a hint that they have been abused. Child may begin disclosure and stop part way through. If you are unsure if the child is attempting to disclose abuse, it would be appropriate to follow up conversation by saying "**Tell me more about that.**" Afterwards please write down the conversation in as much detail as possible.
- **Indirect Disclosure:** The child may use drawing, behaviour, play or other means that lets you know about their experiences. Please record the child's behaviour/drawing and, if appropriate, you can ask the child "**Tell me about your drawing**"? Afterwards, please write down the conversation in as much detail as possible.
- **Slow Disclosure:** The child may make small disclosures over a longer period of time, only providing snippets of information initially – this may be dependent on their developmental age/stage as well as their proximity to the person alleged responsible. Afterwards, please write down the conversations in as much detail as possible.



Disclosure is a process and it is important to let the child talk in their own way and in their own time, prompting the child when necessary with “**Tell me more about that**”. You may have to accept that the child may only tell you a bit of the story.

The person receiving the disclosure should write down all conversations verbatim, if possible, as well as some details about what prompted the conversation or disclosure. This record will form part of your ‘reasonable grounds’ for submitting a report and will be useful to CPFS staff when making their assessment.

- Stay calm, listen attentively, avoid blame, reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling and believe the child as they will be taking cues from your reactions as to whether or not they continue to disclose.
- Once you have enough information or reasonable grounds to form a belief, you may allow the child to continue talking but it is not necessary to elicit any further information.
- If you are a mandatory reporter and you form a belief that the child has been or is being sexually abused, you must submit a Mandatory Report.
- If you are a mandatory reporter and you have not formed a belief that a child has been or is being sexually abused but are sufficiently concerned, it is recommended that you consult with the YACS Principal as per advice in Section 4 of this policy; Required Action for Notification of Child Sexual Abuse (Mandatory Report).
- If you are a mandatory reporter and you are sufficiently concerned about any child abuse and neglect which is not a mandatory report, it is recommended you follow the steps outlined in section 5, Required Action for Notification of Child Abuse and Neglect (Non-Mandatory Report)

### **Protective Interrupting**

- Protective interrupting is a strategy to maintain the child’s privacy and confidentiality. It also protects those around the child from the vicarious trauma of receiving disclosures.
- You may feel anxious or uncomfortable at this point but it is important that you maintain a calm appearance whilst you support and comfort the child.
- It is essential that the child is given an *immediate* opportunity to continue to disclose in a safe and confidential manner once directed away from other students / people.
- Protective interrupting **is not** a strategy to stop a child from disclosing because we may be fearful or uncomfortable about what we may be about to hear.

### **Recommended Actions After Protective Interrupting**

- Tell the child that what they’ve said is really important and that you want to talk to them where no one else can hear.
- Guide the child into a place where other students / people are not around
- Be supportive and gently indicate that the child can talk in this private situation.
- Let the child take their time and use their own words.

- Listen attentively and ensure the child knows you believe them.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling; that it was not their fault and that they are not in any trouble.
- If you are concerned about the child, tell the child that because they are being harmed or are likely to be harmed that you will need to make sure they are safe and gain some help for them. Do not tell the child you will keep it secret or make any other promises.
- Make arrangements to have the child looked after in a supportive and confidential way following the conversation or disclosure e.g. in the care of nurse or a trusted staff member.
- As soon as possible afterwards, write down what the child said, if possible using the child's words. This record will form part of your 'reasonable grounds' for submitting a report and will be useful to CPFS staff when making their assessment.
- If the child is in imminent danger e.g. returning home at the end of the school day to the person alleged responsible for the abuse, take appropriate action to ensure the child is protected. This may involve a verbal report to CPFS and consultation with the YACS principal as a priority.

If no clear disclosure of abuse is made but the child's behaviour is concerning it is recommended that the following information is recorded confidentially:

- Behaviour that is causing concern;
- When the behaviour is occurring;
- Any identified triggers to the behaviour;
- All noticeable changes to the child/young person.

These records will be useful to CPFS staff when making their assessment.

### **Leading Questions**

Leading questions suggest a correct/expected answer or contain the information the listener thinks the person disclosing means. For example if a child said "Papa touched me" then "Did Papa touch your private parts" would be a leading question. Instead the best way to follow up a child's vague or ambiguous statement is by simply saying "Tell me more about that". If it is still not clear if the touch would denote criminality has occurred, it would be okay to say "where did the person touch you?" If possible, keep a record of verbatim questions as this will assist CPFS staff in their assessment.

***Avoid leading questions as they are likely to contaminate evidence.***

Once you have enough information or reasonable grounds to form a belief you may allow the child to continue talking but it is not necessary to find elicited any further information. If you have only received enough information from the child to be sufficiently concerned it is recommended you contact the Mandatory Reporting Service to discuss these concerns.

### **Contamination of Evidence**

The child will be requested to recount their memories of the situation in full detail when they are interviewed following their disclosure. The more the child is questioned about their disclosure the greater chance for the child to provide inconsistencies each time they provide information. Each

statement the child makes is subject to disclosure requirements for criminal proceedings therefore the existence of differing accounts allows the defence a greater opportunity to discredit the child in court. This is why it is important that you do not question the child any further once you suspect or have formed a belief that they have been sexually abused. The finer details will be established in the interview by trained and qualified staff.

Further information and advice about responding to disclosure of sexual abuse is outlined in Appendix B.

## **MANDATORY REPORTING**

It is a legal requirement in Western Australia for doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers, police officers and boarding supervisors to report all reasonable beliefs of child sexual abuse to CPFS. On 1 January 2009, the legislation that governs mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse became part of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*. *Recent changes in legislation have broadened the category of mandatory reporters; this policy will be updated should any of these additions as required.*

The following process details the process that mandatory reporters (ie. YACS Teachers) must follow if they form a belief, based on reasonable grounds, that child sexual abuse has occurred or is occurring.

### **When does a mandatory reporter make a report?**

Mandatory reporters must report a belief, based on reasonable grounds in the course of their work, paid or unpaid, that child sexual abuse has occurred or is occurring. 'Believes on reasonable grounds' means that a reasonable person, doing the same work, would have formed the same belief on those grounds. Grounds for forming a belief are matters of which you have become aware, and any opinions in relation to those matters.

A mandatory reporter does not have to be able to prove that harm has occurred. Professional judgement and objective observation help to identify warning signs or possible indicators of child sexual abuse and contribute to a reporter forming a belief on reasonable grounds. Knowledge of child development and consultation with colleagues or other professionals can also contribute to reasonable grounds.

Reasonable grounds may include:

- your own observations of a child's behaviour
- your own observations of the behaviour of an adult interacting with the child
- when a child tells you they, or another child, has been harmed
- when you hear about it from someone who is in a position to provide reliable information, perhaps a relative or friend, neighbour or sibling of a child who is at risk.

Mandatory reporters must specify the grounds on which they formed the belief that a child has been, or is being, sexually abused. If you are a mandatory reporter and you have not formed a belief that a child has been or is being sexually abused but are sufficiently concerned, it is recommended that you consult with your internal support areas, such as Child Protection

Consultants within your organisation. Alternatively, you can contact Communities' Central Intake Team on 1800 273 889.

### **How does a mandatory reporter make a report?**

If you believe a child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation, call WA Police Force on 000.

Once a mandatory reporter forms a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child has been or is being sexually abused, they must make a report to Communities Mandatory Reporting Service. The service can be contacted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by phone on 1800 708 704 to discuss the report or provide advice to the reporter.

The preferred reporting method is online via the MR Web Portal. When making a mandatory report via the MR Web Portal, the user will be guided through the system to assist with providing the required information to the Mandatory Reporting Service.

A blank mandatory reporting form can be requested from the Mandatory Reporting Service to be sent via fax or email if you cannot access the MR Web Portal. Completed forms can be emailed to [mrs@communities.wa.gov.au](mailto:mrs@communities.wa.gov.au) or faxed to (08) 6414 7316.

An oral report can be made if you believe that the child is at immediate risk, but this must be followed by a written report as soon as practicable (preferably within 24 hours) after the oral report is made in accordance with section 124C (1) Children and Community Services Act 2004. Failure to submit the written report is an offence with a \$3,000 fine.

A report is to contain:

- a) the name and contact details of the reporter;
- b) the name of the child or, if the child's name cannot be obtained after reasonable inquiries, a description of the child;
- c) if, or to the extent, known to the reporter —
  - i. the child's date of birth;
  - ii. information about where the child lives;
  - iii. the names of the child's parents or other appropriate persons as defined in section 41(1);
- d) the grounds for the reporter's belief that the child has been the subject of sexual abuse or is the subject of ongoing sexual abuse;
- e) if, or to the extent, known to the reporter —
  - i. the name of any person alleged to be responsible for the sexual abuse;
  - ii. the person's contact details;
  - iii. the person's relationship to the child;
- f) any other information that is prescribed.

After receiving a mandatory report, the Mandatory Reporting Service must send a copy of the report to the Western Australia Police. The Mandatory Reporting Service then conducts an initial assessment to decide on the next steps in relation to the child, including determining if any

immediate action is required to protect the child's safety. This may include referring the matter to a child protection district office for further investigation. You may be contacted by WA Police and/or the Department of Communities for further information after submitting a mandatory report.

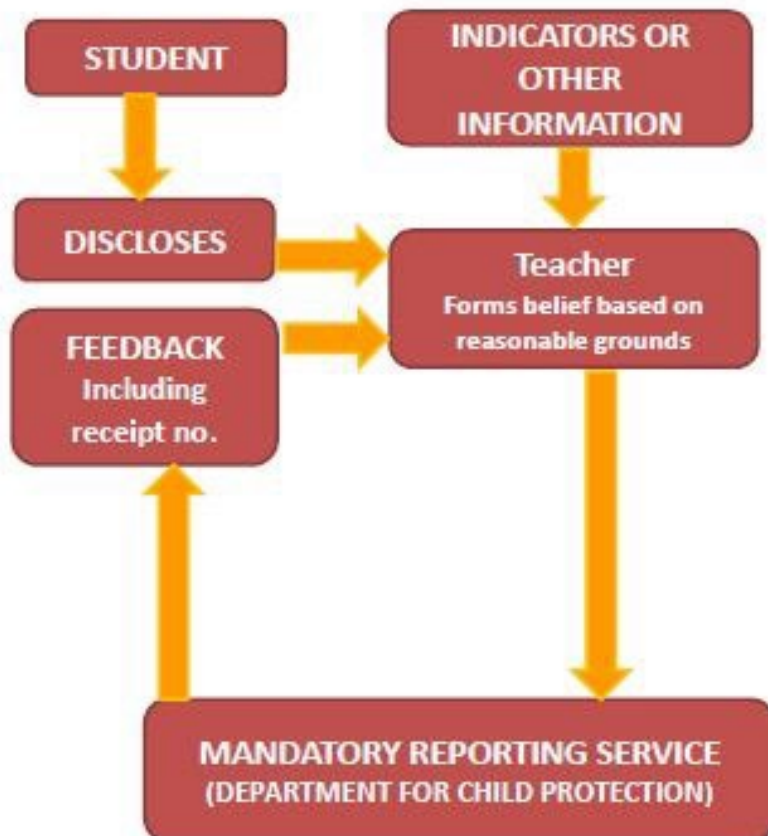
### Confidentiality and Legal Protection

Section 124F of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 has strict provisions relating to the confidentiality of the identity of a mandatory reporter. Anyone who becomes aware of the identity of a mandatory reporter must not disclose identifying information to another person unless an exception under that section applies. The maximum penalty is a fine of \$24 000 and imprisonment for 2 years.

Section 129(2) of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 provides protection for mandatory reporters from liability. This section provides that mandatory reporters who make a report under section 124B(1) in good faith:

- Do not incur any civil or criminal liability; and
- Are not to be taken as having breached any duty of confidentiality; and
- Are taken to have not breached any professional conduct principles

## MANDATORY REPORTING PROCEDURE



The flowchart above only shows what the teacher must do once they have formed a belief. It does not include any consultation process with other school staff. As stated previously it is YACS Policy that the Principal be informed and consulted when child abuse is suspected. This consultation process may occur **prior** to the teacher forming a belief.

Further information regarding mandatory reporting is available at the [Department of Communities](#).

## **NON MANDATORY REPORTING**

### **Physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect:**

The teacher's observations or the child's disclosure should be discussed, in the first instance, with the Principal.

It is not the role of the teacher to investigate child abuse or neglect matters. They must report concerns to the Principal.

The teacher and Principal may wish to consult with the school psychologist or a member of the AISWA Schools Psychology Service or the school nurse.

*Note: It is vital to remember that confidentiality is paramount and that disclosure of this information should only be discussed with those in the school who are required to know.*

Concerns regarding physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect (i.e: non-mandatory reports) can be referred to CPFS District Office. A Child Protection Concern Referral Form can be submitted online at <https://forms.digital.wa.gov.au/223101831590850>. YACS is within the East Kimberley District so concerns can also be reported to CPFS Kununurra, phone number: 08 9168 0333. Alternatively YACS staff can submit a Child Protection Concern Referral Form via email to [CPFrontdesk\\_CS-EKIM-East\\_Kimberley\\_District@cpfs.wa.gov.au](mailto:CPFrontdesk_CS-EKIM-East_Kimberley_District@cpfs.wa.gov.au)

If, following a report, a family approaches the school to receive support for their child, it is recommended that any interview be conducted with a minimum of 2 school members present (eg. The Principal and one other) to provide support.

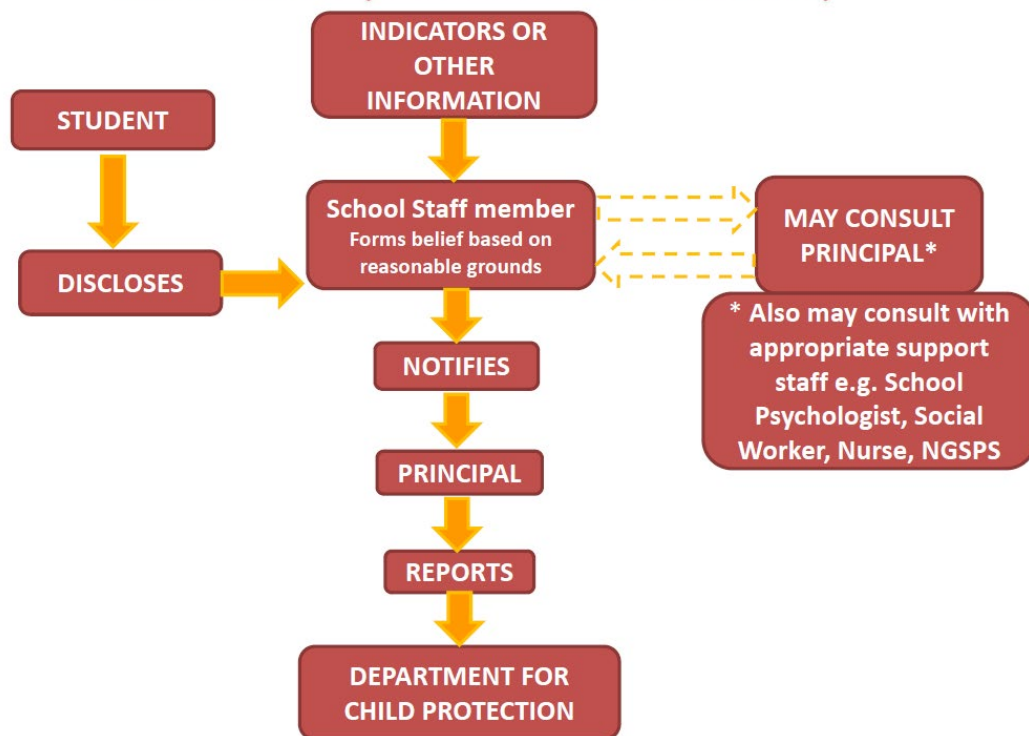
Note: It is important to remember that the focus of the meeting should be the welfare of the child.

The Principal will arrange ongoing support for the teacher, the student and anyone else affected. The need for ongoing support is often necessary as the teacher will continue in their role with the student and CPFS's role may continue for an extended period of time.

This process can be summarized in the following flow chart :

### SUGGESTED NOTIFICATION STEPS for physical, emotional, psychological abuse and neglect

## NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE – CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT (NON-MANDATORY REPORT)



**NB: To avoid interfering with any investigative process initiated by CPFS or the Police, the Principal or teacher must seek advice from CPFS or Police prior to informing the parent/carer of a concern of abuse or neglect.**

YACS Staff must be aware of the above requirement.

YACS Staff must also be aware of the fact that they are not to acquiesce to a student's demands that parents, police or other agencies not be informed when the welfare or safety of the student or other students may be threatened.

### THE REPORTABLE CONDUCT SCHEME

As part of our commitment to child safety, we adhere to the Reportable Conduct Scheme, which was implemented in Western Australia on 1 January 2023 following the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

#### Scope of the Scheme

The Scheme covers:

- Sexual offences
- Sexual misconduct
- Physical assault

- Other prescribed offences

After one year of the Scheme's operation, its scope will extend to include:

- Significant neglect of a child
- Any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child

### **Reporting Obligations**

All staff members are required to report any information that leads them to form a reasonable belief that another staff member has engaged in reportable conduct. This applies whether the conduct took place in the course of the employee's employment or outside of work. This report should be made to the Principal. If the conduct concerns the Principal, the report should be made directly to the Chair of the Board.

### **Reportable Convictions**

A reportable conviction is a conviction for an offence of a sexual nature committed against, with, or in the presence of a child, or other prescribed offences.

### **Historical Conduct**

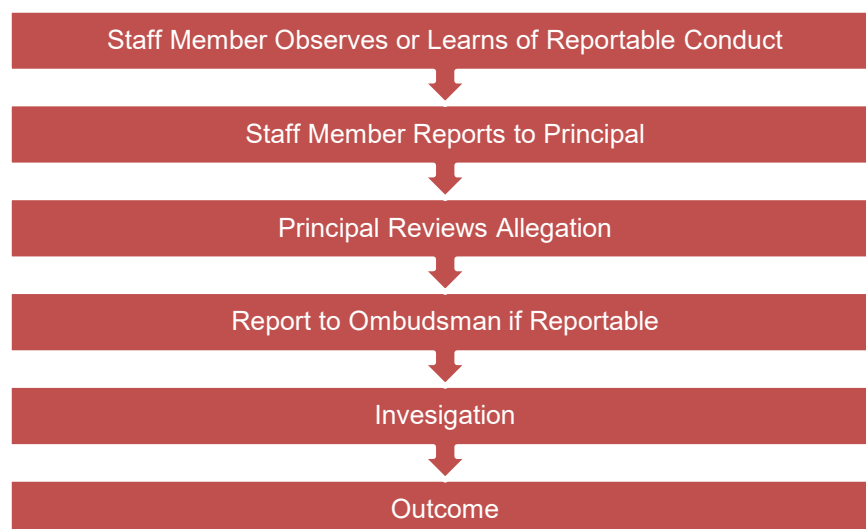
The scheme also covers historical conduct of a current employee that occurred in the past. However, it does not extend to historical conduct of former employees.

### **Protections for Reporters**

Staff members who report under the Scheme are protected under the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1971, including protection from liability for providing information, protection from victimisation, and a prohibition on publishing information that identifies or is likely to identify the person who has made a report under the Scheme.

All staff members have a duty of care to report any incidents of child abuse or neglect to enable the head of the organization to report it to the Ombudsman. Together, we can ensure a safe environment for the children under our care.

## **Reportable Conduct Reporting Procedure**





## **PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOURS AND ABUSE PREVENTION**

YACS is committed to curriculum in the school covering comprehensive, realistic and age appropriate personal safety, which enables students to recognize and report abuse, understand power in relationships, and develop protective strategies, including seeking help.

YACS is proactive in sourcing curriculum that assists with child protection. Three important programs of note that YACS implements are:

**Safe4Kids:** <http://www.safe4kids.com.au/>

Safe4Kids is a Western Australian organization which specializes in child protection education. The distinctive programs delivered are specifically designed as a preventative measure to combat child abuse by providing children with clear messages regarding inappropriate behaviour. This allows them to identify unsafe situations and seek help immediately – and persist in seeking help until they feel safe again. This educational approach emphasizes that should anyone suffer unwanted touching, it isn't the recipient's fault, and that they have the right to have this situation dealt with. In many circumstances protective behaviours is introduced to children after a critical incident has occurred, and whilst these important life skills are valuable for all children at all times, the strength of protective behaviours lies in empowering the children themselves to be proactive about their own safety before a crisis develops.

**Aussie Optimism:** <http://www.aussieoptimism.org.au>

Aussie Optimism includes six separate programs that can be used with children and adolescents of different ages from Kindy through to year 8. Please look at our programs section to find out more about each one.

Aussie Optimism is based on research in psychology (e.g., Seligman, Kendall and Ellis) and uses this information to help develop social and emotional skills, competencies and resilience. Our own extensive research indicates that Aussie Optimism may:

- reduce mental health difficulties
- increase recovery from depressive disorders (anxiety and depression)
- reduce the incidence of suicidal ideation and behaviour
- increase the recovery from suicidal ideation and behaviour
- increase pro-social behaviour
- reduce the likelihood of drinking and smoking at later stages
- reduce hyperactivity

**PATHS CURRICULUM:** <https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary/programs/paths-curriculum>

PATHS is a program that targets the development of social and emotional competence in order to build children's protective factors and decrease the risk of behavioural and social problems. It is designed to promote social and emotional competence, prevent violence, aggression and other behavioural problems, improve critical thinking skills and enhance the classroom climate.

PATHS covers five conceptual domains:

Self-Control  
Emotional Understanding  
Positive Self-Esteem  
Relationships  
Interpersonal Problem-Solving Skills

It is YACS policy that all students in the school are involved in the above programs, and that teachers must also participate.

## **STAFF WELLBEING AND SELF-CARE**

YACS acknowledges that responding to and reporting child abuse and neglect can impact upon the wellbeing of staff. Any concerns about the effects of reporting abuse or neglect should be discussed with the YACS Principal in the first instance. All YACS staff are also encouraged to seek the support of trusted colleagues and personal networks as part of their own self-care routines.

Should YACS staff require additional support to manage their response to child protection issues the following professional support services are available:

- School Psychology Service (cross-sector): current contact details available via YACS Principal or Kimberley Education Regional Office on 9192 0800
- AISWA Schools Psychology Service: [asps@ais.wa.edu.au](mailto:asps@ais.wa.edu.au)
- LifeLine 13 11 14
- Rural Link: 1800 552 002
- Boab Health (Broome): 9192 7888
- Boab Health (Kununurra): 9168 2560
- Department of Health - Kimberley Mental Health Service (Broome): 9194 2640
- Department of Health - Kimberley Mental Health Service (Kununurra): 9166 4350

## **POLICY REVIEW**

This Child Protection Policy is monitored and evaluated on a regular basis and the School Community is kept informed of its content and the procedures recommended in the event that abuse is suspected or has occurred.



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Communities



# Recognising Child Abuse





Child abuse is a serious issue. It refers to any kind of action or failure to act that results in harm or possible harm to a child. A child who is being abused or neglected may feel fear, shame or confusion. The child may be afraid to tell anyone of the abuse, particularly if the person harming them is known to them and their family.

Child abuse is not isolated to specific cultural or socio-economic groups. It can happen through a person within the family (for example a parent or relative) or outside the immediate family (perhaps a teacher or sports coach), or an unknown person.

The following information about recognising signs of abuse may be helpful if you are concerned that a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed.

**There are four main types of child abuse:**

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional – including psychological abuse and exposure to family and domestic violence
- Neglect.

A child can suffer one or more of these types of abuse. Abuse can be hard to spot. Some children show no signs of abuse, while others may show signs of abuse through their behaviour, emotions or physical appearance. Common signs across different types of abuse include:

- bedwetting
- being unable to explain an injury or giving inconsistent, vague or unlikely explanations for an injury
- unusual fear of physical contact
- frequent headaches or stomach pains
- concerning behaviours that may be harmful to themselves or others, or
- being extremely sensitive and alert to their surroundings (hypervigilance).

Other signs may suggest a child is experiencing trauma or grief. Watch for any changes in the child's general mood. The child may become anxious, irritable, depressed, angry, or show a combination of emotions. However, don't assume that just because you see these symptoms, the child is being abused. Keep in mind that these symptoms can apply to a child under stress and may not be related to abuse.





## Physical abuse

Physical abuse is when a child is deliberately hurt or is at serious risk of being hurt by someone they know such as a family member, relative, carer, another adult or child. The signs of physical abuse may be subtle and may be easier to spot if the child has no way of concealing the injury.

Examples of physical child abuse may include beating, strangling, biting, shaking, throwing, scalding, burning and/or suffocating the child; poisoning, being given or forced to ingest alcohol or drugs; assault using implements; and female genital cutting.

Possible indicators or signs of physical abuse include (but are not limited to):

- Broken bones, unexplained bruising and/or burns in different stages of healing.
- Being unable to explain an injury or giving inconsistent, vague or unlikely explanations for an injury.
- Unusual or unexplained internal injuries.
- A history of family violence.
- A delay between the injury and seeking medical assistance.
- Repeated visits to the doctor with injuries, poisoning or minor complaints.
- Habitual absences from school and other usual activities.
- Being unusually frightened of a parent or carer.
- Wearing inappropriate clothing in warm weather (to hide bruises, cuts or marks).
- Avoiding physical contact.
- Becoming scared when other children cry or shout.
- Being excessively friendly to strangers.
- Self-stimulatory behaviours such as rocking or head banging.
- Starting fires or being fascinated with fire.
- Destroying property.
- Hurting animals.



## Sexual abuse

Child sexual abuse is when a child is forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This may involve physical contact or non-contact activities and can happen online or offline. A child may not always understand that they are being sexually abused.

Sexual abuse includes:

- Sexual touching of any part of the body, whether the child is wearing clothes or not. This includes, kissing, holding or touching the child in a sexual way.
- Forcing or encouraging the child to take part in sexual activity.
- Making a child take off their clothes or touch someone else's genitals
- Rape or penetration by putting an object or body part in a child's mouth, vagina or anus.
- Exposing genitals to a child.
- Encouraging or forcing a child to watch or hear sexual acts.
- Not taking proper measures to prevent a child being exposed to sexual activities by others.
- Encouraging or making a child masturbate while others watch.
- Persuading a child to make, view or distribute child abuse images (such as performing sexual acts over the internet, sexting or showing pornography to a child).
- Making, viewing or distributing child abuse images.
- Allowing someone else to make, view or distribute child abuse images.
- Sexual exploitation – occurs when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual activity in return for gifts, money or reasons.

Children who are sexually abused have often been groomed into trusting their abuser and many do not understand they are being abused. Grooming is a process a person uses to prepare a child, significant adults and the environment around the child for the abuse. Grooming can happen anywhere including online, in organisations and in public spaces.

Children may not realise or say that they have been sexually abused. Signs of sexual abuse include changes in the child's behaviour, emotional state and physical signs. These include:

- knowing more about sexual activities than other children their age
- masturbating more or in way that is unusual for their age and stage of development
- involving other children in concerning sexual behaviours
- refusing to undress for activities or often wearing layers of clothing
- bruising, bleeding, swelling, tears or cuts on their genitals or anus
- difficulty walking or sitting
- unusual vaginal odour or discharge
- itching or pain in the genital area and/or difficulty going to the toilet
- having a sexually transmitted disease
- torn, stained or bloody clothing, especially underwear
- being afraid of being alone with a particular person
- being frequently depressed, feeling suicidal or attempted suicide
- frequent head aches and stomach pains



- creating stories, poems or artwork about abuse, and
- unexplained goods, possessions or money.

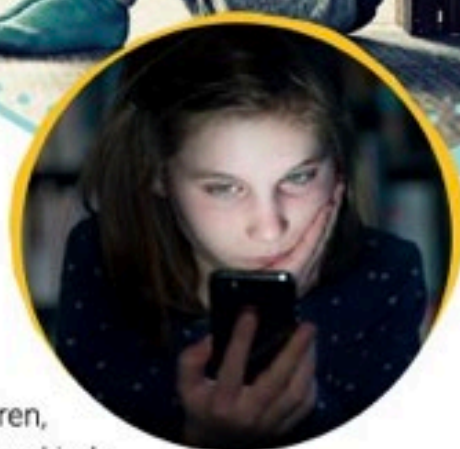
Sexual abuse can cause harm to the child including significant emotional trauma, physical injury, infections and impaired emotional and psychological development.



## Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated, threatened or humiliated.

Emotional abuse also includes exposure to family and domestic violence which causes serious emotional, physical and psychological harm to children, as well as placing them at increased likelihood of other kinds of abuse and neglect.



The term emotional abuse also include psychological abuse which involves behaviours such as isolating, discrediting, and disregarding.

A child can be emotionally abused when they experience hostility, derogatory name-calling and put-downs, repeated physical or social isolation, and persistent rejection or coldness from a person (such as a parent, sibling, carer or teacher) over an extended period.

Possible signs of emotional abuse include (but are not limited to):

- unexplained mood swings between aggressive and passive behaviour
- significant delays in emotional, mental and physical development including gross and fine motor skills
- language delay or stuttering
- poor self-image and low self-esteem (feelings of worthlessness)
- compulsively lying or stealing
- high levels of anxiety or distress
- lack of trust in others
- heightened desire for attention or affection from known and unknown adults
- reluctance to go home
- regressive behaviours such as rocking, sucking their thumb and bedwetting
- fear of someone they know
- self-harming, overeating or starving themselves, and
- creating violent drawings or writing.



## Neglect

Neglect is when a child does not receive adequate food or shelter, medical treatment, supervision, care or nurturance to the extent that their development is harmed, or they are injured.

Some examples are:

- Leaving a child alone without appropriate supervision.
- Not ensuring the child attends school or enrolling them in school.
- The child having an infection because of poor hygiene or lack of prescribed medication.
- Not giving a child appropriate attention and emotional support.
- Not seeking medical help for the child when required.

Possible signs of neglect include (but are not limited to):

- showing signs of malnutrition and hunger
- begging, stealing or hoarding food
- persistent uncleanliness and poor personal hygiene such as matted hair, dirty skin, sores and/or body odour
- frequently ill, untreated medical problems or lack of routine medical care
- often being tired, late for school or non-attendance
- being left without appropriate supervision for their age, development and/or for the environmental circumstances
- left at school for long periods after the end of the school day
- lack of weather appropriate clothing
- inadequate shelter or unsafe conditions
- when a baby or preschool aged child does not meet physical and developmental milestones and there are no underlying medical reasons for this.







## Family and domestic violence

Family and domestic violence is an intentional pattern of behavior intended to coerce, control and create fear within a current or former intimate partner or family relationship. It includes, but is not limited to, emotional and/or psychological abuse, physical violence, sexual violence, financial abuse, technology-facilitated abuse and religious/spiritual violence. The perpetrator of the violence is the person responsible for the abuse.

Exposing a child to family and domestic violence by being present and seeing or hearing the violence, or witnessing physical injuries resulting from the violence, is a form of emotional abuse. In addition to the harm caused by the emotional abuse, exposing a child to family and domestic violence can cause physical harm if they are hurt when a perpetrator assaults the adult survivor; and neglect where the violence contributes to a child's basic needs not being met.

Being exposed to family and domestic violence, particularly when it involves parents and/or caregivers, can seriously affect a child's emotional wellbeing and development. A child is likely to experience profound emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and may suffer from post-traumatic stress due to memories of the abuse.

Signs of a child having been exposed to family and domestic violence are similar to those of emotional abuse, physical abuse and neglect, as listed on page six.



## What you can do

Children can't protect themselves. They rely on responsible adults to be the voice they don't have. If you are worried about the wellbeing or safety of a child and you are not sure what to do, you can contact the Department of Communities (Communities). An experienced child protection worker will talk to you about your concerns to inform what should be done about them.

Unless there is an imminent risk to a child's safety, do not ask the child a lot of questions yourself. The appropriate people will take action to investigate.

## Mandatory Reporters

Under the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*, it is a legal requirement in Western Australia for doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers, police officers and boarding supervisors to report all reasonable beliefs of child sexual abuse to Communities.

You can lodge a verbal mandatory report by calling the Department's Mandatory Reporting Service on free call **1800 708 704**.

By law, you must also lodge a written report. It is important to provide as much information as possible in the written report, as this will assist with the assessment of the child's safety.

You can use the Department of Communities' secure Web System to lodge a written report or alternatively download the mandatory reporting template form (PDF). Links to the online Web System and template form can be found on the Child Protection and Family Support website at <http://mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au/Pages/Home.aspx>.

Under other legislation, the reporting of child sexual abuse requires Family Court personnel and child care licensees to report child abuse to Communities.

The *Family Court Act 1997* (s.160) and the *Family Law Act 1975* (s.67ZA) require Family Court personnel, such as Family Court registrars, counsellors and independent legal practitioners who represent children in Family Court matters, to report when they have reasonable grounds for suspecting a child has been, or is, at risk of being abused. These mandatory reports are referred to the district office from the senior practice development officer located at the Family Court.

Regulations made under the *Child Care Services Act 2007* (WA) require persons who hold a child care license to report any allegation of abuse, neglect or assault of an enrolled child during a care session that is made against a licensee, managerial officer, staff member or volunteer of the child care service to the Department.





## Where to go for advice and support

### Department of Communities

If you are concerned about a child's wellbeing, please contact the Central Intake Team on **1800 273 889** or email [cpduty@communities.wa.gov.au](mailto:cpduty@communities.wa.gov.au).

To report a concern out of business hours please contact our Crisis Care Unit on **9223 1111** or country free call **1800 199 008**. If you believe a child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation contact the Western Australia Police immediately on **000**.

Refer to the [Department of Communities](#) website for your local office.

### Western Australia Police Force

**131 444**

(General enquiries and police attendance)

### Life threatening emergencies

**000**

### Ngala Parenting Line

**(08) 6279 1200 / 1800 654 432**

(24-hour support and advice for parents)

### HealthDirect Australia

**1800 022 222**

(24-hour general health information and advice)

### Kids Helpline

**1800 551 800**

(5-25 years old)

### Youth Beyond Blue

**1300 224 636**

(12-25 years old)

### QLife (LGBTI+)

**1800 184 527**

(3pm to midnight – note: time may change)

### Men's Domestic Violence Helpline

**(08) 9223 1199 / 1800 000 599**

### Women's Domestic Violence Helpline

**(08) 9223 1188 / 1800 007 339**

### Sexual Assault Resource Centre

**1800 199 888**



# Mandatory reporting information sheet 5: responding to disclosures

## What is protective interrupting and how do I protectively interrupt?

If a child is disclosing sexual abuse, it is important to make sure that their visual and auditory privacy is being upheld. For example, if a child indicates a possible disclosure in a public setting or in front of peers by saying something like, 'can I tell you a secret?' or 'I need to tell you something', you may need to interrupt them to protect their privacy.

To do this you can use the protective interrupting or 'parking' strategy, which is when you interrupt them and say something like, 'it sounds like you want to tell me something; I am very interested in what you want to say but can we talk about this in about 10 minutes?', in which you can organise to take the child to an area where the conversation will not be overheard. By doing this you have 'protectively interrupted' and 'parked' the conversation with the goal to continue the conversation privately.

Protective interrupting is a strategy to prevent a child disclosing in front of other children or people who should not be privy to their information. If a child starts to disclose about sexual abuse publicly, they should be stopped immediately and an arrangement should be made to continue the discussion in a private setting where both visual and auditory privacy can be upheld. If there is no one else around, and there is no need to park the conversation, do not interrupt a child's disclosure and follow this guide on how to respond to disclosures.

If you had to protectively interrupt a disclosure, it is essential that the child is given an immediate opportunity to continue to disclose in a safe environment, away from other children/people.

## Steps for receiving a disclosure

- Tell the child that what they've said is really important and that you want to talk to them where no one else can hear.
- Guide the child into a place where they feel safe and other children/people are not around.
- Be supportive and gently indicate that the child is safe to talk.
- Following the disclosure, make arrangements to have the child looked after in a supportive and confidential way. For example, in the care of a nurse, counsellor or trusted staff member.

## How to respond to disclosures

If a child is disclosing sexual abuse, it is important to make sure that their visual and auditory privacy is being upheld. Please refer to the section above about protective interrupting for more information.

The reaction of the person to whom a disclosure is made may affect whether the victim makes further disclosures in the future and may also affect the severity of psychological symptoms experienced by the victim. A negative response to disclosure can affect a victim's willingness to disclose again, exacerbate the impacts of the abuse, and allow it to continue.

According to the Australian Institute of Family Studies (2015) and Briggs (2012), the following is important when a child is disclosing:

- **Give the child your full attention:** allow time for the child to trust that they will be listened to and supported.
- **Maintain a calm appearance:** a disclosure of child maltreatment can evoke strong feelings. For some, the disclosure may be overwhelming or provoke feelings of anger or rage. As a professional, you must conceal your feelings and remain calm. This does not mean that you cannot validate the child's feelings or feel empathy for the child, but you need to do so professionally.
- **Believe the child:** it is important that you take the child's disclosure seriously and they feel supported. Some children delay disclosing because they fear that they will not be believed.
- **Don't be afraid of saying the 'wrong' thing:** if a child has disclosed to you, it is a sign that they trust you and think that speaking to you will be helpful. Try not to be distracted by needing to know exactly the 'right' thing to say.
- **Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you:** let the child know that you are glad they told you and that their situation is not their fault. Affirm that it is never okay for a child to be hurt or harmed in this way. Address any concerns about the child's safety, particularly if they have fears about potential consequences.
- **Accept the child will disclose only what they are comfortable with and acknowledge their bravery/strength in doing so:** it is important that children disclosing child abuse feel in control of the situation. Acknowledge the child's bravery and strength in talking about something that is so difficult.
- **Let the child take their time:** disclosing is difficult for children and something they may only be able to do a little at a time. It is important that the child does not feel rushed or pressured and that you allow them to take their time. For children who disclose indirectly, be mindful that this process may take several days or weeks. During this time, let the child know that you will listen when they are ready. Please balance this with safety considerations.
- **Let the child use his or her own words:** letting the child use their own words is important in reducing their discomfort and in case there is a subsequent court case. It



is also important not to ask leading questions or questions that suggest the 'right' words.

- **Don't make promises you can't keep:** child sexual abuse relies on secrecy and perpetrator/s often go to great lengths to conceal child maltreatment. Children learn to hide what is happening to them. Sometimes they fear repercussions for themselves or family members. In other instances, they may fear the consequences for parents whom they love despite the abuse. Because of this, a child might ask an adult to promise secrecy before disclosing. Such a promise should not be made. It is important to tell the child that you will need to tell someone whose job involves helping kids to stay safe. You can never promise that reporting will stop the abuse and you can't promise to keep it a secret. Such well-intended commitments completely diminish children's trust when they realise that the statements were not possible to uphold and therefore untrue.
- **Tell the child what you plan to do next:** tell the child in language they understand what will happen next. Explain who the child may need to speak to (someone from the Department of Communities and/or the Western Australia (WA) Police Force), what the purpose is and what they will do. Explain that for them to be safe they will need to talk to another person about their experience and that you will support them through that. Let the child know that it is okay for them to ask questions.
- **Never criticise the offending parent/s:** children often have very confused feelings about their parents or carers. They hate the abuse but enjoy other aspects of the relationship. They are angry with them and intensely loyal at the same time. If you criticise offending parents, the feeling of loyalty may rise to the forefront and lead them to protect the abusers. Some children may fear violent repercussions for exposing the problems.
- **Check the child's emotional state and immediate safety:** it is best to check in with the child to see how they are feeling and what they might need to help them through this process.
- **Do not confront the alleged perpetrator:** it is imperative that you do not confront the child's alleged perpetrator or discuss the disclosure with them. This could create a potential risk for the child's safety. Also, perpetrators of child abuse can work hard to shift responsibility from themselves to others. Sexual abusers are often charming and persuasive and are able to fabricate seemingly plausible excuses for their behaviour. Confronting an alleged perpetrator of sexual or other types of abuse should only be done by the WA Police Force and/or the child protection workers who have been specifically allocated the investigation.
- **Document the disclosure verbatim:** please refer to the section in the Mandatory Reporting Guide about what you need to document.

What not to do when a child is disclosing:

- Don't stop the child from talking (unless you are protecting their privacy).
- Don't doubt the child or question the validity of their account.

- Don't dismiss or minimise what the child is telling you.
- Don't ask a child why they have not shared information sooner.
- Don't make assumptions about how the child is feeling.
- Don't promise that everything will be fine or that the child will be safe or happy.
- Don't ask leading questions or interview others (your role is not to investigate; this is the role of the Department of Communities and/or WA Police Force).
- Don't try to deal with the situation completely on your own.
- Don't make assumptions about how a child is feeling.

It is important to remember that unless you are a police officer or a child protection worker who has been specifically allocated the investigation, your job as a mandatory reporter is not to investigate disclosures of child abuse. You do not need to prove the sexual abuse has occurred; however, you must make the notification as soon as is reasonably practicable after forming a belief the child has been sexually abused. Your role is to listen, acknowledge the child's feelings and experiences, and provide emotional support while they are disclosing.

As outlined above, when a child or young person is disclosing, if the person to whom they are disclosing helps the child feel comfortable, provides the right environment for the disclosure, and listens attentively, the child is more likely to talk. It is important to understand that this conversation is generally not a to-and-fro conversation, but rather a conversation where the adult largely listens. There are times when it is appropriate to ask questions, but these questions must be carefully constructed to ensure they are not leading or investigative questions.

It is okay to repeat back what the child has said to clarify your understanding and encourage them to elaborate on it if the information is too vague for you to form belief on reasonable grounds. For example, 'I just want to check my understanding, you have said that daddy touches you; could you tell me a little bit more about that please?' is a suitable question. It is important that the adult does not ask questions that may make the child feel uncomfortable or pressured, e.g. 'You need to tell me more about that please'.

If a child indicates that they have been abused, you may decide you need further information before forming a belief that a report must be made to the Mandatory Reporting Service. Please remember that you do not ask questions in the presence of other children and/or potential witnesses. It is important to let the child talk at the pace they wish and collect information by asking open questions rather than leading questions. Open questions are broad and can be answered in detail, rather than by a simple yes or no response. The previous example ('I just want to check my understanding; you have said that daddy touches you. Tell me more about that please.') is an open question.

The child has revealed that daddy touches her. Without seeking clarification, we might assume that this child is being abused. If the child was then asked, 'does he do that often?' we are likely to get a yes or no response. A direct question does not allow for context; therefore, there is still not enough context around this statement to draw any

reasonable belief. By asking an open question such as, 'could you tell me a little bit more about that please?', it opens up the question to gather further information that is more likely to provide enough detail to make a decision.

For example, the child might say, 'he touches me on my back and rubs my back when I'm sad; it's not often that daddy touches me there, just when I'm really sad. And then he gives me a hug'. This context has provided enough information to determine that this is not concerning. Conversely, she might say, 'he rubs the inside of my leg up to my vagina every time he comes into my room at night'. This provides enough context to suggest that this is a concern. Open ended questions invite information and allow a child to say only what they wish to say.

Leading questions or loaded questions can be suggestive, particularly for younger children. A leading question is a type of question that prompts a respondent towards providing an already determined answer. If we use the 'daddy touches me' statement as an example, and we ask, 'does he do that at night-time?', this question is leading. It has suggested that the father touches the child at night-time. It is also a closed question that is likely to yield a yes or no response. Some children might say yes because they are being asked a direct question and want to appease the adult by saying what they think the adult wants to hear. Others might say yes because she was upset at night-time when her father came and rubbed her back to comfort her. Asking leading questions of the child may prejudice subsequent investigations.

It is sometimes appropriate to ask direct questions to a child if you have concerns about their safety and wellbeing, such as in instances where you think they are at risk of self-injurious behaviour or physical violence, or if you suspect they may be at risk of immediate harm if you do not gather this information quickly. For example, you believe that they may be about to enter an environment where they will come into contact with the perpetrator as they have indicated that their uncle is sexually abusing them and he is staying at their house.

Asking children direct questions about their safety is important in such instances. This is distinct from asking 'leading' questions in an investigative style (which should not occur). Decisions made about asking questions should depend on the nature of concerns and the context.

**Table 1: Examples of leading and open questions for a range of situations**

Examples of a child or young person's statement	Examples of leading questions/making assumptions	Examples of open-ended questions
I don't like my babysitter, she's weird.	What is your babysitter doing to you?	Why do you feel that way? Tell me what you mean by she is 'weird'.

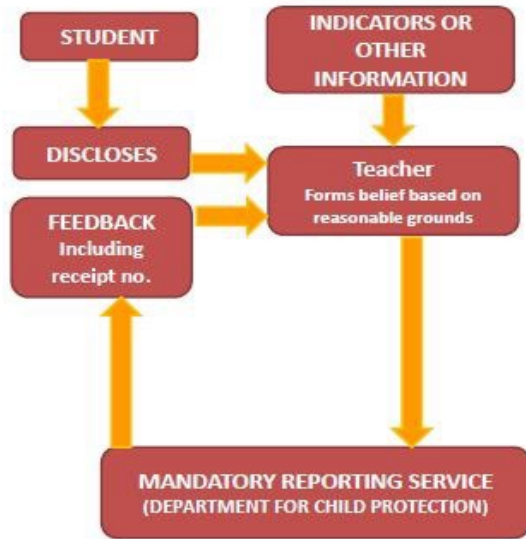


Examples of a child or young person's statement	Examples of leading questions/making assumptions	Examples of open-ended questions
		Explain to me what you mean by she is 'weird'.
A boy from school keeps texting me.	Is he sexting you?	Tell me more about that. Or describe to me what you mean by that. Or explain to me what he is texting you.
Uncle Sam is always looking down my tops. The other day he 'accidentally' touched my boob. He's such a perve. I hate him.	Is uncle Sam being sexual towards you?	Tell me more about this. Describe to me what you mean he 'accidentally' touched your boobs? Describe to me what being such a 'perve' means. How old is your uncle? Have you told anyone else about what has happened?
My friend's mum is so nice to me, she buys me gifts all the time and invites me over to spend time with her.	Is she trying to groom you? What is she trying to get you to do?	Tell me more about that.
I was touched inappropriately.	Were you touched on your penis?	Explain to me what you mean by 'inappropriately'?
I was sexually abused when I was 10.	Who raped you?	Tell me what you mean by sexually abused.
I was touched.	Did someone touch you on your vagina?	Tell me more about that. Or where were you touched? Or describe to me what happened. When did this happen?

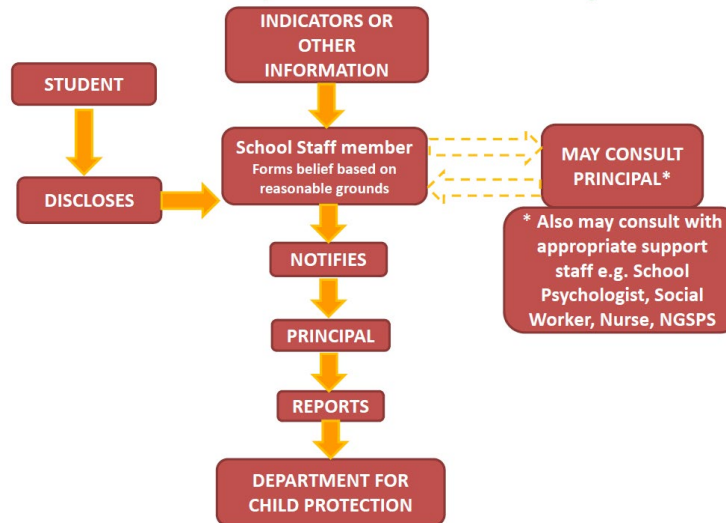
# APPENDIX C

## 1. Reporting Process For All Staff

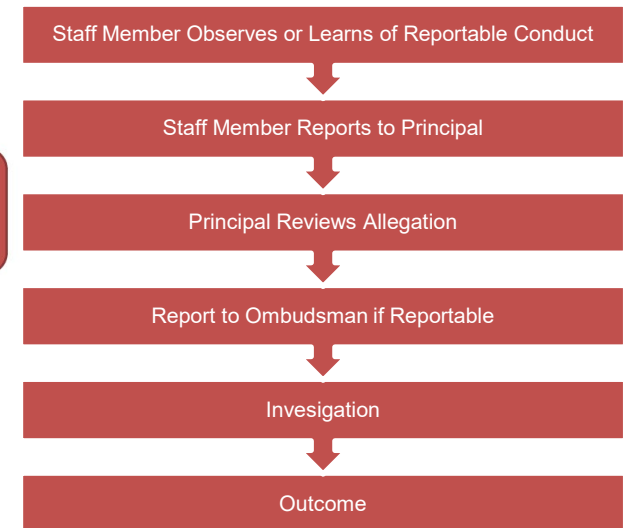
### MANDATORY REPORTING PROCEDURE



### NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE – CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT (NON-MANDATORY REPORT)



### Reportable Conduct Reporting Procedure



Staff	Reporting Sexual Abuse	Reporting Physical, Psychological, Emotional abuse or neglect	Reporting allegation of abuse perpetrated by staff (non sexual)	Reporting allegation of sexual abuse perpetrated by staff
<b>Teaching Staff (Mandatory reporters)</b>	<p><b>Mandatory Reporting Requirements</b></p> <p><b>Step 1 Suspicion of sexual abuse</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Document observations, information and/or disclosures on School Recording Form and provide to principal for storage.</li> <li>2. May consult prior to reporting.</li> </ol> <p><b>Step 2</b> When a belief is formed on reasonable grounds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Report online <a href="https://wa.gov.au/mandatoryreporting">https://wa.gov.au/mandatoryreporting</a> <b>OR</b></li> <li>2. Make verbal report to Mandatory Reporting Service (MRS). Ph: 1800 708 704 Note receipt number as proof of reporting <b>AND</b></li> <li>3. Verbal report must be followed by written report to MRS as soon as practicable <b>OR</b></li> <li>4. Provide principal with the written report to send to MRS <b>OR</b></li> <li>5. Make written report directly to MRS by faxing or posting Form in Appendix C (Fax: 1800 610 614)</li> <li>6. Inform principal that a report has been made and provide receipt number.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Step 1 Suspicion of abuse</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Document observations, information, disclosures on School Recording Form and provide to principal for storage.</li> </ol> <p><b>Step 2</b> When a belief is formed on reasonable grounds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. May consult prior to reporting.</li> <li>b. Report to principal/manager.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Step 1 Suspicion of abuse</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Document observations, information, disclosures on School Recording Form and provide to principal for storage.</li> </ol> <p><b>Step 2</b> When a belief is formed on reasonable grounds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. May consult with Standards and Integrity Directorate prior to reporting.</li> </ol> <p>T: 9264 4740 1800 791 197 (24 hours)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. Report to principal/manager or Standards and Integrity.</li> <li>f. If allegation concerns principal, report to Director Schools.</li> <li>g. Complete School Reporting Form for Abuse.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Step 1 Suspicion of sexual abuse</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>h. Document observations, information, disclosures on School Recording Form and provide to principal for storage.</li> </ol> <p><b>Step 2</b> When a belief is formed on reasonable grounds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. May consult with Mandatory Reporting Service or Standards and Integrity prior to reporting.</li> <li>j. Report to Mandatory Reporting Service.</li> <li>k. Report to principal/manager or Standards and Integrity.</li> <li>l. If allegation concerns principal, report to Director Schools.</li> </ol>

<p><b>Non-Teaching Staff (Non Mandatory reporters)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Document observations, information, disclosures on School Recording Form and provide to principal for storage.</li> <li>b. May consult before reporting to your principal/manager.</li> <li>c. Principal/manager to follow mandatory reporting procedure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Document observations, information, disclosures on School Recording Form and provide to principal for storage.</li> <li>e. May consult prior to reporting.</li> <li>a. Report to principal/manager</li> <li>b. Principal or reporter completes School Reporting Form for Child Abuse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Document observations, information, disclosures on School Recording Form and provide to principal for storage</li> <li>m. May consult with SID prior to reporting.</li> <li>n. Report to principal/manager or SID.</li> </ul> <p>If allegation concerns principal, report to Director Schools. Principal or reporter completes School Reporting form for Child Abuse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o. Document observations, information, disclosures on School Recording Form and provide to principal for storage.</li> <li>p. Report to principal/manager or SID</li> <li>q. If allegation concerns principal, report to Director Schools.</li> </ul> <p>May consult with SID prior to reporting.</p>
<p><b>Principal</b></p>	<p><b>8. Mandatory Reporting Requirements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. If requested, support mandatory reporters to make a verbal report directly to MRS. Do not make verbal report on reporter's behalf.</li> <li>10. Ph: 1800 708 704</li> <li>11. Forward written reports as soon as practicable after receiving the report to MRS Fax: 1800 610 614</li> <li>12. If allegation involves student to student sexual contact, seek advice from MRS or WA Police before informing the family.</li> <li>13. Lodge Online Incident Report and quote MRS receipt number. Print and store securely.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14. Forward all reports of physical, psychological or emotional abuse to DCP.</li> <li>15. Report physical abuse to DCP and WA Police as this may be a criminal matter.</li> <li>16. Seek advice from DCP or Police before informing the family.</li> <li>17. Lodge Online Incident Report. Print and store copy securely.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18. Report psychological or emotional abuse to Standards and Integrity Directorate.</li> <li>19. Report physical abuse to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. WA Police;</li> <li>b. SID;</li> <li>c. Director Schools; and</li> <li>d. DCP.</li> </ul> </li> <li>20. Lodge Online Incident Report. Print and store copy securely.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21. Report to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. WA Police;</li> <li>b. SID;</li> <li>c. Director Schools; and</li> <li>d. MRS</li> </ul> </li> <li>22. Lodge Online Incident Report and quote MRS receipt number. Print and store copy securely.</li> </ul>

