

Responding to abuse and neglect

Education and care induction

volunteer's handbook

This handbook is only for use in conjunction with the induction program of the same title



Government of South Australia

Department of Education and
Children's Services

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The legislation

Under Section 11 (1) and (2) of the *Children's Protection Act 1993*, the following people are obliged by law to notify Families SA if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child/young person has been or is being abused or neglected and the suspicion is formed in the course of the person's work (whether paid or voluntary) or in carrying out official duties. The person must notify the Department of that suspicion as soon as practicable after he or she forms the suspicion. **(13 1478 Child Abuse Report Line)**

(2) this section applies to the following persons:

- (a) a medical practitioner;
- (ab) a pharmacist;
- (b) a registered or enrolled nurse;
- (c) a dentist;
- (d) a psychologist;
- (e) police officer;
- (f) a community corrections officer (an officer or employee of an administrative unit of the Public Service whose duties include the supervision of young or adult offenders in the community);
- (g) a social worker;
- (ga) a minister of religion;
- (gb) a person who is an employee of, or volunteer in, an organisation formed for religious or spiritual purposes;
- (h) a teacher in an educational institution (including a kindergarten);
- (i) an approved family day care provider;
- (j) any other person who is an employee of, or volunteer in, a Government department, agency or instrumentality, or local government or non-government organisation that provides health, welfare, education, sporting or recreational, child care or residential services wholly or partly for children, being a person who:
 - (i) is engaged in the actual delivery of those services to children; or
 - (ii) holds a management position in the relevant organisation the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of those services to children.

(3) A notification under this section must be accompanied by a statement of the observations, information and opinions on which the suspicion is based.

(5) A person does not necessarily exhaust his or her duty of care to a child by giving a notification under this section.

The image shows a 'Mandatory Notification Record' form. It includes sections for 'Personal Information' (Name, Address, Date of Birth, Telephone, Email, Gender, Ethnicity, Language Spoken at Home, Date of Birth, Date of Notification) and 'Type of Notification' (Child Abuse, Child Neglect, Child Sexual Abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Sexual Assault, Child Sexual Abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Sexual Assault, Child Sexual Abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Sexual Assault). There are also checkboxes for 'Family Abuse' and 'Child Abuse'.

Definitions and indicators of abuse

Legal definition of abuse and neglect

Abuse or neglect, in relation to a child, means:

- (a) sexual abuse of the child; or
- (b) physical or emotional abuse of the child, or neglect of the child, to the extent that
 - (i) the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, physical or psychological injury detrimental to the child's wellbeing; or
 - (ii) the child's physical or psychological development is in jeopardy and 'abused' or 'neglected' has a corresponding meaning.

(Section 6 (1) *Children's Protection Act 1993*)

General definitions of abuse and neglect

Physical abuse is commonly characterised by physical injury resulting from practices such as:

- hitting, punching, kicking, throwing
- shaking (particularly young babies)
- burning, biting, pulling out hair
- alcohol or other drug administration.

Sexual abuse occurs when someone in a position of power to the child uses her/his power to involve the child in sexual activity. Behaviour can include:

- sexual suggestion
- exhibitionism, mutual masturbation, oral sex
- showing pornographic material (eg DVD's internet)
- using children in the production of pornographic material
- penile or other penetration of the genital or anal region
- child prostitution.

Emotional abuse tends to be a chronic behavioural pattern directed at a child whereby a child's self esteem and social competence are undermined or eroded over time. Behaviours may include:

- devaluing
- ignoring

- rejecting
- corrupting
- isolating
- terrorising – causing a child to feel constant fear and anxiety
- chronic or extreme spousal abuse in the child's presence.

Neglect is characterised by the failure to provide for the child's basic needs. Behaviours may include:

- inadequate supervision of young children for long periods of time
- failure to provide adequate nutrition, clothing or personal hygiene
- failure to provide needed or appropriate healthcare/medical treatment
- disregard for potential hazards in the home
- forcing the child to leave home early
- allowing children to engage in chronic truancy.

High risk infants

High risk infants are children of less than one year of age, for whom there is serious concern for their immediate and ongoing safety. This concern may arise from a specific incident of abuse and neglect.

Alternatively, it may come from situations where parental behaviour and circumstance places the infant at risk of harm. The infant at risk factors include:

- significant alcohol or other substance abuse by carers
- interpersonal/domestic violence
- mental health of carers
- attachment relationships
- abuse of previous children by carers
- intellectual capacity of carers
- experience of childhood abuse by carer
- parenting abilities
- housing and physical environment
- income and financial management
- age/maturity of carers
- social supports.

Key indicators of abuse, neglect and family violence

**The key message about indicators is to appreciate patterns and clusters of behaviours.
The best way to appreciate clusters is to always consult with the nominated staff member who will liaise with others.**

Possible behavioural indicators of children and young people experiencing abuse, neglect or family violence

- difficulty accepting responsibility for their behaviour
- struggle when receiving any kind of feedback
- difficulty in understanding the feelings of others
- struggling to name their own feelings
- damage to property, stealing property (eg food)
- harm others without feeling remorse
- appear to not follow rules
- easily influenced by others
- find it hard to trust
- struggle to give reasons for their behaviour
- trust too much and allow themselves to be exploited
- withdrawn 'absent' manner
- low self esteem
- suffer sleep disturbance
- act in ways that make others feel uncomfortable or stressed
- change from calm to angry very quickly
- struggle to be a part of group activities
- difficulty making and keeping friends
- run away
- difficulty in concentrating, remembering and learning
- hyper-vigilant (seeming to constantly scan for threat)
- sexual behaviour – inappropriate for age, inappropriately directed (eg at younger children or teacher) excessive, violent, coercive, compulsive and threatening
- tiredness
- overly protective of younger siblings
- unusually fearful of having nappy changed
- wary of physical contact with others
- age inappropriate bed wetting, soiling or smearing
- bullying and aggression
- engage in high risk behaviours (eg alcohol/ substance abuse, offending and self harm)
- suicidal thoughts
- chronic absenteeism/irregular attendance
- unresponsive to 'normal' motivating teaching strategies.

Possible physical indicators of children and young people experiencing abuse, neglect or family violence

- bruising, burns, scalds, lacerations, abrasions, fractures and broken bones
- eating disorders
- consistently dirty/unwashed
- medically unexplained problems in eating or swallowing
- delay in physical development
- multiple injuries
- urinary tract infections/sexually transmitted diseases
- pregnancy
- medical conditions related to poor hygiene
- unattended physical conditions or illnesses
- unexplained failure to thrive
- evidence of hair being pulled out, bald patches.

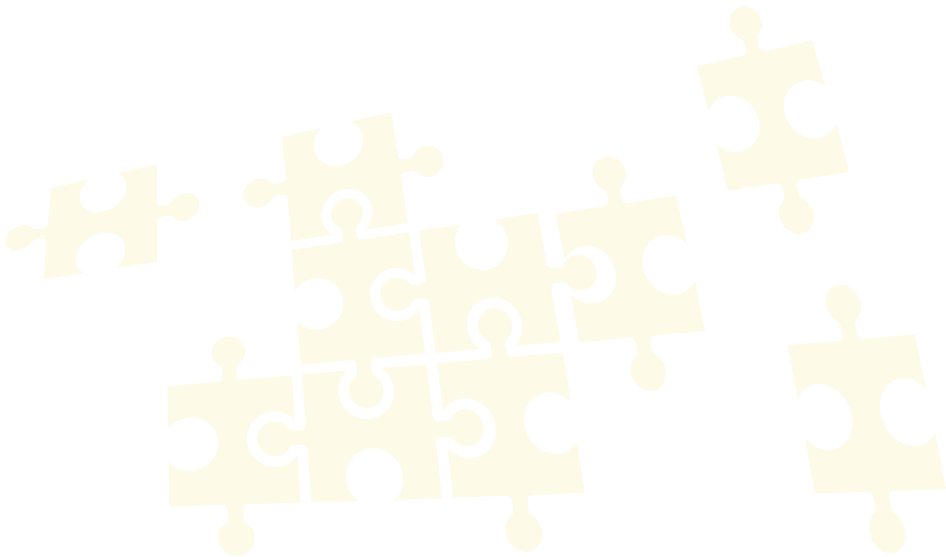
Parent/carer behaviours as indicators

- appear unconcerned about the child/young person's condition/situation
- believe in corporal punishment
- belittle the child/young person
- delay seeking medical help or advice
- excessively critical of child/young person
- favours other children/young people in family
- ignorant of child/young person's developmental stages and needs
- inattentive
- isolates child/young person from social and peer activity
- low self esteem
- does not attend site appointments
- offers illogical accounts of injuries
- poor impulse control
- family violence
- uses multiple health services for child/young person.

Suspicion on reasonable grounds

You have suspicion on reasonable grounds to report child abuse or neglect when:

- a child/young person tells you that she/he has been abused;
- your own observation of the behaviour of a particular child/young person and/or injuries, or your knowledge of the child generally leads you to suspect that abuse is occurring;
- a child/young person tells you she/he knows someone who has been abused (the child may be referring to herself/himself);
- someone else tells you of the abuse who is in a position to provide reliable information (perhaps a relative, friend, neighbour or sibling of the child/young person).



Responding to children and young people

Sometimes children and young people use the opportunities that arise in education and care settings to share personal information. Recognising and respecting the significance of those moments for children and young people is part of the adult's duty of care.

Sometimes what is shared will be about abuse or neglect. The way adults respond in these situations is very important to the long term safety and wellbeing of the child/young person. Your role in these situations is to do everything you can to enable the young person to share what they wish to share. This means listening respectfully, showing you care by your manner and allowing them time.

If you suspect that abuse is being disclosed, your role is not to investigate. This means you don't ask leading questions and you don't interview other people to verify what you suspect or have been told. Using open questions is the best way to support children and young people and helps avoid compromising formal investigations by other agencies.

What are leading and open questions?

Leading questions can usually be answered by a "yes" or "no". Leading questions *offer* information and ideas (put words in people's mouths).

Open questions invite information and allow the individual to only say what they wish to say. Open questions keep the conversation open and are rarely answered by a "yes" or "no".

For example:

Child's statement	Leading question	Open question
I don't like my uncle looking after me.	Does he make you afraid?	How does he make you feel?
I don't want to work, my hand hurts.	Is that a cigarette burn on your hand? Did mum or dad do that to you?	Your hand looks sore; how did it happen?

Safe question styles

- “What are/were you feeling ...?”
- “What are/were you thinking ...?”
- “Tell me more about ...?”

What might the child or young person be feeling?

A child may experience a range of emotions when disclosing abuse or neglect, including:

- **guilt** – children often blame themselves for the abuse and may feel guilty for telling someone about it
- **shame** – children are often ashamed of the abuse itself, particularly sexual abuse
- **confusion** – children are often confused about their feelings for the perpetrator
- **fear** – children are often fearful of the repercussions of telling. They may be scared of the perpetrator, that the abuse may recur or that their family will break up.

Summary guide of the dos and don'ts of appropriate responding when abuse and neglect is disclosed or suspected

Do

- respect the enormity of what is being shared with you
- listen with care, show care and only ask open questions
- be patient, don't rush them or yourself
- record what you have been told
- speak with the nominated staff member asap to help you determine the next actions
- look after yourself, seek support from the nominated staff member.

Don't

- stop the child/young person from talking
- act scared or shocked
- doubt the child (question the validity of their story)
- threaten to harm or punish the perpetrator
- promise that everything will be fine, they will be safe, happy, better
- ask leading questions or interview others (investigate matters further)
- leave the child/young person alone or let them leave the site if you are worried about their immediate safety.

Will the Child Abuse Report Line disclose my identity as the notifier?

Your identity will not be disclosed to any other person unless the disclosure is made in the course of official duties.

Information concerning the identity of the notifier can therefore be released if:

- police need to know in order to further investigations of a criminal nature
- the courts deem the identity to be evidence that is important to its proceedings
- the notifier gives permission for her/his details to be released.



Maintaining professional boundaries with children/young people

The document *Protective Practices for Staff in their Interactions with students – Guidelines for Schools Preschools and Out of School Hours Care* describes the professional practice expectations of staff and volunteers in Government, Catholic and Independent school sectors. It is available at <http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/speced2/pages/childprotection/>

All people working and volunteering in education and care environments are expected to maintain professional practice in their interactions with children and young people. This represents a key component of their duty of care towards the wellbeing and safety of children and young people.

This responsibility not only refers to expectations about their own conduct but also to their responsibility to intervene in the conduct of other adults. All volunteers should ensure they understand their responsibility to report the unprofessional behaviour of other adults.

Any organisation where children and young people are cared for—whether government or non-government, religious or secular—is vulnerable to being targeted by individuals who wish to offend against children and young people.

Boundary	Example of violation
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inappropriate comments about a student’s appearance including excessive flattering comments• Inappropriate conversation or enquiries of a sexual nature (eg questions about a student’s sexuality)• Use of inappropriate pet names• Vilification or humiliation• Jokes or innuendo of a sexual nature• Obscene gestures and language• Facilitating access to pornographic or overtly sexual material• Failing to stop sexual harassment between students• Correspondence of a personal nature including letters, email, phone, SMS text (not including class postcards/bereavement cards, etc).

Boundary	Example of violation
Personal disclosure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing personal details of lifestyle of self or others. It may be appropriate and necessary at times, however, to draw on relevant personal life experiences when teaching • Sharing of personal information about other staff or students.
Physical contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwarranted, unwanted and/or inappropriate touching of a student personally or with objects (eg pencil or ruler) • Initiating or permitting inappropriate physical contact by a student (eg massage, tickling games).
Place (without Pre/school's Authority)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting/allowing/encouraging students to the adult's home • Attending students' homes or social gatherings for personal reasons • Being alone with a student outside of the adult's responsibilities • Watching students in a change room when not in a supervisory role • Driving a student unaccompanied.
Targeting individual students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutoring (outside education sectors' directives) • Personal gifts and special favours • Adopting a welfare role that is the responsibility of another staff member (eg counsellor), or doing so without the knowledge of key staff members.

What should staff do if they become aware of inappropriate adult behaviour?

All volunteers must take action if they observe or are told about inappropriate behaviours of other adults on the site. It is not acceptable to minimise, ignore or delay responding to such information. For the wellbeing of all members of the site community the nominated staff member must be notified as a matter of urgency.

Core messages

- Enjoy your volunteering with children and young people and the contribution you make to their safety, wellbeing and learning.
- Any concerns you have about children, young people or adults at the site should be referred to the site's nominated staff member as soon as possible. Never act alone.
- If children/young people share concerning personal information with you, respond in a supportive way. Showing you care is very important to their wellbeing. Talk with the nominated staff member as soon as possible.
- Confidentiality is critical. Respect the sensitivity of the personal information you have by not discussing it with people other than the nominated staff member.

