

Supporting families following a serious incident

What happens when a serious incident involving your child occurs at an early childhood education or outside school hours care service in NSW.

We recognise that this may be a difficult time for you and your family and would like to assure you that we are here to support you and will always act in the best interests of your child.

The department assesses and investigates incidents that have occurred in education and care services. When determining the outcome of an incident, we will consider the circumstances of each case and the risk to children.

If the incident raises concerns about the health, safety or wellbeing of a child, we may notify other agencies including the Office of the Children's Guardian, the Department of Communities and Justice or the Police.

The process the department takes when investigating an incident will depend on who reported the incident:

Reported by you

When you [contact the department to report an incident](#), a case will be created and you will be given a case number.

Within 24 hours of the case being created, you will be contacted by the department so further information can be gathered.

- o At this point, you can decide whether you wish to receive further contact from the department. If you do not wish to receive further contact, we will not contact you until an outcome for the case has been reached.

The department will then assess the case and contact you within 3 – 10 business days to advise you of the assessment outcome. The outcome can be classified as either:

No further action

We will advise you of this outcome.

Requiring further action

If further action is required you will be:

- o Informed of the further action being taken and offered support within 3 business days.
- o Updated on any progress of the action being taken.
- o Contacted when the action being taken is complete and an outcome of the case has been reached.

You may also be required to provide further information.

Reported by service

When a service reports an incident to the department, we are in contact with them during the incident assessment process. All services are required to notify the department of serious incidents that occur, such as illness, trauma or the need for medical treatment.

In most instances these incidents occur through no fault of the service or its staff. However, there are some cases where we will follow up the serious incident with an investigation.

In these cases, if we contact you, we will be guided by the following principles.

Respectful treatment: we will treat all families with courtesy, respect and understanding.

Good communication: we will keep families informed about the status of the investigation of a serious incident. This will be done by providing the family with:

- o notification of the incident within 24 hours
- o information about the investigation process
- o information on support resources
- o a contact point for enquiries
- o an expected timeframe to finalise the investigation
- o updates on the investigation at regular intervals
- o information on the outcome of the investigation (to the extent possible)
- o information about internal and external avenues of review or access to information where available.

Accountability: we will ensure that staff who conduct investigations are appropriately trained and skilled.

Timeliness: we will deal with the investigation of a serious incident as soon as possible. If there are unavoidable delays in dealing with an investigation we will inform the family and explain the reasons.

Who to contact

For questions on reporting incidents

- o NSW Department of Education: 1800 619 113 or via ececd@det.nsw.edu.au
- o NSW Police: contact Triple Zero (000) in an emergency. For general enquiries call the Police Assistance Line on 131 444
- o NSW Department of Communities and Justice (Child Protection): 132 111

For support

- o Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800
- o Lifeline: 13 11 14
- o Mental health line: 1800 011 511