

# Responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse

As a staff member in an early childhood education and care and outside school hours care (ECEC) service, you must talk to someone if you are concerned or have a suspicion that a child is at risk of abuse, harm, neglect or ill-treatment. You must make a report if you believe a child may be at risk, even if you have not seen the abuse occur.

This resource should be used as a guide, in conjunction with your service's policies and procedures.

## 1 Responding to an emergency

*If there is no risk of immediate harm, go to Action 2.*

If you are concerned that a child's immediate health or safety is compromised, **contact 000 for urgent medical or police assistance.**

Ensure the child feels safe and follow advice from emergency services.

## 2 Reporting to the relevant authorities

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, you must report all incidents, allegations and complaints. Failure to report assault or child sexual abuse may amount to a criminal offence under the *Crimes Act 1900*. Depending on the circumstances, reports to multiple authorities may be required. Reporting requirements can differ based on where the alleged abuse occurred:

### At an ECEC service

#### Report to management

You must report to your approved provider.

#### NSW Police

You must report all instances (alleged or witnessed) of child abuse, including assault or sexual abuse (including grooming).

#### NSW Department of Communities and Justice (Child Protection Helpline)

As a mandatory reporter\*, you must report if a child is considered to be at risk of significant harm - [reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/](http://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/)

#### NSW Department of Education

Services must report incidents, allegations or complaints to the department through NQA ITS\*\* at [acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-agenda-it-system](http://acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-agenda-it-system)

#### NSW Office of the Children's Guardian (Reportable Conduct Scheme)

Any reportable allegation or conviction involving a staff member, volunteer or contractor must be reported within 7 business days.

### At home or in the community

#### NSW Police

All adults in NSW are required to report information to police if they know, believe or reasonably ought to know that a child has been physically or sexually abused (including grooming) to NSW Police.

#### NSW Department of Communities and Justice (Child Protection Helpline)

As a mandatory reporter\*, you must report if a child known to you is considered to be at risk of significant harm.

#### Report to management

If the child attends the ECEC service at which you work, you should notify the approved provider so your service can consider any follow up actions or relevant supports as needed.

\*Educators working in early childhood education and care and outside school hours care services are 'mandatory reporters' under NSW child protection law. Mandatory reporters must make a report when they have concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child. The Mandatory Reporter Guide should be used on each occasion where there are concerns for a child, as every circumstance is unique.

\*\*Mobile and occasional care services should use the notification forms found at [https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/investigation-feedback-and-complaints/regulation-assessment-and-rating/approvals-process#sidenavigation\\_auto](https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/investigation-feedback-and-complaints/regulation-assessment-and-rating/approvals-process#sidenavigation_auto)

## 3 Contacting parents/ carers

Always consult with the relevant authorities to understand what information can be shared and when, as this can impact any ongoing investigations.

You may be advised to:

- not contact the parent or carer (for example, in situations where they are alleged to have engaged in abuse); or
- to contact the parent or carer and provide agreed information as soon as possible.

## 4 Providing ongoing support

Often support will be required for children, families and staff following an incident.

Support might include counselling, access to community services or more information.

Scan the QR code for information on some available counselling and support organisations.



## Contact

### NSW Police

- Contact Triple Zero (000) in an emergency
- If not an emergency, make a report by calling or attending your local Police station
- For general enquiries, call the Police Assistance Line on 131 444
- If you are unsure if it is a criminal matter, speak with your supervisor. If in doubt, report the matter to your local Police

### NSW Department of Communities and Justice (Child Protection)

- Use the NSW Mandatory Reporter Guide at [reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg](http://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg)
- Call the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111

### NSW Department of Education

- Make a report at [acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-agenda-it-system](http://acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-agenda-it-system)
- If unsure call 1800 619 113 or email [ececd@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:ececd@det.nsw.edu.au)

### NSW Office of the Children's Guardian (Reportable Conduct Scheme)

- Call (02) 8219 3800 or email [reportableconduct@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au](mailto:reportableconduct@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au)

## 5 Debrief and critical reflection

After every critical incident, you should ensure staff are provided the support they need.

Critically reflecting on the incident in a manner that respects the privacy and confidentiality of the incident is recommended to inform required changes to policies, procedures, practices and risk assessments.