

PROTECTING CHILDREN IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

Children and young people rely on responsible adults to help them be safe.

- Focus on the best interests of the child or young person.
- Listen carefully to what they say.
- Write down the information.

If your agency has child protection guidelines, refer to them.

Ask yourself:

- Is the child behaving or saying things which suggests abuse or neglect?
- Does new information increase your concern about the child?
- Do you continue to worry after the child visits your service?
- Do you need to 'do something' to help the child?

ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Physical abuse - being severely hurt or injured - excessive physical punishment, beating, shaking babies, giving alcohol and drugs, strangling, scalding/burning, punching, leaving a child alone in a car.

Sexual abuse - being touched or involved in sexual activities not appropriate to the child's age and development - sexual penetration, inappropriate touching, seeing sexual acts or pornographic materials.

Emotional abuse - being repeatedly treated in ways that damages a child's ability to feel and express a range of emotions - verbal abuse, rejection, threatening, bullying and teasing.

Psychological abuse - being repeatedly treated in ways that damages the child's self esteem, personal and moral development and intelligence - belittling, causing the child to feel worthless, unloved, dumb and having no self value.

Neglect - not providing enough care or supervision so that the child is injured or their development is damaged - lack of food, shelter or affection, no one providing supervision, untreated medical problems, abandonment.

WHAT TO DO WHEN...

You are worried but there is nothing specific to report:

- Try to stay in touch with the family.
- Talk about services which can help families.
- Encourage their involvement in parenting activities.
- Link them with community groups from similar cultural or religious backgrounds.
- Link the family with day care or play activities.
- Talk with someone experienced in supporting families or in child protection (a colleague, or worker in another agency).

You can describe the abuse or neglect, or the risk.

Contact:

- the Department for Child Protection;
- after hours Crisis Care; or
- the Police if concerned about the child's **immediate** safety or where criminal acts have occurred.

A child tells you he or she has been abused:

- Believe them.
- Let the child know that:
 - Δ It's not their fault.
 - Δ Telling you is the right thing to do.
 - Δ You will need to tell the authorities to stop the abuse.
- Let them use their own words. You may need to ask open questions (what? when? who? etc) to work out if they need immediate protection by the authorities. Avoid asking questions that may lead or influence their response or that provide you with more details than you need.
- Contact the Department for Child Protection.
- Only discuss the child's situation with people dealing with this matter.



REFERRING TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR CHILD PROTECTION

An officer will discuss your concerns and ask about:

- The child's details.
- Why you believe the child has been abused or neglected, or is at risk.
- The child's immediate risk.
- The person suspected of causing the harm.
- Your ongoing contact with the child.

The Department will make decisions about the kind of action that needs to be taken.

There is
LEGAL PROTECTION
for people who provide information to the
Department for Child Protection
'in good faith'.

CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

Department for Child Protection

Contact the district office closest to where the child lives.
See the White Pages or www.childprotection.wa.gov.au.

Crisis Care - 24 hour telephone service
(08) 9223 1111 or free call 1800 199 008

Family Helpline
(08) 9223 1100 or free call 1800 643 000

Western Australia Police
131 444 or 000 (emergencies only)

Parenting Line
(08) 6279 1200 or free call 1800 654 432

Kids Helpline
1800 55 1800