

# Responding to and Reporting Suspected Child Abuse<sup>1</sup>

## If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you

- Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, or the police.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information on the Sentral Wellbeing Module child safety incident portal, (mark as confidential) using the child's words and report the disclosure to the Principal/ Assistant Principal, police or child protection.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

## If a parent/carer says their child has been abused in your organisation or raises a concern

- Explain that your organisation has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the Principal/Assistant Principal, the police or child protection.
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together.
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately and that the record is stored securely (mark as confidential). Record the incident on the Sentral Wellbeing Module (child safety incident portal).

## Considerations

- Some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse. For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking with police, and communicating in English may be a barrier for some. You need to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible.
- If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal child, you will need to ensure a culturally appropriate response. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal children, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisations to review policies and procedures.
- Some children with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. You need to ensure that the needs of the child are met and they are supported appropriately to disclose the incident.

## Legal responsibilities

This procedure should be read in conjunction with the Mandatory Reporting Policy Child Abuse<sup>1</sup> -

Child abuse can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, grooming, emotional or psychological harm, neglect or family violence. It doesn't have to involve physical contact or force.

Child abuse can include:

- talking to a child in a sexually explicit way
- grooming a child for future sexual activity
- forcing a child to watch pornography
- being witness to family violence
- failing to provide a child with an adequate standard of nutrition, supervision or medical care to the extent that the development of the child is placed at serious risk, or is significantly impaired.