

Seeking Advice and Notifying Child Abuse



CHILD PROTECTION INFORMATION SHEET

If you need general information or advice about the issue of child abuse or neglect -

- contact the Child Protection Advice and Referral Service (CPAARS). This is the 'intake service' for Child and Family Services (CFS) in DHHS
- use hypothetical examples in preference to real cases – do not identify children

If a child discloses abuse or his or her behaviour concerns you –

- be supportive and listen carefully
- convey belief
- do not quiz
- validate decision to tell
- make no promises
- explain to the child what will happen next

Record statements or observations in writing

- what was seen or heard
- date/time/when/where
- signs/behaviours
- what you said or did at this point

Determine if there are reasonable grounds to notify

- 'knowledge', 'suspicion' or 'belief' are sufficient
- do not need 'proof' or sufficient evidence for court

Prepare to report your concern

- if child is in immediate danger, notify Tas Police and CPAARS (let them know police are aware)
- if uncertain about whether to notify – or who to notify, consult with senior staff member
- discuss your grounds for knowledge, suspicion or belief
- agree who will make the notification (and when) – the child may be included
- confirm and organise immediate support needs for child
- schedule sufficient time to make a comprehensive report (in the future this may be possible online)
- it is advisable, but not mandatory under the Act, to inform your supervisor, manager or senior

Contact Child Protection Advice and Referral Service (CPAARS)

- Telephone 1300 737 639
- Fax 03 6230 7821
- Email cpaars@dhhs.tas.gov.au

In your initial contact with CPAARS

- provide comprehensive information about the suspected abuse or neglect
- contribute knowledge, insight and experience to a collaborative discussion and risk assessment according to the Tasmanian Risk Framework
- consult and clarify issues around informing parents, police etc
- CPAARS will provide follow-up information about what will happen next

Feedback to Notifiers

The amount of information that can be shared with a notifier concerning statutory child protection intervention will depend on the nature and type of involvement that the notifier has with the child and family.

It is possible to share more information with services that are assisting the family and child or with protective members of the immediate and extended family than is it with concerned members of the general public who make a report

Confidentiality

provide information to other staff or volunteers, friends and community representatives on a 'need to know' basis

Interviews of children

If the child is to be interviewed at school or at an agency, the following processes will occur:

- the child's permission will be sought and he or she will be asked to nominate a support person. Children and young people **MUST** have a support person during an interview.
- if the support person is a relative or close friend, child protection may be consulted
- in the absence of an appropriate support person, the school principal or other senior manager or supervisor of the service should attend
- child protection staff will clarify the interview process - venue, right of child to refuse, role of support person, advice to parents, involvement of police (if appropriate) etc

Throughout the process

- acknowledge that this is a traumatic experience for all involved, especially the child
- support child, self and colleagues throughout the intervention.