

Reporting Child Abuse: Frequently Asked Questions

CHILD PROTECTION INFORMATION SHEET

Which service in DHHS do I contact if I know or think a child is at risk of abuse or neglect?

- If you believe a criminal assault of a child has taken place, call the police. If you are not sure, or believe that a child is at risk of abuse or neglect from their parents or caregivers, call the **Child Protection Advice and Referral Service (CPAARS)** in DHHS.
- CPAARS receives enquiries and reports ('notifications') made during business hours Monday to Friday. CPAARS is a central statewide service for Tasmania that does most of its work via the telephone or email. The telephone number is: **1300 737 639** and fax number: (03) 6230 7821.

If I make a notification to CPAARS, will they visit the child or family?

- **NO**, CPAARS staff do not conduct face-to-face investigations of suspected child abuse. However, they will carry out an initial assessment of the risk to the child using an evidence-based risk assessment tool based on the information in your report and existing child protection records.

Are all notifications followed up by a face-to-face investigation by child protection staff?

- NO, each notification is documented and the case may be closed at CPAARS with no further action by child protection, if the initial risk assessment concludes that it is not appropriate or necessary for a face-to-face investigation to take place.
- The case may be referred to another service in the government or community that can provide more appropriate support and assistance to the child or family. The case may also be referred to the police by CPAARS
- If the initial risk assessment at CPAARS indicates that a face-to-face investigation is necessary, the case will be referred to local Child Protection offices in the North, North West or South for contact with the child, their family and other people involved in the situation to determine the level of risk or harm to the child.

What can I be told about how my notification was dealt with?

- The amount of information that can be shared with you is restricted by legislation and it depends on the type of involvement you have with the family or child. It is possible to share more

information with services or professionals assisting the family or child than it is with concerned members of the public who notify.

- The Tasmanian child protection service operates under publicly available guidelines that interpret the confidentiality requirements of the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997*.
- When you make a notification, please discuss your expectations about future feedback regarding the matter, and ask for this to be recorded by CPAARS.

What is a 'mandated' reporter or notifier?

- Under the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997*, some people are required to report their belief or suspicion that a child is at risk of abuse. These people are known as 'mandated' reporters or notifiers and they include doctors, nurses, police officers, teachers and people who are employed or volunteer in government or community services funded by the Government that provide services to children.

What is the best way for a 'mandated' notifier to make a notification?

- If you are involved in providing a service to the child or family, it is preferred if you take the time to fill out a Notification Form which is available from CPAARS (or via the DHHS internet). This will highlight relevant aspects of the child's current situation and key elements of risk.
- It will help CPAARS document your concerns quickly and accurately and provide you with a record of your notification. This provides verification that you have complied with the law. The receipt will be the item in your email or your fax confirmation report.
- Please also call CPAARS once you have sent the report and ask to discuss it with a duty worker. Consistent with the Act, CPAARS staff are encouraged to ask other services to help with the care and protection of children so you can expect to be asked to help if that is appropriate in the circumstances.

What can I do if I am not happy with the response I get from CPAARS?

- It is not uncommon for notifiers and CPAARS to hold different views about assessment of risk and the most appropriate response to a situation. Often service providers feel that child protection services should be more directly involved. CPAARS has a process to manage concerns or complaints about its service provision and this is available on request.

What happens if I need to make a notification after hours?

- After hours calls to the CPAARS number are automatically switched through to Child Protection offices in the North, North West or South. Each local area provides a limited emergency after hours service for urgent child protection notifications only.
- As the after hours emergency service is limited, please make contact with CPAARS during business hours.

What do I do if I am not happy with the service I receive after hours?

- If you have a complaint about the emergency after hours service, this should be directed to the Child Protection office in your local area – please see contact telephone numbers listed below.

What do I do if I have already made a notification and the situation changes, with increased risk to a child?

- Situations involving vulnerable children often change. If you are a service provider who is aware of any change, which escalates the risk to a child, it is important to make another notification that describes this risk.

What happens when CPAARS refers a notification to a local Child Protection office for investigation?

- If the initial risk assessment at CPAARS results in the judgement that a referral should be made to the local Child Protection office for face-to-face investigation, it will have been given a priority rating to reflect the level of urgency for starting the investigation.
- Priority 1 cases are the most urgent and Priority 3 reflects the lowest level of risk for cases requiring intervention. Due to workload pressures, it is possible that less urgent cases may be placed on a waiting list.

What is the role of staff in the local Child Protection offices?

- Child Protection Workers in Assessment Services are allocated a case when it is referred from CPAARS. These staff members, who are authorised under the Act, then conduct a protective investigation of the matter.
- This generally includes a face-to-face interview with the child and his or her family.
- In consultation with the family (where possible), child's community network, senior staff, child protection specialists, external professionals and other service representatives, as necessary, a judgement will be made to determine whether any form of short or longer-term protective intervention by the statutory service is in the child's best interests.

If my notification has been referred to one of the local Child Protection offices, how can I find out what is happening?

- When a referral has been made by CPAARS to specialist child protection assessment workers in the local office, queries about progress are best directed to the relevant office.
- Contact details for all sections within the child protection service in Tasmania are listed below

What will my role be if the matter is referred to the local Child Protection office?

- If you continue to have contact with the child and family, please continue to assist with the provision of a safe, nurturing and supportive environment around him or her and the family.
- Remember, child protection is everyone's business and we can all make a difference by learning more about the needs of children.

Child Protection in Tasmania

State Manager, Child and Family Services

State Office:

4th Floor 34 Davey Street, Hobart 7000

Tel: (03) 6233 4928

Child Protection Advice and Referral Service (CPAARS)

Telephone 1300 737 639

Fax 03 6230 7821

Email cpaars@dhhs.tas.gov.au

Child Protection North

Telephone 6336 2376

Child Protection South

Telephone 6230 7650

Child Protection North West

Telephone 6434 6308