

# What is Child Abuse?

## CHILD PROTECTION INFORMATION SHEET

### What is Child Abuse?

- Abuse or neglect includes sexual abuse and/or physical or emotional injury to the extent that the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, harm detrimental to his/her well being or development.
- Neglect can take many forms and it is extremely damaging to children.

### Why should I report?

- Children and young people have the right to emotional and physical safety at all times.
- Reporting an incident may also:
  - ✓ uncover serious hidden abuse
  - ✓ prevent serious injury or death through early intervention
  - ✓ assist professionals by allowing them to tell families they are required by law to report
  - ✓ understand the extent and nature of the problem

### Who has responsibility to report?

- The *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997* legally requires members of certain professions within the community to report suspected abuse or neglect of children to a statutory authority
- For example, all employees within the Department of Health and Human Services and the Education Department are mandated to report their knowledge, belief or suspicion that a child has suffered, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect

### What about members of the public?

- While mandated reporters have a legal responsibility to report, all adults in the community share a community responsibility to report their concern. The Act states that:
  - ✓ *“An adult who knows, or believes or suspects on reasonable grounds, that a child is suffering from, has suffered or is likely to suffer abuse or neglect has a responsibility to take steps to prevent the occurrence or further occurrence of the abuse or neglect.”*

### What are ‘reasonable grounds’ for suspecting abuse?

- A child tells you he/she has suffered non-accidental physical injury, neglect, sexual abuse, and/or severe emotional abuse.
- Someone else tells you that a child has been abused
- Your own observations of the child’s physical condition or behaviours lead you to believe that the child has suffered non-accidental physical injury or sexual abuse or neglect

### If I am not sure, can I talk to someone in DHHS about it?

- If in doubt about whether or not to notify, telephone child protection and discuss the case anonymously with a worker. This should help you make the decision.

### What are the legal and ethical issues around reporting?

- You cannot be sued or have defamation charges made against you for reporting your concerns to Child Protection.
- In fact you may well be legally obligated to report and may be held accountable if you fail to do so.
- If you are legally required to notify, this overrides any confidentiality requirements that may otherwise govern your behaviour in this regard.
- It is illegal for the child protection program to identify the notifier

### How and where should I report?

- In cases of actual or suspected child abuse or neglect contact:

### Child Protection Advice and Referral Service (CPAARS)

Ph: 1300 737 639

Fax: 62 307 821

Email: [CPAARS@dhhs.tas.gov.au](mailto:CPAARS@dhhs.tas.gov.au)

*These telephone numbers are switched through to an emergency service outside of business hours. If it is safe and practical to do so, please report during business hours.*

### Where can I find out more information on child abuse?

See the DHHS internet or explore the websites for NAPCAN  
Australian Institute of Family Studies  
Child Abuse Prevention Services or  
Australian Childhood Foundation