

Flowchart for Reporting Guidelines

RECEIVING A DISCLOSURE

Remain calm and find a private place to talk
Explain why you can't keep it a secret
Only ask enough questions to confirm the need to report the matter
Do not attempt to conduct your own investigation



DOCUMENTING A DISCLOSURE

Complete an incident report form and include:
Time, date and place of the disclosure
'Word for word' what happened and what was said, including anything you said
and any actions that have been taken
Date of report and signature



REPORTING A DISCLOSURE

Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) - 1800 811 810
Queensland Police Service (enter local police station details here)



FOLLOWING A DISCLOSURE

Support and counselling will be offered to all parties involved.
The policies and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm are to
be reviewed.

Policy and Procedures for Handling Disclosures or Suspicions of Harm

The following policy and procedures will ensure that staff respond as quickly as possible and in the best interests of the child or young person under 18 years of age, when disclosures or suspicions of harm are received. Our organisation recognises that children and young people are vulnerable members of the community and that extra measures must be taken to protect and support them.

Policy

All staff will receive training in identifying risks of harm and handling disclosures or suspicions of harm as soon as possible upon commencing employment. All staff will report disclosed or suspected harm to either the Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) or the Queensland Police Service who will decide on an appropriate course of action.

Who must comply with this policy?

The following people must comply with this policy:

- employees and volunteers
- contractors
- committee members, and
- work experience students/students on placement.

Definitions

Harm may be categorised in the following types:

- physical abuse, for example, beating, shaking, burning, biting, causing bruise or fractures by inappropriate discipline, giving children alcohol, drugs or inappropriate medication
- emotional or physiological abuse, for example, constant yelling, insults, swearing, criticism, bullying, not giving children positive support and encouragement
- neglect for example, not giving children sufficient food, clothing, enough sleep, hygiene, medical care, leaving children alone or children missing school, and
- sexual abuse or exploitation, for example, sexual jokes or touching, exposing children to sexual acts or pornography or having sexual intercourse with a child or young person under 16 years of age (even if the child appears to have consented).

Suspicion of harm

You can suspect harm if:

- you are concerned by significant changes in behaviour or the presence of new unexplained and suspicious injuries.

Disclosure of harm

A disclosure of harm occurs when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened or is likely to happen.³⁵

Disclosures of harm may start with:

- “I think I saw...”
- “Somebody told me that...”
- “Just think you should know...”
- “I’m not sure what I want you to do, but...”

Procedures to minimise harm to children and young people

Our organisation works to minimise harm to children and young people by acting in a manner that supports their interests and wellbeing, by:

- making sure that children know that it is their right to feel safe at all times
- teaching them about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in general
- letting them know who is and who is not an employee in the organisation
- allowing them to be a part of decision-making processes
- making sure they are safe by monitoring their activities and ensuring their environment meets all safety requirements
- taking anything a child or young person says seriously and following up their concerns
- letting them know there is no secret too awful, no story too terrible, that they can’t share with someone they trust
- teaching them about appropriate and inappropriate contact in a manner appropriate to their age and level of understanding
- teaching children and young people to say ‘no’ to anything that makes them feel unsafe
- encouraging them to tell staff of any suspicious activities or people, and
- Listening to children and young people and letting them know that staff are available for them if they have any concerns.

Procedures for receiving a disclosure of harm

When receiving a disclosure of harm:

- remain calm and find a private place to talk
- don’t promise that you’ll keep a secret; tell them they have done the right thing in telling you but that you’ll need to tell someone who can help keep them safe
- only ask enough questions to confirm the need to report the matter; probing questions could cause distress, confusion and interfere with any later enquiries, and
- do not attempt to conduct your own investigation or mediate an outcome between the parties involved.

Reporting guidelines for disclosures or suspicions of harm

Following are the actions our organisation will take immediately following a disclosure or suspicion of harm.

Documenting a suspicion of harm

If you or others have concerns about the safety of a child, record your concerns in a non-judgmental and accurate manner as soon as possible. If a parent explains a noticeable mark on a child, record your own observations as well as accurate details of the conversation. If you see unsafe or harmful actions towards a child in your care, intervene immediately, provided it is safe to do so. If it is unsafe, call the police for assistance.

Documenting a disclosure of harm

Complete an incident report form or record the details as soon as possible so that they are accurately captured. Include:

- time, date and place of the disclosure
- 'word for word' what happened and what was said, including anything you said and any actions that have been taken, and
- date of report and signature.

If you need to take notes as the person is telling you, explain that you are taking a record in case any later enquiry occurs.

Reporting the disclosure or suspicion of harm to authorities

Our organisation will not conduct its own enquiries in relation to the disclosure or suspicion of harm or try to come to an agreement between the parties involved. The person who receives a disclosure or suspects harm is to contact the relevant authority to ensure information provided is comprehensive and accurate.

Report the matter to:

- Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) on freecall 1800 811 810, or
- Queensland Police Service (provide local contact details).

Actions following a disclosure of harm

Support and counselling will be offered to all parties involved.

Processes for those involved in the report

The child or young person

The children and young people involved should be offered appropriate counselling and support.

The person who made the report

Under Section 22 of the Child Protection Act 1999, a person who reports suspected child abuse is protected from civil or criminal legal actions and is not considered to have broken any code of conduct or ethics.

Details of the person who made the report are to be kept completely confidential and will not be made available to the family of the child or young person, or the person against whom the allegation has been made.

The person against whom the allegation has been made

If the person responding to the allegation of harm is a member of the organisation, you may need to review their duties. If they continue to interact/work with children, ensure that they are appropriately supervised at all times. You may want to seek legal advice as to the extent to which that person can carry out duties in the organisation.

Review procedures

- The organisation's policy and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm are to be reviewed and assessed regularly to ensure that the organisation is continuing to provide a safe and supportive service environment.

Responsible person/officer: Nicholas Noordink

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