



# Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse – Information Sheet

Foster, family and significant other carers (carers) play a vital role in supporting vulnerable children and young people in Western Australia (WA).

Whilst carers are not mandatory reporters, it is important to have an understanding of mandatory reporting.

All children have the right to be protected from sexual abuse and any person who has a concern that a child is suffering from any type of abuse should report their concern to the Department of Communities (the Department).

## What is Mandatory Reporting?

Mandatory Reporting requires specific people or professionals, by law, to report concerns of child sexual abuse to the Department's Mandatory Reporting Service.

Mandatory reporters must make a report to the Mandatory Reporting Service, if during the course of their work, they form the belief that child sexual abuse has occurred or is occurring.

Mandatory Reporting legislation focuses on child sexual abuse however; all forms of abuse such as physical, emotional and psychological abuse and neglect should still be reported by mandatory reporters, carers and the general public.

## Who are mandatory reporters in WA?

People working in the following professions are specified in legislation as mandatory reporters:

- Doctors;
- Nurses;
- Midwives;
- Teachers;
- Boarding Supervisors; and
- Police Officers.



## [Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse]

### **What does Mandatory Reporting mean for carers?**

Carers are not mandatory reporters, so by law they do not need to report concerns about child sexual abuse.

However, it is important that all children and young people be kept safe. So, if anyone, including a carer, has a concern about the safety of a child, then they should report their concerns to the Department.

### **Carers who are mandatory reporters**

If you are carer and work in a profession that is mandated to report (except police officers) and, in the course of your paid or unpaid work, you form a belief that child sexual abuse is occurring, you should follow your workplace processes for the mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse.

When you leave work and resume your role as a carer you should follow the Department's processes for carers wanting to report any type of harm (including sexual abuse) to a child in their care, that is, to contact your child protection worker to report any concerns.

### **Carers who are police officers**

Unlike other mandatory reporters, a police officer is a police officer 24 hours a day. If concerns for a child are raised, as a police officer and a carer you must first follow the Police processes for making a mandatory report. Immediately afterwards, you should report these concerns to your child protection worker.

### **Should carers who are also mandatory reporters interview the children in their care?**

No. It is essential that in your role as carer, mandatory reporters, including police officers do not attempt to "interview" or ask specific questions of the child in their care. Specialist child interviewers from the Department and the WA Police Service (WA Police) will conduct any necessary interviews with a child.



## [Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse]

### Mandatory Reporting protocols

Professional role	Reporting protocols that apply at work	Reporting protocols that apply to carers
<b>Doctor</b>	Work protocols	Department protocols
<b>Nurse</b>	Work protocols	Department protocols
<b>Midwife</b>	Work protocols	Department protocols
<b>Boarding Supervisor</b>	Work protocols	Department protocols
<b>Teacher</b>	Work protocols	Department protocols
<b>Police Officer</b>	Work protocols	Police protocols then Department protocols
<b>Foster, Family or Significant Other Carer</b>	Not applicable	Department protocols

### What if a child discloses abuse or neglect to a carer?

The most important and immediate thing a carer can do when a child or young person discloses abuse or neglect is:

- Always believe the child.
- Reassure the child that telling was the right thing to do.
- Maintain a calm appearance.
- Find a quiet place to talk.

#### Be truthful

Children and young people sometimes fear repercussions for themselves or siblings; or consequences for parents or other family members. Because of this, a child might ask an adult to promise secrecy before disclosing abuse or neglect.

Such a promise should not be made. The carer can reassure the child and encourage them to speak out about the abuse.



## [Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse]

### **Let the child or young person take their time**

It is important that the child or young person does not feel rushed or panicked and that the carer has plenty of time to calm, reassure and listen to the child.

### **Let the child or young person use their own words**

Children and young people have their own way of describing their experiences. It is important not to ask questions that suggest the 'right' words to a child or young person, or in a way that can be seen as putting words in the child's mouth.

It is important that carers do not quiz or interview the child about the disclosure, as this may interfere with any investigation.

Investigation of a disclosure should only be done by professional child protection workers or the WA Police.

### **Let the child or young person know what you will do next**

Child abuse often leaves the child feeling disempowered and lacking control in their own life. Making sure the child or young person is fully aware of each step can make the process less intimidating and can help return a sense of power and safety.

### **Do not confront the person believed to be the abuser**

Confrontation has the potential to place the child, carer or others at risk. Child protection workers or the WA Police will take any necessary action.

## **Contact information**

### **Department of Communities**

Telephone: (08) 9222 2555

Country free call: 1800 622 258

Web: [www.communities.wa.gov.au](http://www.communities.wa.gov.au)

### **Mandatory Reporting Service**

Telephone: 1800 708 704

Web: [www.mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au](http://www.mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au)