



MAKING A CHILD PROTECTION REPORT

What to do when children and young people are at risk of significant harm

From late January 2010, reports to the Child Protection Helpline need to meet the threshold of 'risk of significant harm' as opposed to 'risk of harm'. This change has been introduced so that children and young people who need the protection of statutory intervention can receive this from Community Services, while children and families who need other forms of support and assistance can receive this from a range of government and community organisations without having to report to Community Services.

Anyone who has reasonable grounds to suspect a child or young person is at risk of significant harm and has current concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of the child or young person should make a report to the Child Protection Helpline.

Where concerns of harm do not meet the significant harm threshold, the referring agency should offer and coordinate assistance or make a referral to other services, using normal referral networks. Services may also be located through the new Family Referral Services or through Human Services Net (HSNet) ServiceLink.

The consent of the family should be sought before making referrals.

Recognising child abuse and neglect

To help reporters decide whether a case needs to be reported to the Child Protection Helpline, both mandatory and non-mandatory reporters may access advice via the [Making a Child Protection Report web pages](#) or the NSW Mandatory Reporter Guide. An interactive version of the Mandatory

Reporter Guide will be located on the KTS website to assist reporters in making their decisions. It will be available at the time the legislative changes are introduced.

Mandatory reporters from Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Housing NSW and Juvenile Justice in the Department of Human Services, NSW Health, NSW Police Force and Department of Education and Training can also contact their Child Wellbeing Unit for advice.

Significant Harm

A child or young person is at risk of significant harm if the circumstances that are causing concern for the safety, welfare or wellbeing of the child or young person are present to a significant extent.

This means it is sufficiently serious to warrant a response by a statutory authority irrespective of a family's consent.

What is significant is not minor or trivial and may reasonably be expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on the

Keep Them Safe

A shared approach to
child wellbeing

For further information:

Child Protection Helpline: **132 111** or **133 627** (mandatory reporters)

Talk to your supervisor/manager

Talk to your Child Wellbeing Unit (for staff from NSW Health, Housing NSW, ADHC, Juvenile Justice, Education and Police)

Visit Human Services Net: www.hsnet.nsw.gov.au/login/ServiceLink.aspx

Visit Association of Children's Welfare Agencies:
www.acwa.asn.au

Visit www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au



child or young person's safety, welfare or well being, or in the case of an unborn child, after the child's birth.

The significance can result from a single act or omission or an accumulation of these.

Who should report?

Everyone in the community should be alert to signs of abuse or neglect in children and young people. Their safety, welfare and well-being are a community responsibility. An injury, concerning behaviour or a disclosure indicates that action may be needed to prevent significant harm to a child or young person from occurring or continuing.

Non mandatory reporters including the general public should phone the Helpline on **132 111**.

Mandatory reporters should use the Mandatory Reporter Guide to confirm that there is a risk of significant harm. Mandatory reporters should telephone the Child Protection Helpline on **133 627**.

Mandatory reporters

Mandatory reporters are defined in NSW legislation and this definition has not changed. They are those who deliver the following services to children as part of their paid or professional work:

- health care (e.g. doctors, nurses, dentists and other health workers)
- welfare (e.g. psychologists, social workers and youth workers)
- education (e.g. teachers)
- children's services (e.g. child care workers, family day carers and home based carers)
- residential services (e.g. refuge workers, community housing providers)
- law enforcement (e.g. police).

Any person with direct responsibility to provide the above mentioned

What's New

- **The threshold for reporting to the Child Protection Helpline is rising to 'risk of significant harm' in late January 2010.**
- **A new model for the intake and referral of child protection concerns is being introduced. Only reports that meet the threshold of 'risk of significant harm' should be made to the Child Protection Helpline. Other concerns may be referred to non statutory services that can provide supports to families or mitigate concerns or risks.**
- **If you believe that other agencies can assist the child/ young person and family, you should share your information with those agencies and/or make the appropriate referrals. If you believe your own agency can further assist, then you should arrange this.**
- **The HSNet ServiceLink is a point of referral. Child Wellbeing Units and Family Referral Services are also being established as part of the new intake and referral model.**
- **Reporters will be assisted in decision making through a newly developed Structured Decision Making[®] tool, the NSW Mandatory Reporter Guide.**
- **The penalty for failing to report (mandatory reporters) is being removed in late January 2010**
- **Feedback: The Child Protection Helpline will tell mandatory reporters whether the report they have made meets the threshold of significant harm or not.**

services must report risk of significant harm to children. Managers – including both paid employees and volunteers – who supervise direct services are also mandated to report. Mandatory reporters are not obliged to report risk of significant harm to unborn children or young people (those aged 16-17 years). However they are encouraged to make a report if it is appropriate.

While the legal obligation to report significant harm remains, the penalty applying to mandatory reporters who fail to report concerns about risk of harm will be removed from the legislation from late January 2010.

Safeguards for reporters

Reports made to Community Services are confidential and the reporter's identity is generally

protected by law. However, from late January 2010 a new provision will allow a law enforcement agency access to the identity of the reporter if this is needed in connection with the investigation of a serious offence against a child or young person. While this will override the legislative protection, new safeguards to protect the reporter have been introduced. The request must come from a senior law enforcement officer and the reporter must be informed that their identity is to be released – unless informing them of the disclosure will prejudice the investigation.

Feedback to reporters

The Child Protection Helpline will tell mandatory reporters whether the report they made meets the threshold of significant harm or not.