



Mandatory Reporting

Counsellor Toolkit
2024

Mandatory Reporting

Mandatory reporting entails a legal duty for individuals or professionals to alert authorities about suspected cases of abuse, neglect, or harm concerning vulnerable children. This requirement aims to safeguard their well-being, particularly when they may not be able to advocate for themselves. Deciding whether reporting is necessary typically hinges on specific guidelines established by relevant authorities. Generally, if there's a reasonable suspicion or evidence of abuse or neglect, reporting becomes mandatory. Incidents necessitating reporting include instances of physical or sexual abuse, neglect, exploitation, or situations where an individual's health or safety is jeopardised due to inadequate care or living conditions.

What Will Child Protection Do?

Child Protection will prioritise the best interests of the child above all else. They will determine whether follow-up action is necessary and how to categorise the report. This could involve offering guidance to the individual who made the report, initiating an investigation, directing the family to community support services, or choosing not to pursue the matter further.

[More Information](#)

Filenotes & Child Protection Services

Recording notes from conversations with Child Protection services is crucial for maintaining accurate records. Information may be requested later if the matter becomes the subject of court proceedings. Remember, you must act if you develop a suspicion or reasonable belief, even if you are uncertain and have not directly witnessed child abuse, such as when the victim or another person discloses the abuse to you. Reporting child abuse or neglect is confidential.

[More Information](#)

Reporting

Reporting methods often entail filling out a form or providing a detailed report. Essential information to include consists of the child's name, age, and address, along with detailed reasons for suspecting abuse, the rationale for making the report, and an evaluation of immediate danger to the child. Additionally, counsellors should provide a description of observed injuries or behaviours, the current whereabouts of the child, any involvement of other services or agencies with the family, and any culturally specific details that could aid in caring for the child. This consolidated approach ensures that all pertinent information is provided to facilitate appropriate intervention and support for the child's well-being. You can find an example of a form used by education authorities for reporting and recording information.

[More Information](#)

Confidentiality: Ethical Considerations in Counselling

In counselling, the Australian Counselling Association Code of Ethical Practice emphasises the importance of maintaining client confidentiality. At the start of counselling, it's widely recognised as best practice for clients in both private practice and organisational settings to receive documentation outlining confidentiality. In best practice, you would discuss the written document outlining the confidentiality protocol and confirm instances when confidentiality would be breached. This discussion would be noted in the client's records. This approach aims to strike a balance between legal obligations and ethical responsibilities.

Further information on mandatory reporting process of child abuse and neglect in Australia can be found below:

- The Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 in NSW: [Reporting a Child at risk.](#)
- The Child Protection Act 1999 in Queensland: [Report Child abuse.](#)
- The Children and Community Services Act 2004 in Western Australia: [Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse in WA.](#)
- The Children's Protection Act 1993 in SA: [Mandated reporters or notifiers and their role.](#)

- The Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997 in Tasmania: [How to report a safeguarding concern.](#)
- The Children and Young People Act 2008 in the Australian Capital Territory: [Report child abuse or neglect.](#)
- The Care and Protection of Children Act in the Northern Territory: [Report child abuse.](#)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 Victoria: [Making a report to child protection.](#)

Support & Resources

The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) resource sheet on mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect in Australia underscores the legal obligation of certain professionals to report suspicions of abuse or neglect. It covers abuse types, reporting procedures, and the paramount importance of prioritising child welfare over confidentiality concerns. Non-compliance with reporting requirements can result in legal consequences, emphasising the gravity of this responsibility in safeguarding children.

[More Information](#)

Responding to children and young people disclosures of abuse can be found on the [Australian Institute of Families Studies.](#)

Training and Education

Counsellors can enhance their knowledge by accessing written materials, talking with their supervisors, engaging in discussions with peers and participating in additional training. These avenues can increase your understanding of your obligations regarding mandatory reporting.

Any counsellor, regardless of their location, can benefit from the free online training available on the Children at Risk Learning Portal. These training modules offer comprehensive guidance on detecting and addressing child abuse and neglect, covering various topics such as identifying signs of abuse, understanding legal responsibilities, and effectively engaging with vulnerable families. By participating in these modules, counsellors can enhance their proficiency and confidence in safeguarding vulnerable children. You can access the training modules through the Children at Risk Learning Portal.

[More Information](#)

Queensland Government has developed [training for health workers.](#)

Risk Assessment

Further reading and or participating in training in conducting risk assessments can aid in determining the severity and urgency of an intervention in cases of suspected abuse or neglect.

- [Assessing and responding to safety concerns](#)
- [Risk Assessment Framework and Tools](#)

Cultural Sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity is crucial when identifying and addressing signs of abuse or neglect, particularly within diverse communities. While cultural differences may impact perceptions, it's important to note that mandatory reporting requirements remain the same. For further exploration of this topic, visit the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

[More Information](#)

Supervisor

Supervisors can provide valuable support, guidance, and clarification on reporting procedures. Counsellors are encouraged to seek assistance from supervisors when faced with challenges or uncertainties related to mandatory reporting.

Consequences of Non-Compliance

Failure to report as required can have severe personal, professional, and legal consequences. It's the counsellor's responsibility to be familiar with the laws in their jurisdiction and fulfill their duty to report suspected cases of abuse or neglect to protect vulnerable individuals and uphold ethical obligations.

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The document was written with the assistance of ChatGPT, an AI language model developed by OpenAI.

Disclaimer: While the information provided in this fact sheet is current as of the date written, it is essential for counsellors to stay updated with the latest regulations, resources, and practices specific to their state within Australia. It is the responsibility of the counsellor to ensure compliance and effectiveness in their work. Seeking guidance from a supervisor is advised to navigate regional requirements. This disclaimer underscores the counsellor's responsibility to stay informed and adhere to relevant standards and guidelines.



ACA

AUSTRALIAN
COUNSELLING
ASSOCIATION

Unit 2/42 Finsbury Street
Newmarket QLD 4051
Australia – Yuggera Country

P : 07 3356 4255
E : aca@theaca.net.au
W : www.theaca.net.au

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