

Sexual behaviour in children and young people fact sheet for ancillary staff and volunteers

Overview

This fact sheet is for ancillary staff and volunteers in the government, Catholic and independent education and care sectors.

Ancillary staff include:

- Aboriginal education workers
- Aboriginal community education officers
- administrative staff
- early childhood co-educators
- early childhood support workers
- educational support officers
- school services officers.

This fact sheet covers basic information about:

- children and young people's developmentally appropriate, concerning and harmful sexual behaviour
- how you should respond to sexual behaviour, including your legal responsibilities as a mandated notifier
- information sharing and confidentiality
- the procedure, guideline and online learning module for educators and care providers
- wellbeing and support
- services for people affected by sexual abuse and sexual assault.

Children and young people's sexual behaviour

Developmentally appropriate sexual behaviour

Children and young people are sexual beings from birth and they may show different sexual behaviour at different ages and stages of their development.

Most children and young people display developmentally appropriate sexual behaviour that is considered typical and expected for their age in years and/or developmental abilities. Keep in mind that the developmental abilities of children and young people with disability and additional needs¹ may be different from other children and young people of the same age.

When children are younger and before they have reached puberty, their sexual behaviour is usually:

- a natural part of child development
- about curiosity and understanding their own and other people's bodies
- not about sexual pleasure.

¹ Children and young people with additional needs may experience complex social, emotional and behavioural issues. This may be a result of a disorder, illness or condition, or be related to developmental trauma.



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Once children and young people have reached puberty, their sexual behaviour is often:

- a natural part of adolescent development
- about curiosity and their need for information about sexuality
- about being interested in relationships or shown through relationships
- to seek sexual pleasure.

Concerning sexual behaviour

Some children and young people display concerning sexual behaviour that:

- is not expected for their age in years and/or developmental abilities
- may cause distress, result in rejection, or increase the risk of harm to themselves and/or others.

Harmful sexual behaviour

A very small number of children and young people display harmful sexual behaviour that:

- is not expected for their age in years and/or developmental abilities
- is likely to be harmful to themselves and/or others
- may be abusive to another child, young person or adult.

Responding to sexual behaviour

Immediately report all sexual behaviour

If you:

- witness sexual behaviour happening
- are told about sexual behaviour by a child or young person
- receive a report about sexual behaviour from someone else

you must **immediately** alert the educator or care provider with supervisory responsibility for the children or young people at the time of the incident, report or disclosure. If you are the staff member with supervisory responsibility, you must report the sexual behaviour to the site leader.

Report risks of harm, abuse and neglect

You are a mandated notifier. You must notify the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) of any behaviour that leads you to suspect on reasonable grounds that a child or young person:

- is or may be at risk – a child or young person is considered to be at risk if they have suffered or will suffer harm caused by sexual abuse or neglect
- has sexually harmed or is at risk of sexually harming others

when that suspicion is formed in the course of your employment or volunteering.

The [Mandatory Reporting Guide](#) will guide your judgement about notifying the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL). The guide has decision-making trees about sexual abuse and problematic sexual behaviour in children and young people.

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Work with your site leader to:

- follow processes from [Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse and Neglect \(RRHAN-EC\)](#)
- get the support and guidance you need.

If you have a suspicion on reasonable grounds, phone CARL on 13 14 78 or make an online electronic notification through [E-CARL](#).

Reporting to police

Site leaders are responsible for reporting to police. The 'sexual behaviour in children and young people [procedure](#)' tells site leaders what they must report to police.

Information sharing and confidentiality

Not everyone who works or volunteers in an education or care setting will need to know the detail of a child or young person's sexual behaviour. You will only be told the information you need to know to fulfil the responsibilities of your role.

You must respect the privacy and confidentiality of children, young people and their families. Follow your site and sector's policies and procedures about information sharing and confidentiality.

Procedure, guideline and online learning

Ancillary staff and volunteers should read this fact sheet as part of your induction.

While you are a mandated notifier, you are not required to read the 'sexual behaviour in children and young people' [procedure](#) and [guideline](#), or undertake the online learning module, unless when asked to do so by your line manager or site leader.

Wellbeing and support

Sexual behaviour in children and young people can cause strong emotional responses in adults, which may:

- affect you when you are working or volunteering
- impact your wellbeing and daily life.

A conversation with your line manager can help you to:

- talk through any worries
- reflect on any strong feelings
- recognise any impacts
- ask for help
- put in place plans for support.

You can get support from an appropriate counselling service or your general practitioner. Staff can access the Employee Assistance Program.

If the information in this fact sheet has raised any personal issues for you, talk to your line manager or someone else who can help.

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Services for people affected by sexual abuse or sexual assault

Yarrow Place – Rape and sexual assault service

Yarrow Place provides services for people aged 16 and above including 24-hour crisis response for recent rape or sexual assault, counselling, support for partners, families and friends, and group work programs for survivors. Phone 8226 8777 or 8226 8787 (outside of office hours) or 1800 817 421 (country callers anytime).

1800Respect – National sexual assault and domestic violence counselling service

1800Respect is a counselling helpline, information and support for anyone whose life has been impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence. The service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Phone 1800 737 732.

Uniting Communities – Sexual abuse or sexual assault counselling

Uniting Communities provides counselling for children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse and/or sexual assault, and adults who have experienced childhood sexual abuse. Phone 1800 615 677.

Relationships Australia – Child sexual abuse counselling

Relationships Australia provides counselling to children, young people and adults who have experienced childhood sexual abuse. Phone 1800 408 408.

Supporting information

See the following web page <https://education.sa.gov.au/sexual-behaviour> for additional resources about sexual behaviour in children and young people.

[Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse and Neglect \(RRHAN-EC\)](#)

Contact

Engagement and Wellbeing Directorate
Department for Education

education.engagementandwellbeing@sa.gov.au

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