

Document 3

Deciding to make a report to the Child Protection Helpline

Any member of the community, including mandatory reporters, who suspect, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm should report their concerns to the Child Protection Helpline. Mandatory reporters and non-mandatory reporters, including the general public, should phone **132 111**.

In an emergency, where there are urgent concerns for the child's health or life, call the police using the emergency line triple zero (000).

Reports can be made about:

- children and young people at risk of significant harm
- unborn children at risk of significant harm
- homeless children (aged under 16) and young people (aged 16 and 17).

What is significant risk of harm?

The law says a child or young person is at risk of significant harm (ROSH) if there are current concerns for their safety, welfare or wellbeing because of one or more of the following:

- if their basic needs are not met — e.g. they don't have enough food or clothing, or don't have a safe or secure place to live
- parents or caregivers aren't arranging necessary medical care — e.g. a child is very sick, but is not taken to a doctor
- a child or young person being physically abused or ill-treated — e.g. where a child has bruises, fractures or other injuries from excessive discipline or other non-accidental actions
- a child or young person being sexually abused — e.g. sexual activity between the child and an older child or adult
- risk of serious physical or psychological harm resulting from domestic violence — where a child could be injured by a punch intended for their mother, or a child can't sleep at night because of the fear there will be violence in the home
- risk of the child or young person suffering serious psychological harm — e.g. a child having to take care of his parent, or a child being continually ignored, threatened or humiliated.

I'm not sure if there's been abuse, but I'm worried. Should I call?

You don't have to be certain - you only need to make sure your concerns are well founded and based on information you know or have from a reliable source.

Child or young person

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. Significant means serious enough 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 child or young person's safety, welfare or wellbeing.

Where possible, the young person should be involved in the decision to report unless there are good reasons for this not happening.

Tell Helpline if the young person doesn't want the report being made as we must consider the young person's wishes when deciding to assess or investigate the report and how to do this.

Unborn child

In the case of an unborn child, what is significant is not minor or trivial and may reasonably be expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on the child after the child's birth. Significance can result from a single act or omission or an accumulation of these.

I've made a report about one child in the family. What happens to the siblings?

Whenever DCJ responds to a report it must also consider the immediate safety, welfare and wellbeing of any other children/young people living in the same home and take appropriate action. This applies to all other children/young people in the home, not just brothers and sisters.

Can I make an anonymous report?

Yes, you can. But it does mean we won't be able to contact you again to discuss what you've told us and we can't give you any feedback on your report.

The identity of all reporters is confidential. Your identity, or any information which might reveal your identity (such as your address or workplace), can't be disclosed by anyone without your consent, except on rare occasions, where information about the report is crucial to court proceedings.

Confidentiality

Reports made to the Helpline are confidential and the reporter's identity is generally protected by law. However, current legislation allows NSW Police 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. 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.

Making the report to the Child Protection Helpline

To report suspected child abuse or neglect, call the Child Protection Helpline on **132 111** (open 24 hours/7 days).

Helpful information needed for a Child Protection Helpline report includes:

- full name, date of birth (or approximate age), address and phone number of the child or young person you are concerned about
- full name (including any known aliases), approximate age, address and phone number of the parents or carers
- a description of the child or young person and their current whereabouts
- why you suspect the child or young person is at risk of significant harm (what you have seen, heard or been told)
- whether a language or sign interpreter may be required, whether support is required for a person with a disability or an Aboriginal agency is involved
- your name and contact details.

Sometimes you may not have all this information. Communities and Justice (DCJ) needs at least to be able to identify and locate the child or young person. Information that assists this, such as the child or young person's school or childcare centre, is also helpful.

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