

Handout: Mandatory Reporting

Mandatory Reporters are people who are required by law to report suspected cases of harm and neglect to their states governing body. Each state has its own mandatory reporting laws. According to Australian Institute of Family Studies each state has different legislative duties as to what and how harm is to be reported.

A report made by a mandatory reporter will remain confidential. Contact details of the mandatory reporter will be made by any agency or reporting body to the parents, employer, alleged perpetrator or any other person mentioned in the report. The information documented in the report will be investigated by the authorised states governing agency to determine if the child is at risk of harm.

It is important to remember children's wellbeing, safety and rights come first before any fears of reporting as the information does remain confidential. When making a report, services policies and procedures should be followed. This should include having your Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person or qualified councillor support you.

Mandatory reporters are protected when making a report. If the report is made in good faith to protect them, then the reporter can't be liable in any civil, criminal or administrative proceeding.

- After a report has been made, it is the responsibility of the state's child protection governing agency or the police department, to inform parents or legal guardians. The mandatory reporter needs to seek to advise as to what to communicate with parents or legal guardians from the governing agency. Parents or legal guardians may approach staff members to find further information, and it is essential for staff to follow the services policies and procedures which should include;
- Listening without giving any information or entering into discussion;
- Advising they would need to make enquiries to the child protection agency as staff at the service have no role in the investigation process;
- Refer to the Nominated Supervisor or Management if necessary;
- Document the conversation accurately and without judgement, assumptions or bias.

Mandatory Reporting

There are two ways for a mandatory reporter in NSW to make a child protection report;

- Online at ChildStory Reporter—<https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/>
- By calling 24/7 the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111. General public can make a report using this number.

If it is an immediate report it to the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111 or the Police. The ChildStory Reporter website has a mandatory reporter guide (MRG) to help mandatory reporters make their decision to report. After completing the MRG if you obtain one of the three following decisions you have the option to report online through an eReport after logging in;

- Immediate Report to Child Protection Helpline
- Report to the Child Protection Helpline
- Refer to Child Wellbeing Unit (CWU)

The Decision Tree

The MRG helps you to obtain a decision on how to respond through being asked a series of questions and responding with yes or no answers until a decision is reached. If you are unsure how to answer there is further information available in relation to the question on the screen. There are further instructions that can be obtained in the “How to Guides” on the ChildStory website at www.reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au or by contact the Child Wellbeing Unit (CWU)

Writing the Report and Associated Documentation

It is important to do the following when writing a report or associated documentation;

- Document information in a factual and objective manner.
- Do not make assumptions, judgments or personal opinions.
- Only make written observations not photo documentation.
- Keep documentation confidential in a locked area in the service.
- See handout for possible information to collect and record, confidentially and safely within the service.