

This information is a guide and summary only. It is not legal advice.

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

Child Protection
Make the Call



Government of Western Australia
Department of Communities
Child Protection and Family Support

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

By the end of section two, you will be able to:

- Define child sexual abuse.
- Respond to a child who discloses sexual abuse.
- Recognise that professional judgment is required in identifying circumstances which lead to a mandatory report.

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

Definition of a 'child'

A child is defined as a person 'under 18 years of age, and in the absence of positive evidence of age, means a person apparently under 18 years of age'.

Children and Community Services Act 2004



Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

Meaning of ‘child sexual abuse’

‘Sexual abuse’, in relation to a child, includes sexual behaviour in circumstances where:

- the child is the subject of bribery, coercion, a threat, exploitation or violence; or
- the child has less power than another person involved in the behaviour; or
- there is a significant disparity in the developmental function or maturity of the child and another person involved in the behaviour.

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

Abusive sexual behaviour

Abusive sexual behaviour may include, but is not limited to:

- sexual penetration
- inappropriate touching
- exposure to sexual acts
- exposure to pornographic materials.

This applies to children and young people under 18 years of age.

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

Indicators of child sexual abuse

- Many indicators on their own may not lead to a belief, based on reasonable grounds, of child sexual abuse.
- Mandatory reporters must use their professional judgement and objective observation to form a belief on reasonable grounds of child sexual abuse.

(continues over)

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

Indicators of child sexual abuse

- Indicators will assist you in making a professional judgement.
- The intention is not to capture all sexual activity involving children and young people, for example, between a teenage boyfriend and girlfriend engaging in consensual sexual activity.

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

Possible indicators of child sexual abuse

- A child displays sexualised behaviours inappropriate to their age (including sexually touching other children).
- A child states knowledge of sexual behaviour inappropriate to their age.

(continues over)

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

Possible indicators of child sexual abuse

- A child exhibits drawings, play or writing that describes sexual abuse.
- A child exhibits pain or bleeding in the anal or genital area with redness or swelling.
- A child shows presence of a sexually transmitted infection.

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

Responding to a child who discloses child sexual abuse

There are **eight key points** to remember when a child self discloses:

1. Always believe the child.
2. Reassure the child that telling you was the right thing to do.
3. Maintain a calm appearance.
4. Find a quiet place to talk.

(continues over)

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

Responding to a child who discloses child sexual abuse

5. Be truthful about what you can and can't do.
6. Let the child take their time.
7. Let the child use their own words.
8. Let the child know what you will do next.

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

Your response to a disclosure of child sexual abuse

- Do not confront the person alleged by the child to be responsible for the abuse.
- Do not ask the child questions which may cause distress.
- Avoid asking the child to repeat their story.
- An assessment and investigation of a report should only be done by professional child protection workers at the Department of Communities - Child Protection and Family Support and/or the WA Police.

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

When to make a mandatory report

- Mandatory reporters must report as soon as *practicable* after forming a belief that a child is being, or has been, sexually abused.
- Reporters do not need to prove that a child is being abused, only a *belief, formed on reasonable grounds* is required.
- This belief must be formed in the course of a person's paid or unpaid work as a doctor, teacher, nurse, midwife, police officer and boarding supervisor.

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

Content review

The following pages include questions about the content covered in section two.

See if you can answer each question in your head, then click the forward button to reveal the correct answer.

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

Which of the following could be interpreted as an act of child sexual abuse?

- a) All sexual activity between children.
- b) When a child has less power than another person involved in the sexual activity.
- c) Young children exploring their own bodies.
- d) None of the above.

Click forward to reveal correct answer

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

Which of the following could be interpreted as an act of child sexual abuse?

- a) All sexual activity between children.
- b) When a child has less power than another person involved in the sexual activity.
- c) Young children exploring their own bodies.
- d) None of the above.

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

A child must tell you if he or she is being abused before you can make a report

- true
- false

Click forward to reveal correct answer

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

A child must tell you if he or she is being abused before you can make a report

- true
- false



Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

If a child discloses sexual abuse, you need to make a report

- true
- false

Click forward to reveal correct answer

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

If a child discloses sexual abuse, you need to make a report

- true
- false

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

If a child discloses sexual abuse, what is the best approach to take?

- a) Take the child to more senior staff and encourage them to repeat their story.
- b) Remain calm and believe the child.
- c) Suggest the child makes a report to the necessary authorities.

Click forward to reveal correct answer

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

If a child discloses sexual abuse, what is the best approach to take?

- a) Take the child to more senior staff and encourage them to repeat their story.
- b) Remain calm and believe the child.**
- c) Suggest the child makes a report to the necessary authorities.

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

When should child sexual abuse be reported

- a) When you are sure the child is telling the truth.
- b) When you have a belief based on reasonable grounds that child sexual abuse has occurred or is occurring.
- c) After you have contacted the parents.
- d) Only when you have proof of the abuse.

Click forward to reveal correct answer

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

When should child sexual abuse be reported

- a) When you are sure the child is telling the truth.
- b) When you have a belief based on reasonable grounds that child sexual abuse has occurred or is occurring.**
- c) After you have contacted the parents.
- d) Only when you have proof of the abuse.



Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

If you are working in your professional capacity but are engaged in unpaid work, are you legally required to report child sexual abuse?

- Yes
- No

Click forward to reveal correct answer

Section two: Responding to child sexual abuse

If you are working in your professional capacity but are engaged in unpaid work, are you legally required to report child sexual abuse?

- Yes
- No

This information is a guide and summary only. It is not legal advice.

**You have now completed section two,
responding to child sexual abuse.
Please proceed to section three.**

Child Protection
Make the Call



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**
Child Protection and Family Support