

2015  
2017

Volunteer's handbook

# Responding to abuse and neglect

Education and care induction session for volunteers

This handbook is only for use in conjunction  
with the induction program of the same title



**Government of South Australia**

Department for Education and  
Child Development

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Family Services – Office for Children and  
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and Child Development

Designed by | She Creative Pty Ltd

## Session 1 | Children and young people's behaviour

### What should we expect to see in children and young people's behaviour?

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Generally children and young people should be:

- **Happy** – appearing pleased to be at the site once settled, participating willingly in most activities and happy to see parents/caregivers at the end of the day.
- **Healthy** – adequately clothed for weather conditions, clean, provided with enough food for recess and lunch, and any health issues are appropriately managed by parents/caregivers.
- **Socialising normally with adults and peers** – interacting comfortably with adults in their life, and having mainly positive interactions with peers.
- **Doing what is expected of them developmentally** – similar cognitive and physical abilities to their peers, or in keeping with the level of disability which may be present.
- **Attending regularly** – Irregular attendance and unexplained absences are issues the site must respond to.

## Session 2 | The legislation

Under Section 11 (1) and (2) of the *Children's Protection Act 1993*, the following people are obliged by law to notify Families SA if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child/young person has been or is being abused and/or neglected and the suspicion is formed in the course of the person's work (whether paid or voluntary) or in carrying out official duties. The person must notify the Department of that suspicion as soon as practicable after he or she forms the suspicion.

Child Abuse Report Line  
(CARL) **13 14 78**

- (2) *This section applies to the following persons:*
- (a) *a medical practitioner;*
  - (ab) *a pharmacist;*
  - (b) *a registered or enrolled nurse;*
  - (c) *a dentist;*
  - (d) *a psychologist;*
  - (e) *a police officer;*
  - (f) *a community corrections officer (an officer or employee of an administrative unit of the Public Service whose duties include the supervision of young or adult offenders in the community);*
  - (g) *a social worker;*
  - (ga) *a minister of religion;*
  - (gb) *a person who is an employee of, or volunteer in, an organisation formed for religious or spiritual purposes;*
  - (h) *a teacher in an educational institution (including a kindergarten);*
  - (i) *an approved family day care provider;*
  - (j) ***any other person who is an employee of, or volunteer in, a government or non-government organisation that provides health, welfare, education, sporting or recreational, child care or residential services wholly or partly for children, being a person who—***
    - (i) is engaged in the actual delivery of those services to children; or***
    - (ii) holds a management position in the relevant organisation the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of those services to children.***
- ...
- (3) *A notification under this section must be accompanied by a statement of the observations, information and opinions on which the suspicion is based.*
- ...
- (5) *A person does not necessarily exhaust his or her duty of care to a child by giving a notification under this section.*
- ...

## Session 3 | Definitions and indicators of abuse and neglect

### Legal definition of abuse and neglect

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*Abuse or neglect, in relation to a child, means:*

- (a) sexual abuse of the child; or*
- (b) physical or emotional abuse of the child, or neglect of the child, to the extent that
  - (i) the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, physical or psychological injury detrimental to the child's wellbeing; or*
  - (ii) the child's physical or psychological development is in jeopardy and 'abused' or 'neglected' has a corresponding meaning.**

(Section 6 (1) *Children's Protection Act 1993*)

### General definitions of abuse and neglect

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**In general, child abuse or neglect is categorised in four ways.**

#### Physical abuse

This is commonly characterised by physical injury resulting from practices such as:

- hitting, punching, kicking, throwing
- shaking (particularly young babies)
- burning, biting, pulling out hair
- alcohol or other drug administration.

#### Sexual abuse

This occurs when someone in a position of power to the child uses their power to involve the child in sexual activity. Behaviour can include:

- sexual suggestion
- exhibitionism, mutual masturbation, oral sex
- showing pornographic material (eg DVD's, internet, mobile phones)
- using children in the production of pornographic material
- penile or other penetration of the genital or anal region
- child prostitution.

## Emotional abuse

This tends to be a chronic behavioural pattern directed at a child whereby a child's self-esteem and social competence are undermined or eroded over time. Behaviours may include:

- devaluing (eg 'you're hopeless, useless, stupid')
- ignoring (eg parent/carer is psychologically unavailable to the child)
- rejecting (eg telling a child in varying ways he/she is unwanted)
- corrupting (eg allowing children to participate in immoral or criminal acts)
- isolating (eg limiting normal social experiences)
- terrorising (eg may single out or threaten with punishment or death)
- chronic or extreme domestic violence in the child's presence.

## Neglect

This is characterised by the ongoing failure to provide for the child's basic needs. Behaviours may include:

- inadequate supervision of young children for long periods of time
- failure to provide adequate nutrition, clothing or personal hygiene
- failure to provide needed or appropriate healthcare/medical treatment
- disregard for potential hazards in the home
- forcing the child to leave home early
- allowing children to engage in chronic truancy.


## High risk infants

High risk infants are children of less than one year of age, for whom there is serious concern for their immediate and ongoing safety. This concern may arise from a specific incident of abuse and neglect. Alternatively, it may come from situations where parent/carer behaviour and circumstances place the infant at risk of harm. As with other kinds of indicators, one factor on its own, for example the mental health of the parent/carer may not signify that an infant is at risk. However, the more factors present, the greater the likelihood of risk.

The infant at risk factors include:

- significant alcohol or other substance abuse by carers
- interpersonal/domestic violence
- mental health of carers
- attachment relationships
- abuse of previous children by carers
- intellectual capacity of carers
- experience of childhood abuse by carer
- parenting abilities
- housing and physical environment
- income and financial management
- age/maturity of carers
- social supports.

## Session 4 | Key indicators of abuse, neglect and family violence



The key message about indicators is to appreciate patterns and clusters of behaviours. The best way to appreciate clusters is to always consult with the nominated site leader who will liaise with others.

### Indicators of abuse, neglect and family violence

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#### Possible behavioural indicators of children and young people experiencing abuse, neglect or family violence

- difficulty accepting responsibility for their behaviour
- struggle when receiving any kind of feedback
- difficulty in understanding the feelings of others
- struggling to name their own feelings
- damage to property, stealing property (eg food)
- harm others without feeling remorse
- appear to not follow rules
- easily influenced by others
- find it hard to trust
- struggle to give reasons for their behaviour
- trust too much and allow themselves to be exploited
- withdrawn 'absent' manner
- low self-esteem
- suffer sleep disturbance
- act in ways that make others feel uncomfortable or stressed
- change from calm to angry very quickly
- struggle to be a part of group activities
- difficulty making and keeping friends
- run away
- difficulty in concentrating, remembering and learning
- hyper-vigilant (seeming to constantly scan for threat)
- sexual behaviour – inappropriate for age, inappropriately directed (eg at younger children or teacher) excessive, violent, coercive, compulsive and threatening
- tiredness

- overly protective of younger siblings
- unusually fearful of having nappy changed
- wary of physical contact with others
- age inappropriate bed wetting, soiling or smearing
- bullying and aggression
- engage in high risk behaviours (eg alcohol/substance abuse, offending and self harm)
- suicidal thoughts
- chronic absenteeism/irregular attendance
- unresponsive to 'normal' motivating teaching strategies.

### Possible physical indicators of children and young people experiencing abuse, neglect or family violence

- bruising, burns, scalds, lacerations, abrasions, fractures and broken bones
- eating disorders
- consistently dirty/unwashed
- medically unexplained problems in eating or swallowing
- delay in physical development
- multiple injuries
- urinary tract infections/sexually transmitted diseases
- pregnancy

- medical conditions related to poor hygiene
- unattended physical conditions or illnesses
- unexplained failure to thrive
- evidence of hair being pulled out, bald patches.

### Parent/carer behaviours as indicators

- appear unconcerned about the child/young person's condition/situation
- believe in corporal punishment
- belittle the child/young person
- delay seeking medical help or advice
- excessively critical of child/young person
- favours other children/young people in family
- ignorant of child/young person's developmental stages and needs
- inattentive
- isolates child/young person from social and peer activity
- low self-esteem
- does not attend site appointments
- offers illogical accounts of injuries
- poor impulse control
- family violence
- uses multiple health services for child/young person.



## Session 5 | Suspicion on reasonable grounds

Reasonable grounds for reporting suspected abuse and/or neglect may include:

- a child/young person tells you that they have been abused
- a child/young person tells you they know someone who has been abused (they may be referring to themselves)
- someone tells you of the abuse who is in a position to provide reliable information (perhaps a relative, friend, neighbour or sibling of the child/young person)
- your own observation of the behaviour of a particular child/young person and/or injuries, or your knowledge of the child generally leads you to suspect that abuse is occurring
- your own observations about the behaviour of the child/young person's adult caregiver/s give you cause to suspect that a child is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected.

## Session 6 | Responding to children and young people

Sometimes children and young people use the opportunities that arise in education and care settings to share personal information. Recognising and respecting the significance of those moments for children and young people is part of the adult's duty of care.

Sometimes what is shared will be about abuse or neglect. The way

adults respond in these situations is very important to the long term safety and wellbeing of the child/young person. Your role in these situations is to do everything you can to enable the young person to share what they wish to share. This means listening respectfully, showing you care by your manner and allowing them time.

If you suspect that abuse is being disclosed, your role is not to investigate. This means you don't ask leading questions and you don't interview other people to verify what you suspect or have been told. Using open questions is the best way to support children and young people and helps avoid compromising formal investigations by other agencies.

## What are leading and open questions?

Leading questions can usually be answered by a 'yes' or 'no'. Leading questions *offer* information and ideas (put words in people's mouths).

Open questions invite information and allow the individual to only say what they wish to say. Open questions keep the conversation open and are rarely answered by a 'yes' or 'no'.

For example:

Child's statement	Leading question	Open question
I don't like my uncle looking after me.	Does he make you afraid?	How does he make you feel?
I don't want to work, my hand hurts.	Is that a cigarette burn on your hand? Did mum or dad do that to you?	Your hand looks sore; how did it happen?

### Safe question styles

- 'What are/were you feeling ...?'
- 'What are/were you thinking ...?'
- 'Tell me more about ...?'

## What might the child or young person be feeling?

A child/young person may experience a range of emotions when disclosing abuse or neglect, including:

- **guilt** – they often blame themselves for the abuse and may feel guilty for telling someone about it
- **shame** – they are often ashamed of the abuse itself, particularly sexual abuse
- **confusion** – they are often confused about their feelings for the perpetrator
- **fear** – they are often fearful of the repercussions of telling. They may be scared of the perpetrator, that the abuse may recur or that their family will break up.

## Summary guide of the do and don'ts of appropriate responding when abuse and neglect is disclosed or suspected

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### Do...

- respect the enormity of what is being shared with you
- listen with care, show care and only ask open questions
- be patient, don't rush them or yourself
- record what you have been told
- speak with the nominated site leader asap to help you determine the next actions
- look after yourself, seek support from the nominated site leader.

### Don't...

- stop the child/young person from talking
- act scared or shocked
- doubt the child (question the validity of their story)
- threaten to harm or punish the perpetrator
- promise that you will keep it a secret
- promise that everything will be fine, they will be safe, happy, better
- ask leading questions or interview others (investigate matters further)
- leave the child/young person alone or let them leave the site if you are worried about their immediate safety.

## Making a notification to the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) 13 14 78

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- After you and the nominated site leader have discussed your concerns, the site leader will be informed that a mandatory notification is going to be made.
- Senior staff or the site leader will refer to checklists that help ensure you have all the information required to make a notification.
- Once all the relevant information is gathered and noted the call will be made to the Child Abuse Report Line.
- You will be supported by the site to make your notification.

## Will the Child Abuse Report Line disclose my identity as the notifier?

Under Section 13 of the *Children's Protection Act 1993*, your identity as a mandated notifier will not be disclosed to any other person unless the disclosure is made in the course of official duties.

Information concerning the identity of the notifier can therefore be released if the:

- police need to know in order to further investigations of a criminal nature
- courts deem the identity to be evidence that is important to its proceedings
- notifier gives permission for their details to be released.

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality is critical. Respect the sensitivity of the personal information you have.

## Am I protected from civil liability?

Provided that a report is made in good faith, mandated notifiers are immune from civil liability.

## What happens if I do not notify?

Failure to notify suspected abuse and/or neglect on reasonable grounds is an offence under the *Children's Protection Act 1993* and carries a maximum penalty of a \$10,000 fine.

In April 2014, the *Children's Protection Act 1993* was amended to provide new defence provisions for mandated notifiers. The defence provisions apply when a mandated notifier has failed to notify a reasonable suspicion of neglect or abuse of a child or young person because:

- the mandated notifier became aware of such circumstances only as a result of information imparted to them by a police officer acting in the course of their official duties; or
- the mandated notifier became aware of the child's situation only from another mandated notifier who has **already** made a report with regard to the situation.

In order for the defence to apply, you must be satisfied that the other mandated notifier has already made a report to the Child Abuse Report Line.

The defences do not apply in situations where a mandated notifier possesses additional knowledge of the child's circumstances beyond that reported to them by a previous notifier or police officer. In these circumstances the mandated notifier must make their own report to the Child Abuse Report Line.

## Session 7 | Maintaining professional boundaries with children/young people

The document *Protective practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people* describes the professional practice expectations of staff and volunteers in Government, Catholic and Independent school sectors. It is available at [www.decd.sa.gov.au/docs/documents/1/ProtectivePracticesforSta.pdf](http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/docs/documents/1/ProtectivePracticesforSta.pdf)

All people working and volunteering in education and care environments are expected to maintain professional practice in their interactions with children and young people. This represents a key component of their duty of care towards the wellbeing and safety of children and young people.

This responsibility not only refers to expectations about their own conduct but also to their responsibility to intervene in the conduct of other adults. All volunteers should ensure they understand their responsibility to report the inappropriate/unprofessional behaviour of other adults.

Any organisation where children and young people are cared for—whether government or non-government, religious or secular—is vulnerable to being targeted by individuals who wish to offend against children and young people.

Boundary	Example of violation
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriate comments about a child/young person's appearance, including excessive flattering comments</li> <li>• Inappropriate conversation or enquiries of a sexual nature (eg questions about a child or young person's sexuality or his/her sexual relationship with others)</li> <li>• Disrespectful or discriminatory treatment of, or manner towards, young people based on their perceived or actual sexual orientation</li> <li>• Use of inappropriate pet names</li> <li>• Vilification or humiliation</li> <li>• Jokes or innuendo of a sexual nature</li> </ul>

*continued on p 12*

Boundary	Example of violation
<b>Communication</b> <i>(continued)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obscene gestures and language</li> <li>• Facilitating/permitting access to pornographic material</li> <li>• Facilitating/permitting access to sexually explicit material that is not part of endorsed curriculum</li> <li>• Failing to intervene in sexual harassment of children and young people</li> <li>• Correspondence of a personal nature via any medium (eg phone, text message, letters, email, internet postings) that is unrelated to the staff member's role. This does not include class cards/bereavement cards etc</li> </ul>
<b>Personal disclosure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussing personal lifestyle details of self, other staff or children and young people unless directly relevant to the learning topic and with the individual's consent</li> </ul>
<b>Physical contact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwarranted or unwanted touching of a child or young person personally or with objects (eg pencil or ruler)</li> <li>• Corporal punishment (physical discipline, smacking etc)</li> <li>• Initiating, permitting or requesting inappropriate or unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person (eg massage, kisses, tickling games) or facilitating situations which unnecessarily result in close physical contact with a child or young person</li> <li>• Inappropriate use of physical restraint (see <i>Protective practices</i> p 18)</li> </ul>
<b>Place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Inviting/allowing/encouraging children and young people to attend the staff member's home (see <i>Protective practices</i> p 11 country/local community considerations)</li> <li>• Allowing children and young people access to a staff member's personal internet locations (eg social networking sites)</li> <li>• *Attending children and young people's homes or their social gatherings</li> <li>• *Being alone with a child or young person outside of a staff member's responsibilities</li> <li>• Entering change rooms or toilets occupied by children or young people when supervision is not required or appropriate</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Transporting a child or young person unaccompanied</li> <li>• Using toilet facilities allocated to children and young people</li> <li>• Undressing using facilities set aside for children and young people, or in their presence (*without the site leader's authority)</li> </ul>
<b>Targeting individual children and young people</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutoring (outside education sector's directions or knowledge)</li> <li>• Giving personal gifts or special favours</li> <li>• Singling the same children and young people out for special duties or responsibilities</li> <li>• Offering overnight/weekend/holiday care of children and young people as respite to parents (unless a family day care educator, or employed by a respite organisation and with the site leader's knowledge)</li> </ul>
<b>Role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopting an ongoing welfare role that is beyond the scope of their position or that is the responsibility of another staff member (eg a counsellor) or an external professional, and that occurs without the permission of senior staff</li> <li>• Photographing, audio recording or filming children or young people via any medium when not authorised by the site leader to do so and without required parental consent</li> <li>• Using personal rather than school equipment for approved activities, unless authorised by the site leader to do so</li> </ul>
<b>Possessions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correspondence or communication (via any medium) to or from children and young people where a violation of professional boundaries is indicated and where the correspondence has not been provided to the site leader by the staff member</li> <li>• Still/moving images or audio recordings of children and young people on personal equipment or kept in personal locations such as car or home that have not been authorised by the site leader</li> <li>• Uploading or publishing still/moving images or audio recordings of children and young people to any location, without parental and site leader's consent</li> </ul>

## What should volunteers do if they become aware of inappropriate adult behaviour?

All volunteers must take action if they observe or are told about inappropriate behaviours of other adults on the site. It is not acceptable to minimise, ignore or delay responding to such information. For the wellbeing of all members of the site community the nominated site leader must be notified as a matter of urgency as soon as possible.



## Session 8 | Core messages

My nominated site leader is:

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- Enjoy your volunteering with children and young people and the contribution you make to their safety, wellbeing and learning.
- Always keep in mind The Independent Education Inquiry (IEI—the DeBelle Report) recommendations generated from the SA Royal Commission 2012–2013 conducted by Bruce M DeBelle AO QC (information sharing, prevention, good practice).
- Any concerns you have about children, young people or adults at the site should be referred to the nominated site leader as soon as possible. Never act alone.
- If children/young people share concerning personal information with you, respond in a supportive way. Showing you care is very important to their wellbeing. Talk with the nominated site leader as soon as possible.
- Confidentiality is critical. Respect the sensitivity of the personal information you have by not discussing it with people other than the nominated site leader.

### Counselling support for adults

Adults Surviving Child Abuse

**1300 657 380**

(information and support line)

[www.asca.org.au/](http://www.asca.org.au/)

Lifeline

**13 11 14**

[www.lifeline.org.au/](http://www.lifeline.org.au/)

Relationships Australia

**1300 364 277**

[www.relationships.org.au/](http://www.relationships.org.au/)

### Counselling support for children and young people

Kids Helpline

**1800 551 800**

[www.kidshelp.com.au/](http://www.kidshelp.com.au/)

Youth Beyondblue

[www.youthbeyondblue.com/](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com/)

# Volunteer's notes

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# CARL

(Child Abuse Report Line)

# 13 14 78

This handbook is part of an induction session for volunteers who are working in Department for Education and Child Development education and care environments.

This handbook is only for use in conjunction with the induction program of the same title.