



Responding to a Safeguarding Concern Practice Guide

The Diocese of Broken Bay, through its commitment to safe communities takes seriously and encourages persons who have experienced abuse, have concerns about a child (under 18), or an adult at risk or concerns about the conduct or behaviour of someone in our Diocese who works with children or adults at risk to come forward.

A person who has had an experience of abuse may find speaking up difficult. The process of bringing what may have been long hidden into the light and speaking about what has been unspeakable may assist the person to find healing. Speaking about their experience may help the person in many ways. Whoever a victim of abuse chooses to trust with their disclosure needs to receive their story with respect, compassion, and without judgement.

A person wanting to speak of abuse may make contact by phone, email or in the context of another conversation. Some people may have repressed the memories of abuse for many years because it is so painful. A person will generally only disclose abuse when they feel safe. The initial contact may be a person testing the reaction of the person to whom they are making their disclosure to see how the disclosure will be received. You may be the first person to whom a person relates their experience. In all situations, the most important response is to hear their story compassionately and without judgement.

An offender may decide to disclose their crime to Clergy. Disclosures made in the Sacrament of Reconciliation are currently exempt in NSW from the obligation to report to Police. However, if the disclosure occurs outside the Sacrament of Reconciliation, reporting obligations exist.

Church personnel who receive a Disclosure of abuse are required to comply with all legal requirements including but not limited to notification to the NSW Police and Department of Communities and Justice where required.

People may wish to speak about:

- Abuse that is happening to them now
- Abuse that happened in the past – this may be many years ago
- Something that they have been told
- Something that they have witnessed
- The person disclosing to you may in fact be the offender



What you are required to do in the following situations:

A. You have received a disclosure of abuse

The best environment is one that is private, where you will not be interrupted. It is always preferable to allow the person to speak when they are ready, avoid suggesting that they come back at another time.

DO	DO NOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remain calm• Listen carefully without interrupting• Establish the welfare and safety of the child, or adult• Make detailed notes and document all the information received (as soon as possible after disclosure)• Support and reassure them they have done the right thing by talking to you• Explain clearly what will happen next• Follow the Diocesan Complaints Policy• Report to your Supervisor, Parish Priest or the School Principal and the Diocesan CCD Coordinator if a CCD catechist• Seek support from Safeguarding if needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Express panic, shock, anger or disbelief• Ask leading questions• Dismiss, minimise or challenge the disclosure or provide an opinion or judgement• Make promises you cannot keep (including keeping the disclosure a secret)• Confront the perpetrator• Discuss with staff, parents, other children unless directed to by your Supervisor or Authorities• Make judgement about what you hear

Guideline of what to do after a person makes a disclosure

- Where the disclosure presents a current emergency please contact 000
- Write down what the person has told you
 - name and contact details of the person disclosing/victim
 - name of the perpetrator
 - nature of the crime (briefly)
 - when and where the alleged crime happened
 - record date and time when the person told you and include your name as the author
- Immediately contact your Parish Priest, CCD Coordinator or the Manager for Safeguarding (Chancery & Parishes) (Safeguarding Office)
- Consider what pastoral support the person who made the disclosure may need
- Consider your reporting obligations (you may need to report to NSW Police or Department of Communities and Justice)- the Safeguarding Office will assist you with this. ***If you are a Mandatory Reporter see Mandatory Reporting flowchart***
- Consider what supports you may need, noting any strong feelings that come up for you. The Safeguarding Office is here to assist you.



B. You are concerned about a child's safety, welfare and wellbeing

Regardless of the suspected cause, all concerns about the wellbeing of a child (or an unborn child) should be taken seriously and acted upon. This includes concerns about the wellbeing of a child, which does not appear to be the result of abuse.

If the child is in immediate danger call 000. You must address your concerns with the appropriate Parish personnel, who may include the Parish Priest, your ministry coordinator, direct supervisor/manager, CCD (if CCD catechist) or contact the Safeguarding Office.

If you are a Mandatory Reporter, you are legally obligated to make a report to the Department of Communities and Justice. (Please refer to the [Risk of Significant Harm Mandatory Reporting Fact Sheet](#) for more information regarding the reporting process).

C. You are aware of an incident of inappropriate conduct by a worker towards a child

Any allegation of harm towards a child by an adult must be immediately notified to your Parish Priest, your ministry coordinator, direct supervisor/manager, CCD (if CCD catechist) or the Safeguarding Office.

Parishes and Chancery leaders have a legal responsibility to investigate and report on types of conduct made against their employees, volunteers or certain contractors who provide services to children. (Please refer to the [Responding to Reportable Conduct Fact Sheet](#) for more information regarding the reporting process).

D. You know about a serious crime involving the abuse of a child including sexual abuse

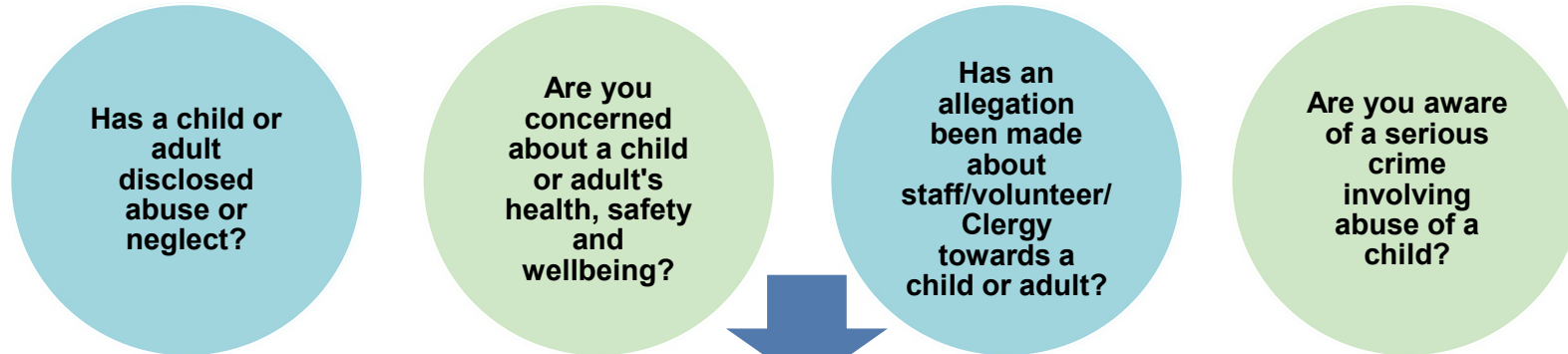
Under the Crimes Act 1900 all adults in NSW are required to report information to NSW Police if they know, believe or reasonably ought to know that a child (under 18 years) has been abused. (Please refer to the [Reporting Crimes to NSW Police Fact Sheet](#) for more information regarding the reporting process).

In all instances remember! It is not your role to investigate.

It is important that you know and understand, that you are not responsible for deciding whether the abuse has occurred. You are responsible for ensuring that the Safeguarding Office is aware of the abuse/crime so that reporting obligations by you and/or the Safeguarding Office can be met, and appropriate steps taken including pastoral care. Your main role with the person making the disclosure is likely to be providing pastoral care and listening to the needs of the person.



When responding to children and young people it is best practice to implement the **3R's response system**: Reassure the child or adult, Record the information and Report the incident.



IS THE CHILD OR ADULT IN IMMEDIATE DANGER?

NO

YES, CALL POLICE IMMEDIATELY on 000

THEN

Immediately contact and update the Parish Priest, Direct Supervisor or CCD (if CCD catechist) and Safeguarding Office

If you didn't contact the Police and you are Mandated to Report to DCJ, complete the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) and follow instructions. The Safeguarding Office, CCD (if CCD catechist) or Direct Supervisor will assist you.

If you contacted Police and are a Mandatory Reporter, contact the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111 and report

Record the details in writing as soon as possible. The Safeguarding Office will assist you to use a form if needed. Remain confidential and discuss only with the Parish priest, Supervisor and Safeguarding Office.

Safeguarding Office Email safeguarding@bbcatholic.org.au or phone 02 8379 1605



Reference

The following documentation is available from the Diocesan intranet.

Policy - Complaints Handling Framework

Policy & Fact Sheet - Risk of Significant Harm - Mandatory Reporting (including flow chart)

Practice Guide - Legislation that affects those that work with children in Broken Bay

Practice Guide - Signs of Abuse & Children at Risk of Harm

Practice Guide - What conduct must be reported to the Office of the Children's Guardian

Fact Sheet - Responding to Reportable Conduct

Fact Sheet - Reporting Crimes to NSW Police

Poster - Responding to a child, young person or vulnerable adult disclosing abuse or neglect

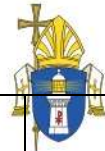
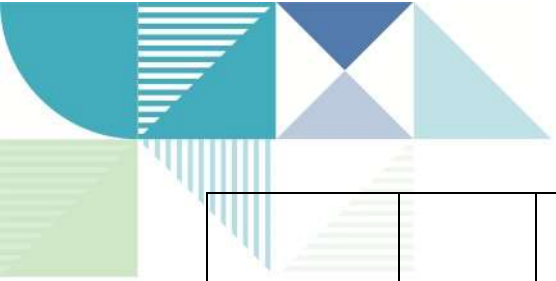
More information

For further information or to seek support in responding to a disclosure and reporting a Safeguarding concern you can contact the Safeguarding Office (Chancery) at

safeguarding@bbcatholic.org.au or phone **02 8379 1605**.

REVISION/ MODIFICATION HISTORY

Date	Version	Current Title	Summary of Changes	Approval Date	Commencement Date
14/08/2020	2.	Responding to a Safeguarding Concern Practice Guide	Change of title and included flowchart.	Nov 2020	Nov 2020
29/06/2020	1.	Responding to a child, young person or vulnerable adult disclosing abuse or neglect Practice Guide	New	June 2020	June 2020
13/03/2023	3	Responding to a Safeguarding Concern	Included adult in content and Flow chart; updated practice not to do; deleted 'young		



			person' and defined child as under 18.	
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APPROVAL DATE/REVISION SCHEDULE

Approved by: Ana Kosi, Manager for Safeguarding

Date approved: 13 March 2024

To be revised: 13 March 2026

