

Core messages

Volunteers play an important role in the education of our children in partnership with the staff of our schools.

- **Enjoy** your volunteering with children and young people and the contribution you make to their safety, wellbeing and learning.
- **Refer** any concerns you have about children, young people or adults at the school to the nominated staff member as soon as possible.
- **Respond** in a listening way if children/young people share concerning personal information with you. Showing you care is very important to their wellbeing. Do not make any observations to the child about what they have shared. Talk with the nominated staff member 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 staff member.

What is child abuse?

Child abuse can occur through someone doing something hurtful or by someone not doing something to provide for or protect a child.

There are four types of child abuse:

- (1) Physical abuse is characterised by physical injury resulting from practices such as: hitting, punching, kicking, throwing, shaking (particularly young babies), burning, biting, pulling hair, alcohol or other drug administration.
- (2) Sexual abuse occurs when someone in a position of power uses their power to involve the child in sexual activity.
- (3) Emotional abuse tends to be a chronic behavior directed at a child whereby a child's self-esteem and social competence is undermined or eroded over time. This may include devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising, chronic or extreme spousal abuse in a child's presence.
- (4) Neglect is the failure to provide a child with their basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, hygiene, education, adequate supervision, medical, dental care, forcing a child to leave home or allowing chronic truancy.

What does the law say?

Volunteers are obliged by law to notify the Department for Child Protection if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child or young person has been or is being abused or neglected and they formed their suspicion in the course of their work (whether paid or voluntary) or in carrying out official duties.

Volunteers must notify the Department for Child Protection of their suspicion as soon as practicable after they form the suspicion.

Why report child abuse?

From time to time, volunteers working with children will experience children disclosing sensitive information.

Children have limited power to protect themselves from abuse and will only be protected from abuse and neglect if responsible adults take action on their behalf. Reporting child abuse is the first step in stopping the abuse and protecting children from further harm.

When to report child abuse?

You are required to report child abuse and neglect when you have suspicion on reasonable grounds

- A child or young person tells you that s/he has been abused;
- Your own observation of the behavior of a particular child or young person and/or injuries, or your knowledge of the child generally leads you to suspect that abuse is occurring;
- A child or young person tells you s/he knows someone who has been abused (the child may be referring to her/himself);
- Someone tells you of the abuse who is in a position to provide reliable information (perhaps a relative, friend, neighbor or sibling of the child/ young person).

What do you do if you have suspicions or concerns?

You are not expected to act alone

Always seek guidance and work in partnership with the nominated staff member at the school (normally this would be the Principal or the person who inducted you as a volunteer).

Your role as a volunteer means you are supported by professionals at the site in meeting your responsibilities as a mandated notifier.

Child abuse must be reported to the Department for Child Protection either online:
www.reportchildabuse.families.sa.gov.au

or

Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) 13 14 78
After Hours Crisis Care 13 16 11

Links

- [Protective practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people Guidelines for staff working or volunteering](#)
- [Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse and Neglect – Education and Care \(RRHAN-EC\)](#)

Contact

Please contact System Safeguarding and Development Team at People, Leadership and Culture on 8301 6600.