

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE WESTERN AUSTRALIA



LEGISLATION: Mandatory Reporting in Western Australia falls under The Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA)

The health, safety and wellbeing of children is paramount in all organisations providing services to children across Australia. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse highlighted the need for improvement in the processes and outcomes of reporting child abuse. This fact sheet provides information on reporting child abuse in Western Australia.

WHO ARE MANDATORY REPORTERS?

WA mandatory reporters are:

- assessors who visit residential care and secure care services
- boarding supervisors
- departmental officers of the Department of Communities
- doctors
- early childhood workers
- midwives
- ministers of religion
- nurses
- out-of-home care workers
- police officers
- psychologists
- school counsellors
- teachers
- youth justice workers

Further information for Ministers of Religion can be found [here](#).

WHAT REQUIRES REPORTING?

Mandatory reporters are legally required to report any reasonable concerns, whether in their paid or unpaid duties, regarding the sexual abuse of a child or young person.

If a mandatory reporter has concerns about a child regarding other forms of abuse (physical, emotional and neglect) then this should continue to be reported, but there is no penalty if a report is not made.

You do not require proof to make a report.

HOW DO I MAKE A REPORT?

If a reporter believes the child is in imminent danger and at risk of immediate serious harm, they must call 000.

All other reports must be made to the Department of Communities - Child Protection and Family Support's Mandatory Reporting Service. A verbal report can be made by calling 1800 708 704 and must be followed up by a written report within 24 hours.

Written reports can be made using the online reporting form found [here](#).

Email: If you are experiencing technical difficulties lodging a mandatory report online, please email mrs@communities.wa.gov.au to request a hard copy for completion.

If you have any concerns about other forms of abuse of a child that does not include sexual abuse you should still make a report.

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WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A REPORT IS MADE?

The Mandatory Reporting Service will make an initial assessment on reports regarding sexual abuse and take the most appropriate action. All written reports will be provided to Western Australian Police for assessment and action where required. An investigation may occur collaboratively between child protection services and the police. Not all reports will result in an investigation.

The reporter will receive a standardised letter stating that a report has been received and providing a receipt number.

Organisations must maintain records of all reports made regardless of the outcome of the report. This should be reported as an incident in SMO (Safety Management Online).

WILL THE CHILD OR FAMILY BE INFORMED THAT I HAVE MADE A REPORT?

The identity of a reporter or referrer must remain confidential unless in the following circumstances:

- the reporter chooses to inform the child or family about the report
- the reporter consents in writing that their identity can be disclosed
- a court or tribunal requests it in order to ensure the safety of a child

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES FOR NOT REPORTING CONCERNS ABOUT THE SAFETY, WELFARE AND WELLBEING OF A CHILD?

If you are a mandatory reporter, you are legally bound to report any concerns you have regarding the safety, welfare and wellbeing of a child.

Failure to make a report regarding the known or suspected sexual abuse of a child carries a fine of \$6000 for all mandatory reporters.

Mandatory reporting must be included in child safeguarding policies and procedures including the Code of Conduct. Failing to report regarding concerns about the welfare, safety and wellbeing of a child will also lead to disciplinary action within an organisation.

Failure to provide a written report following a verbal report of sexual abuse carries a fine of \$3000.

Further information regarding mandatory reporting in Western Australia can be found [here](#).