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**Responding to disclosures
of Child Sexual Abuse**

Pastors' Workshop

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(Rachel)

What is Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)?

Child sexual abuse occurs when an adult, more powerful child or an adolescent uses his or her power to involve a child in sexual activity.

Sexual abuse can be physical, verbal or emotional.

The following slide lists some behaviours considered to be child sexual abuse.

(Department of Child Safety, 2007)

What behaviours are considered to be CSA?

- kissing or holding a child in a sexual manner
- 'flashing' or exposing a sexual body part to a child
- speaking to children about sexual matters
- making obscene phone calls or remarks to a child or young person
- sending obscene emails or text messages to a child or young person
- fondling a child or young person's body in a sexual manner
- persistent intrusion of a child's privacy
- penetration of the vagina or anus either by the penis, finger or any other object
- oral sex
- rape
- incest
- showing pornographic films, magazines or photographs to a child
- having a child pose or perform in a sexual manner
- forcing a child to watch a sexual act
- child prostitution

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How do we explain sexual abuse to children?

"Sexual abuse is when an adult, or someone a fair bit older than you, has touched your body and genitals in a sexual way, or has made you touch their body and genitals. It might also mean that you have seen other people do these things".

(Sexual Abuse Counselling Program, MFS, 2010)

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Chen 4-18.
This is how they explain
it.

What are the effects of sexual abuse on children? (1)

Harm experienced in childhood can have significant and lasting effects for children, and no two children react in the same way.

Some children show no observable effects of harm they may have experienced, while others show a wide range of effects.

There may be long-term effects even when short-term effects are not apparent.

Children may experience a range of emotional, psychological and physical problems as a result of being harmed.

(Department of Child Safety, 2007)

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What are some effects of sexual abuse on children? (2)

- low self esteem
- increased fear, guilt and self blame
- distrust of adults
- depression
- suicidal thoughts and self harming
- anxiety disorders
- attachment disorders
- post traumatic stress disorder
- aggressive behaviour and other behavioural problems
- delinquency and criminal behaviour including violent or aggressive behaviour
- drug and alcohol abuse and high-risk sexual behaviour
- sexualised behaviours

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flashbacks / nightmares / anxiety

& most common
signs she sees

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How can we lessen the effects of Child Sexual Abuse?

The most serious effects are likely to occur when no one takes action to stop the harm and protect the child.

With early identification and an appropriate response and support, children can recover from being harmed.

A child's support network and bonds with those who believe in them and protect them will help them to cope.

(Department of Child Safety, 2007)

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How do children tell others that they have been sexually abused?

Children will often say things, do things or exhibit physical signs that are clues to sexual abuse, even if they do not disclose the fact.

- Children are more likely to tell their peers first to check out if this is normal, is this a problem
- Children are likely to hint at, or reveal information bit by bit, in order to check out your response
- Children are likely to display their distress through changes in behaviour

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What are some behaviours that *may* indicate that a child has been sexually abused?

- displaying greater sexual knowledge than normally expected for their age
- playing sex games and being more preoccupied with sex talk and sex games than other children
- excessive masturbation or masturbation in public after kindergarten age
- drawing the sexual parts of bodies
- being afraid or upset when people talk about their bodies or sex
- creating stories, poems or artwork about the abuse
- difficulty with concentrating and being withdrawn or overly obedient
- persistent urination or defecation in clothes
- refusing to undress for activities or wearing layers of clothes

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*If ADD medication makes
kids worse then not
ADD - may be SA.*

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What are some physical indicators of possible sexual abuse?

- Bruising, bleeding, swelling, tears or cuts around the genitals, anus or mouth
- An unusual vaginal discharge or odour
- Torn, stained or bloodied clothes, especially underwear
- Pain or itching in the genital area, difficulty using the toilet, walking or sitting
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy

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How should you respond when a child discloses that they have been sexually abused? (1)

Manage your own emotional response.

Protective Interrupting is essential if the disclosure begins somewhere public. Acknowledge that the child has something important to say and find a suitable space.

Listen. Do not probe for details. You do not need to conduct an investigation. Use minimal encouragers and lots of silence.

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How should you respond when a child discloses that they have been sexually abused? (2)

Reassure the child that they have done nothing wrong and it is good to tell someone. Thank them for telling you and acknowledge their bravery.

Believe the child. Children rarely lie about abuse, even if they do there is still a problem.

Identify support people. Who does the child identify as being safe and comfortable.

Refer/Report/Document. Tell the child what you are going to do with the information they have given you.

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The info is 'a gift'.

About 80% don't report.

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What shouldn't you do when a child discloses that they have been sexually abused?

Don't show horror or revulsion.

Don't make promises that you can't keep.

Don't express disbelief.

Don't contact the parent/s until you have sought advice.

Don't contact the alleged abuser or make threats against them.

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What does your organisation need to consider?

- Who needs to know? Who doesn't need to know?
- What are your reporting requirements?
- What are your recording requirements?
- How will you manage confidentiality?
- What language do you use within your organisation?
- What opportunities do children have to make disclosures within your organisation?
- How are workers supported after receiving a disclosure?

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Where can you get support or further information?

If you would like further details on child sexual abuse, a 36-page information booklet – *Child Sexual Abuse – things you need to know* is available online via

<http://www.childsafety.qld.gov.au/child-abuse/sexual.html>

To report suspicions of child sexual abuse:

Police: Child Protection and Investigation Unit – 46 316 333

Department of Communities, Child Safety Services: SW Region
B/H - 1300 683 390 A/H -1800 177 135

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Support - counselling
or?

Hospital writes about
process - (not step by
step) - referrals, no therapy
before they report.

(36 pages)

Good resource.
