



Defence Youth Safety Framework

Youth Safety Incident Management Guide

Introduction

The Defence Youth Safety Responding and Reporting Policy is limited to high level guidance relating to youth safety incident management. This Youth Safety incident management guide provides amplifying detail on how to respond to, report and the ongoing management of youth safety incidents. The guide contains four main sections:

- Section 1 - youth safety incident **initial response**
- Section 2 - youth safety step by step **incident reporting**
- Section 3 - youth safety incident **ongoing management**
- Section 4 - youth safety incident **reporting instructions**

A supportive environment for youth, personnel and families is critical to effective incident response and reporting action. Youth, staff, volunteers and families all need to know how to report abuse allegations and feel comfortable doing so.

Incident Management Knowledge and Skill

Each level of the youth safety training continuum builds on the previous level. Incident management features strongly in both level 2 (practitioner) and 3 (leader) training.

[Youth safety level 2 \(practitioner\) training](#) will include the knowledge and skill required to enable persons in youth facing roles to:

- talk to youth in their language.
- respond appropriately in the event of a youth safety incident (disclosure, allegation or observation).
- know when and how to escalate concerns to "Supervisor/Commander/Manager".

[Youth safety level 3 \(leader\) training](#) will include the knowledge and skill required to enable Supervisors/Commanders/Managers to:

- acquit reporting responsibilities- internal and external.
- ensure effective ongoing incident management.
- know when and how to access to support services for all parties involved in youth safety incidents.





Section 1 – Youth Safety Incident Initial Response

A young person has disclosed a youth safety related incident (e.g. sexual abuse).

What do I do next?

It is important to remember that if a young person is disclosing to you, then it is more than likely that they trust you. The young person will benefit from you **listening** calmly and attentively.

The response to any disclosure of an assault or concern of harm can be the first important step in stopping the assault and taking all reasonable steps towards protecting the young person from further harm. The way adults respond to disclosures can have a fundamental impact on young people.

Once a young person makes a disclosure or allegation regarding their safety or well-being, Defence has a responsibility to take all reasonable steps to prevent further harm. Following the guidelines below will ensure you reflect the appropriate responses to disclosures or allegations from young people. The guidelines are consistent with individual state and territory advice on these matters:

- Listen carefully to all that the young person says without comment or judgement.
- Try to comfort them.
- Don't place any blame on the young person.
- Let them know you will take all reasonable steps to ensure that something is done in relation to their allegation or disclosure but don't commit to a specific course of action or specific outcome.
- Document the conversation as soon as practicable after the allegation or disclosure is made (not during). Where possible, document the incident using the young person's exact words as best you can.
- You are there to listen to what they want to tell you – do not force them to talk about it.
- Avoid using direct or leading questions.
- Take all reasonable steps to make the young person feel safe.
- Document and report as soon as practically possible to your supervisor/commander/manager.

Additional guidance can be found in the SEMPRO Guide Information for Commanders and Managers

Section 2 – Youth Safety Step by Step Incident Reporting

What are my reporting responsibilities if I have concerns about a young person's safety?

It is not your responsibility to make a decision about whether a young person has been harmed. However, it *is* your responsibility to report any concerns that come to your attention.

Your responsibilities include:

- Reporting, in accordance with [Defence and ADF Cadet procedures](#) and [state and territory legislated requirements](#), any allegations or disclosures made to you, or concerns based on reasonable grounds, that a young person has been sexually assaulted, abused or neglected.
- Reporting if you believe, on reasonable grounds, that a young person is in need of protection in accordance with state and territory legislated requirements.
- Reporting to your Supervisor/Commander/Manager if you believe you have acted or said something that may be interpreted as sexual or harmful.

The [state or territory authority](#) to which the incident is reported will decide whether the incident meets the authority's definition of a reportable incident.

When should I report?

You should make a report if:

- a young person discloses sexual, physical, psychological or emotional harm or neglect.
- a third party, such as a colleague, parent, relative or friend of a young person tells you that a young person has been sexually, physically, psychologically or emotionally harmed or neglected.
- you have directly observed or have a suspicion of harmful behaviour perpetrated on a young person.
- there are any clear signs of physical or sexual harm.

Defence recognises that regardless of the mandatory reporting requirements and any privacy considerations, anyone who has reasonable grounds and/or evidence should report known or suspected abuse or neglect of a young person to the relevant State/Territory Child Protection authority and their Chain of Command.

All personnel, visitors and contractors are also required to report any disclosure, allegation or observed behaviour that may have breached the Defence Youth Safety Framework or Code of Conduct in accordance with Defence and/or ADF Cadet procedures.

Where do I report my concerns?

Defence has a procedure outlined in the Youth Safety Responding and Reporting policy in [YOUTH POLMAN](#) to support you in handling disclosures or suspicions of harm. If in doubt seek advice from your Supervisor/Commander/Manager.





Section 3 – Youth Safety Incident Ongoing Management

A key component of effective ongoing incident management, including the management of breaches of the Framework or Code of Conduct, also classified as youth safety incidents, is the action undertaken by the Supervisor/Commander/Manager.

Supervisor/Commander/Manager Responsibilities

Supervisor/Commander/Manager responsibilities are focussed on:

- managing the safety of the young person:
 - ensuring appropriate local assistance from the police or ambulance has been requested if the young person is in immediate danger; and
 - ensuring the young person (and other young persons) are protected from further harm by taking appropriate precautionary action such as removing a person about whom an allegation has been made from the immediate environment while the incident is being assessed.
- reporting:
 - notifying the chain of command of the incident in accordance with Defence policy and/or ADF Cadet procedures;
 - ensuring the appropriate written report is completed in accordance with Defence policy and/or ADF Cadet procedures;
 - ensuring a report is made to the relevant State based Child Protection Statutory Authority if the incident is about actual abuse or harm perpetrated on the young person;
 - ensuring the incident is reported to the local Police as soon as practicable if allegations involve a potential criminal matter; and
 - ensuring the incident is reported up the chain of command for further action as required if allegations relate to a breach of the Youth Safety Framework or Youth Safety Code of Conduct.
- ensuring the well-being and needs of all parties involved in an incident are taken into consideration at all stages of the response, reporting and investigation process including:
 - advising the parent/ legal guardian verbally of the disclosure or allegation made by the young person if it will not jeopardise the safety or well-being of the young person (this should be done face-to-face not by 'cold call');
 - if the allegation involves adult Defence personnel or ADFC members, informing them of the allegation both verbally and in writing, noting there may be a need to limit detail (consistent with the principles of natural justice) to avoid potential prejudice to any investigation;
 - ensuring that each party receives the appropriate support in relation to the specific incident in accordance with the extant Defence and/or ADF Cadet procedures; and
 - advising in writing the outcome of the investigation to the principal parties involved in the incident.
- managing the information associated with the incident and the security of all incident documentation in accordance with Defence policy and/or ADF Cadet procedures.

Investigations

If an internal investigation is conducted it should be conducted in accordance with [DI \(G\) 45-2 The reporting and management of notifiable incidents](#)

If the incident is referred to the civilian authorities, an internal Defence investigation is not appropriate where it might interfere with or prejudice the civilian investigation. However, if a civilian investigation does not result in formal charges this does **not** automatically result in Defence closing the incident.

Defence action does not require the same standard of evidence as civilian police action and where an incident does not involve a criminal act, it may still involve a breach of Defence standards or policies, which require investigation. Such an investigation may also help identify areas where policies and procedures can be improved.





Section 4 – Youth Safety Incident Report (Defence Incident Record – Form AE 530)

The Defence Incident Record (DIR) Form [AE 530](#) is used to report all Youth Safety Incidents. Completing the form in accordance with the guidance below will ensure a consistent approach to critical youth safety information collection.

Description of Incident

The Description of the incident is particularly important and should reflect why you are reporting before you provide the background to or context for the incident.

Suggested phrases include:

- I have concerns that abuse or neglect may be occurring
- A young person has told me that he/she is being abused /sexually assaulted
- I have received an allegation of abuse or sexual assault
- I was witness to an incident with a young person
- I was involved with an incident with a young person

When describing the incident (disclosure, allegation, or observation):

- use plain English wherever possible
- focus on fact, including dates, times and locations if the information can be obtained without distressing the young person
- avoid assumptions or opinions
- if you are reporting an allegation or disclosure made by a young person use the young person's own words wherever possible
- provide as much detail as possible about the person against whom the allegation has been made, the details of the person making the allegation (if not the young person) and the details of any witness
- include details of any injury and whether the young person required medical attention

Other key information that will be required for external reporting includes as much detail as possible about the young person and their parent/guardian including:

- Young Person's Details
 - Name
 - Date of birth
 - Address (if known)
 - Capacity in which the reporter knows the young person
- Parent/Guardian's Details
 - Name
 - Address
 - Contact details;

Actions taken to date

When completing 'actions taken to date' the following minimum information needs to be included:

- Response:
 - immediate youth safety action
 - precautionary youth safety action
- Reporting:
 - to whom, when and how – internally
 - to whom, when and how – externally

