

D. V. & I. R. CENTRE
60 ELGIN STREET
CARLTON 3053
PHONE: 347 1866

PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOURS TRAINING DAY

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What if I receive a disclosure?

One of the problems many people face is the fear of not knowing what to do if someone makes a disclosure. This fear relates primarily to sexual abuse, however, the basic principles apply for other forms of abuse.

There seem to be three phases of dealing with a disclosure:

- Phase One: Immediately, or in the first hour
- Phase Two: What next, or in the next day
- Phase Three: Followup, or ongoing action and support.

The following points are made as guidelines only. Each situation will vary according to the people involved, where and when the disclosure occurs and what the legal requirements are. The term 'child' is used, however you can substitute adolescent or adult as necessary. Telephone numbers need to be adapted to local resources.

PHASE ONE - IMMEDIATELY

- . If a child (or adult) starts to make a disclosure in a group situation, remember, PROTECTIVE INTERRUPTING.
- . BELIEVE the child.
It is much safer to believe the person who makes a disclosure. Children RARELY lie about sexual abuse.

Even if a child does lie, there is still a problem that needs to be addressed.

- . STAY CALM
To show shock, horror or revulsion is not helpful. If anything, it will make the child withhold or retract information.
- . IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO GET DETAILS
All that is necessary is to hear what the person wants to tell. It is much better to ask about feelings; helping a child to identify feelings will start the process of dealing with their problems.

There is a second and perhaps more important reason for not asking details - if any charges are to be laid, the Police will need a detailed statement. Thus, to prevent any criticisms or accusations of interfering with evidence, listen to what the child needs to say and leave the questioning to the relevant authorities. The child will need to repeat their story a number of times - why add to their problems because of some voyeuristic need of our own?

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. REASSURANCE

This word is meaningless unless action follows. A child may well be distressed, frightened or reluctant to talk. Just because we believe we are being reassuring, the child may not know or pick up non-verbal messages. Thus it is extremely important that at least the following statements are made:

- You are not to blame for what has happened;
- You have done nothing wrong;
- It is good that you have told me; and
- I will do all that I can to help you.

There are many other reassuring statements you can and hopefully will make.

. HAS THE CHILD TALKED TO ANYONE ELSE?

The child may have told someone else before speaking to you - they may be receiving help already. Thus it is also important to check out the response(s) of anyone else who knows about this problem. Remember PERSISTENCE EXPECTATION.

. WHAT DOES THE CHILD WANT YOU TO DO?

It is best to ask what the child wants you to do. There may be some simple thing that can be easily achieved or there may be unreal expectations that need to be clarified. Unfortunately there is no magic wand. NEVER MAKE A PROMISE THAT YOU CANNOT KEEP.

. WHO IS ON THE CHILD'S NETWORK?

You cannot assume that you are on the child's NETWORK. Check out who is on their NETWORK and see if you can help the child make contact. The child may need/want your support - others may not believe the child's story straight away.

. IS THE CHILD SAFE TONIGHT?

You may need to give the child "instant Protective Behaviours". The priority must be the child's safety.

. IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO "BUY 24 HOURS"

If, and ONLY IF, the child is safe. This gives you time to talk over options and plan appropriate actions without rushing in and maybe jeopardising the child's safety. It also gives you time to talk to your own NETWORK. Remember PERSISTENCE and ONE STEP REMOVED.

. Disclosure brings out information for both the child and abuser - children may want help for the abuser as well.

. If it is an urgent problem, talk it over with the child about going to official channels such as the Principal, the Community Policing Squads or Protective Services Units. Remember PERSISTENCE EXPECTATION.

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- . As a last resort, and if a child is too frightened to go home, you can contact the Court Advisory Service, on (03) 6546033. They will screen all 'irreconcilable differences' and can find emergency accommodation. They will also help the child to take the problem to court. For after hours situations, contact the nearest Community Policing Squad.

PHASE TWO - WHAT NEXT? OPTIONS FOR ACTION

Each situation will be different, and thus there is no specific sequence of moves for a worker to follow.

SMALL

Here is a ^{SMALL} list of options for you to start thinking about.
Remember - MATCH RESOURCES TO NEEDS

- . Child's network, including non-offending parents.
- . School's network, such as Melbourne Student Services or equivalent.
- . Local resources, such as:
 - Community Health Centres
 - Community Centres
 - Council Services
 - Neighbourhood Houses
 - Local support or self-help groups
- . Regional services, such as:
 - Community Policing Squads
 - Protective Services Units
 - Sexual Assault Clinics

If you are in doubt, you can always contact the Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre, who will help put you in touch with resources.

Local networks are the best source of referral for all forms of abuse, but it is important for you to check people out (remember ONE STEP REMOVED). Not all people are helpful when needed, and especially, not all people are sympathetic to the issues of domestic violence, sexual and physical abuse.

The following is a list of some useful telephone numbers for victims and survivors.

Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre
60 Elgin Street, Carlton, 3053 (03) 347 1866
(Monday through Thursday 8.30 am - 5.30 pm)

The DV & IRC can assist ^{WITH} information and referral to appropriate resources, counsellors, lawyers etc.

Sexual Assault Clinics

Casa House, Royal Women's Hospital
270 Cardigan Street, Carlton (24 hour) (03) 344 2210

Sexual Assault Clinic, Monash Medical Centre,
246 Clayton Road, Clayton (24 hour) (03) 550 2166 *After Hrs*
550 2289 *Bus. Hrs*
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Sexual Assault Centre, Royal Children's Hospital
Flemington Road, Parkville (24 hour) (03) 345 6390

North East Sexual Assault Centre
9 Martin Street, Heidelberg (03) 459 3190

Western Region Sexual Assault Centre
17 Eleanor Street, Footscray (03) 318 5222

Bendigo Sexual Assault Clinic
Bendigo Base Hospital (054) 43 0411

Ballarat Sexual Assault Clinic
Ballarat Base Hospital (053) 32 1771

Geelong Rape Crisis Centre
1st floor, 199 Mooabool Street, Geelong (052) 22 4802

Warrnambool & District Base Hospital
Sexual Assault Unit, Ryot Street (055) 64 9400

These Centres offer a specialist support service for all victims of sexual assault, male and female, adults and children.

Other Services

Survivors' Self-help Groups
Mothers of Survivors Group
Incest Support Groups
(Refer through DV & IRC above) (03) 347 1866

Haywire
288 Smith Street, Collingwood
Provides information, resources and support
for young women and their children. Focuses
on housing issues. (03) 417 6988

Community Policing Squads
Russell Street Headquarters, Melbourne
Contact others through Police in phone book (03) 667 1911

Child Protective Services Units
Department of Community Services
55 Swanston Street, Melbourne (03) 654 4222
Other units listed under 'Community Services'

Women's Refuge Referrals (24 hour) (03) 329 8433

Parent's Anonymous (03) 654 4654

Personal Emergency Service (24 hour) (03) 347 6466

Lifeline (24 hour) (03) 662 1000

Women's Information & Referral Exchange (03) 654 6844

Multilingual Lifeline (5pm to midnight every
day) Vietnamese 662 2929

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Turkish	662 2727
Arabic	662 2141
Italian	662 2595
Greek	662 2448

Community Information Service Centre
(Ring W.I.R.E. 9am-9pm Monday to Friday, and
1pm to 5pm weekends and state which language
you require).

Central Health Interpreter Service (03) 329 8633

Interpreter Services Bureau (03) 67 3198
(both 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday)

Local Community Health Centres, eg

Fitzroy	419 5266
Collingwood	419 6155
Carlton	347 0022
North Richmond	429 5477
Westgate	391 0444

These are some examples. A listing of Community
Health Centres appears in the White Pages on page
503, or ring the Health Department on 616 7777 and
ask for the nearest Community Health Centre to your
location.

The Community Policing Squad and Protective Services
Unit contact numbers are on accompanying pamphlets.