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## Reporting child abuse

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### Queensland

#### Legislation

##### What gets reported?

Any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect. **You don't have to have proof.** If you suspect that a child (and that includes anyone under 18) is in need of protection then you should report it immediately.

##### Who is required to report?

Although people working in sporting or recreation organisations are not mandatory reporters, there may be some individuals who do have this responsibility as a result of their employment with other organisations (e.g. teachers who coach the local team).

Even though not required by law anyone who suspects that a child or young person is at risk of neglect or abuse should report it to the [Department of Communities](#).

#### Action

##### How do I make a report?

If you believe a child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation, contact the Police immediately by dialling **000**.

To make a report about a child at risk of harm, contact the [Department of Communities](#):

- **During normal business hours** contact your local child safety service centre or free call **1800 811 810**. Child safety service centres have professionally-trained child protection staff who are skilled in dealing with information about harm or risk of harm to children.
- **After hours and on weekends** contact the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre on **(07) 3235 9999** or freecall **1800 177 135**. The service operates 24 hours a day.

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## Useful information

### How do I recognise abuse?

The [Department of Communities](#) defines child abuse as:

- **Physical abuse:** punching, slapping, kicking, shaking, biting, applying physical 'discipline' or 'punishment' causing harm or injury
- **Emotional or psychological abuse:** constant criticism, scapegoating, name-calling, belittling, excessive teasing, ignoring, punishing normal behaviour, exposure to domestic and family violence, withholding praise and affection
- **Neglect:** failing to meet the child's basic needs for adequate supervision, food, clothing, shelter, safety, hygiene, medical care, education, love and affection and failure to use available resources to meet those needs
- **Sexual abuse or exploitation:** any sexual act or sexual threat imposed upon a child including exposure, indecent phone calls, voyeurism, persistent intrusion of a child's privacy, penetration, rape, incest, involvement with pornography, child prostitution.

### Child-safe environment strategies

Child-safe environment strategies are put in place to prevent and minimise opportunities for child abuse within your organisation including preventing offenders from gaining access to your organisation. They include ensuring your staff and volunteers understand their child protection obligations and that staff and volunteers know who to go to should they have suspicions a child may be at risk of harm.

### What does establishing a child-safe environment involve?

Basically it requires putting strategies in place to prevent offenders from gaining access to your organisation and reducing opportunities for abuse.

These strategies include:

**Understanding** the different types of child abuse.

**Identifying** potential risks and dangers to children (e.g. going away on camps) and managing those risks.

**Developing** guidelines and processes that clearly outline how to respond to child protection issues.

**Choosing** your staff with care.

- State your commitment to a child safe environment when advertising vacant positions.
- Seek criminal history checks for employees/volunteers working with children. For information on Queensland's "blue card" system, visit: [www.bluecard.qld.gov.au](http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au).
- Conduct referee checks (particularly with previous child-related employers, if possible).

**Nominating** a child protection officer or Member Protection Information Officer who people can trust and go to with concerns.

**Ensuring** that all staff (paid and volunteers) understand their mandatory/ethical reporting obligations for suspected child abuse.

**Ensuring** staff have a clear understanding of acceptable/ unacceptable behaviour and know who to contact to about concerns they may have.

**Talking** openly about the importance of ensuring the safety of children within your organisation.

## Resources

### Where can I get further information or resources on reporting?

- [Queensland Department of Communities](#)
- [Child Wise – “Choose With Care: 12 Steps to a Child Safe Organisation”](#)
- [Queensland Commission for Children & Young People and Child Guardian](#)

