



**Vulnerable Children - Management of Known Sex Offenders at RCH**

**1. Purpose**

The Royal Children's Hospital is committed to providing family centred care without discrimination.

RCH has an obligation to provide a safe environment for patients, families, visitors and employees and to reduce risks associated with sexual offending.

This Procedure describes the process for management of Sex Offenders and Persons of Concern at RCH.

**Background: Sex Offender Registry**

Victoria's sex offender register was established in 2004 under the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004. Inclusion in the register is mandatory following conviction for a range of nominated sexual offences. Both adults and young people are on the register. Victoria Police maintain the Register. The aim of the register is to protect children.

Registered sex offenders living in the community are required to keep police informed about their personal details and whereabouts for a period determined by the Act. They are also required to report the names and ages of children with whom they live or have had 'regular unsupervised contact'.

It is DHS Child Protection's role to determine the risk to children and young people living with or having contact with a person on the Sex Offender Register.

Victoria's Law Reform Commission has proposed a series of recommended reforms in 2012. These include improved information sharing ability to protect children. These reforms have not yet been enacted.

**Implications for RCH**

At present, Victoria Police cannot disclose names of Registered Sex Offenders to RCH. Information sharing provisions exist between Police and DHS. Therefore RCH can contact DHS Child Protection for clarification of potential risks to children.

Individuals are included in the register for a wide range of heterogeneous sex offences. Inclusion on the Register does not automatically mean the person will pose a risk to RCH patients.

Privacy considerations need to be balanced with patient safety.

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## 2. Definition of terms

'**Person of concern**' is a person about whom RCH has information to believe has been convicted of sexual offences against children.

'**Sex offender**' is a person convicted of sexual offences against children and registered on the Victorian Sex Offenders Register. As young people may be on the sex offenders Register, an RCH patient may also be a Person of Concern.

This Procedure will guide RCH response where staff observe suspicious or concerning behaviour involving a registered Sex Offender or Person of Concern.

When staff become aware of a Person of Concern e.g. parent, visitor, other adult at RCH, confirmation of information is required to assess potential risk to patients and families.

## 3. Responsibility

When staff member has reason to believe a **Person of Concern** or **Sex Offender** is present at or likely to arrive at RCH they must:

- Inform the Associate Unit Manager (AUM) and Nurse Unit Manager (NUM) immediately.
- Refer to the Unit Social Worker (call x56111) providing all available information.
- Treat the individual with respect at all times
- After hours, notify the Nursing Hospital Manager, who acts as a representative of hospital management outside of business hours.

The **Social Worker** will

- attempt to obtain further information from DHS Child Protection and / or Victoria Police
- assess risks for individual children and other RCH patients and families through liaison with external agencies, discussion with the child's family and where appropriate, discussion with the Person of Concern
- ensure safety plan is documented in the relevant patient file
- maintain a calm and professional approach to the Person of Concern and other involved parties
- make every effort to ensure privacy of the child and family
- consult with Nurse Unit Manager and the Executive Director Nursing Services
- consult with Legal Services as required
- consult with Chief Social Worker or delegate
- during after-hours periods consult with the Nursing Hospital Manager
- If risk assessment indicates any possible behaviours of concern consider consulting the Clinical Nurse Consultant - Code Grey for advice and support regarding behaviour management, and utilisation of code grey process & procedure

### Information gathering

The Social Worker will attempt to obtain accurate and timely information regarding the nature of the offending behaviour and any associated risk to RCH patients.

It is necessary to distinguish a situation of imminent risk to RCH patients from past offences unrelated to children or RCH patients.

If it is determined that the Person of Concern poses an imminent risk to a patient or has recently offended against children, specific ward management measures should be implemented by Nurse Unit Manager (see below):

It will not always be possible to obtain full information about the nature of the alleged offences. In such situations nursing staff will continue to respectfully monitor the situation using less intrusive actions e.g. ensure AUM aware of situation, nursing staff to monitor visitors on ward, document any concerns, consult with Social Work as required.

The **Nurse Unit Manager** will

- consult with Social Worker regarding assessment of risks to RCH patients
- ensure AUM and relevant nursing staff are aware of concerns
- ensure appropriate ward management measures are in place to minimise risk and ensure a safe environment e.g. NUM (or AUM) to discuss with Executive about the need for supervision to ensure that the Person of Concern's presence on the ward is monitored, provide information to staff about the concerns in a sensitive and confidential

manner

- notify Security of current situation as appropriate
- notify Executive Director Nursing Services / Nursing Hospital Manager if after business hours
- consult Clinical Nurse Consultant - Code Grey, for advice and support
- provide support to staff as required
- where appropriate, join the social worker in discussions with the Person of Concern and family members

In cases of imminent risk to a patient or other children a Code Grey will be called.

When a **Person of Concern** has justified cause to continue to visit RCH and is considered to be a significant risk to a patient or other children the **Executive Director Nursing Services** will

- notify **Executive Director Clinical Operations** and **Executive Director Legal and Information Services**
- provide advice / support to staff as required
- enlist support from Clinical Nurse Consultant - Code Grey & RCH Security where appropriate

## 5. Related procedures

RCH Procedure for Suspected Child Abuse

RCH Procedure: Code Grey: Management of Aggressive Behaviour

RCH Clinical Practice Guideline: Child Abuse Guideline

## 6. Related policies

This document should be read in conjunction with the RCH Vulnerable Children Policy which details the responsibilities of all staff of The Royal Children's Hospital in relation to children for whom there is concern about abuse.

## 7. Related legislation

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005

## 8. References

Victorian Law Reform Discussion Paper

Victorian Law Reform Report - Sex Offenders Registration: Final Report April 2012

## 9. Documentation

A VIHMS incident report may be required; this will be at the direction of the **Executive Director Nursing Services**.

## 10. Further information

Contact RCH Social Work Department

See Department of Human Services website

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