



REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

Children are among the most vulnerable people in any society.

This vulnerability is recognised by Scripture, United Nations proclamation and national and stage legislation.

Children are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation in many forms. Physical violence or neglect, emotional abuse and sexual exploitation are the most common.

The effects of abuse of any sort on a child are more than short term. A child may be affected for the most of his/her life by one act of abuse, though an abused child is commonly abused more than once. The abuser frequently is a parent (care giver) or a close relative/friend of the child, who often has been abused as a child him/herself.

Society, not only the child, is hurt by acts of abuse on children. This behaviour has long lasting effects on individuals, families and the whole community.

The Salvation Army has a tradition of support to children and their families and needs to continue its commitment with an expanded ministry to the abused and the abuser.

Community concern in many states/countries has caused legislators to introduce mandatory reporting of child abuse. In all cases, in Australia, legislation provides that certain professional workers with children report "the belief on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection, because the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm". Again in all cases legislators believe that all citizens have a moral responsibility to report abuse. Legislation underlines this moral responsibility. It should be borne in mind that any report will have social and emotional consequences for all concerned.

Salvationists working with children professionally will be aware of their legal responsibilities and act accordingly, making every effort to ensure that appropriate support is given to both the child and the alleged abuser.

Life's circumstances can bring any person to the point of abuse. Salvationists need to:

- i. be alert and responsive to all forms of abuse in their own areas of influence;

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- ii. be ready to give loving support to any person concerned about their own behaviour, or potential behaviour, encouraging them to seek professional and spiritual help;
- iii. work to ensure that programmes, both within The Salvation Army and in the general community, are made available at both the preventative and treatment levels.

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