



Australian Government
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 National Child
 Protection Clearinghouse

The National Child Protection Clearinghouse has operated from the Australian Institute of Family Studies since 1995. The Clearinghouse is funded by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services as part of the Australian Government's response to the problem of child abuse and neglect. The Clearinghouse collects, produces and distributes information and resources, conducts research, and offers specialist advice on the latest developments in child abuse prevention, child protection, and associated family violence.

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CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION HELP SHEETS

Tom Reisner

HELP SHEET 1

Minimising your organisation's exposure to the risk of child abuse

This help sheet is designed to assist organisations that deal directly with children and young people, to take the first steps in risk managing their exposure to child abuse, in a proactive and responsive way.

Whether your organisation deals directly with children or young people (for example, family welfare agencies, sporting clubs, schools) or you come in contact with children on an irregular basis (for example children attending as spectators or visitors), you have a responsibility to prevent children and young people from being placed in a situation where they are at risk of child abuse.

If staff in your organisation (including volunteers) work directly with children and young people, your legal and moral duty of care is greater than if you only come in contact with children and young people indirectly or irregularly.

Any organisation that works directly with children and young people has a legal and moral duty to ensure their safety and security is maintained. Your duty of care extends to taking all reasonable steps to prevent children or young people from any form of child abuse.

What is child abuse?

The term "child maltreatment" is a catch-all term to describe the maltreatment of children by caregivers, and includes various forms of child abuse and neglect.

The definition of child maltreatment is a complex area. Leah Bromfield, Senior Research Officer at the National Child Protection Clearinghouse advised that the main forms of child maltreatment are sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, and neglect. She provided the following information and description of these terms (personal communication, 23 October 2004).

Sexual abuse is:

- exposure to sexual activity, voyeurism;
- fondling, masturbation, oral sex on a child or offender; or
- penetrative sex on a child (or by the child to the offender).

Available statistics for 2003-2004 show that in Australia, approximately 10 per cent of all child protection notifications involved an allegation of child sexual abuse (AIHW 2005).

Physical abuse is:

- inappropriate/excessive physical discipline or hitting with an object;
- punching, kicking, shaking/throwing; or
- scalding/burning, strangling, fatal abuse.