



HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN SOMEONE IS EXPERIENCING ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

You may feel like this is a big responsibility for you and may not be confident that you will know when something is wrong. That is understandable, so this fact sheet will help you. Remember, you always have a supervisor in Guiding that can help and provide you with support.

Firstly, it is important to know that there are different ways for information about the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person to be brought to your attention. The table below explains these.

DISCLOSURES - IMMEDIATE	ALLEGATIONS	SUSPICIONS
When a child or young person tells you about an incident or incidents of abuse and/or neglect, that happened or is happening to them or that they were directly involved in.	When a child, young person or any other person tells you about an incident or incidents of abuse and/or neglect that happened or is happening to someone else or that someone else was directly involved in.	When you have a reason to suspect an incident or incidents of abuse against and/or neglect of a child or young person has occurred, based on observations, instinct, behaviours and indicators.
EXAMPLES		
<p><i>"I need to tell you about something that happened to me"</i></p> <p><i>"That happened to me too"</i></p> <p><i>"Somebody did something to me that I didn't like"</i></p> <p><i>"I have done something I shouldn't have"</i></p>	<p><i>"I am worried about my friend, she told me something happened to her"</i></p> <p><i>"I saw that person do something to my friend"</i></p> <p><i>"Those people have been doing something that makes me uncomfortable"</i></p>	<p><i>"I just don't feel right about this situation"</i></p> <p><i>"That person makes me really uncomfortable"</i></p> <p><i>"I have noticed her behaviour has changed lately; she doesn't seem herself"</i></p> <p><i>"I don't like the way that person treats her"</i></p>

It is more likely you will have a 'suspicion' that something is not right than a disclosure or allegation. Due to the nature of abuse, and the traumatic impact abuse can have on an individual, disclosures are uncommon, however it is possible someone may be telling you that something is not right without coming right out and saying it. This is usually through particular behaviours, actions and interactions and these are called *indicators*.

INDICATORS

There are many indicators of child abuse and neglect. If you notice a single indicator, or even a few indicators, it does not mean that abuse or neglect has occurred. Remember, children have moods just like adults. However, if you notice single or multiple indicators, this should alert you to the *possibility* of child abuse and neglect.

Equally, abuse and neglect may occur without obvious indicators, so you should always remain open and aware of the environment and the people around you. Additionally, you should use your judgment to assess risk, just like you would if you were taking Youth Members to the beach or camping.

There are physical *indicators* a child may display such as:

- Hair feels like it's standing on end
- Tightness/tight band around the head
- Start to cry without a reason
- Heart thumping
- Throat feels tight
- Goosebumps
- Butterflies in tummy
- Need to go to the toilet
- Shaky all over
- Wobbly knees

The following list includes examples of indicators in categories of abuse. Most of these can also be indicators of Family Violence. There are many more, and many cross over, but this is a starting point for you.

ABUSE TYPE: PHYSICAL

INDICATORS

- Disclosure of abuse
- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts
- Fractured bones, especially where a fracture is unlikely to occur accidentally
- Poisoning
- Internal injuries
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Wearing long sleeved clothes on hot days (to hide bruising or other injury)
- Demonstrating fear of parents/carers and of going home
- Becoming fearful when other children cry or shout
- Being excessively friendly to strangers
- Being very passive and compliant

ABUSE TYPE: SEXUAL ABUSE AND CHILD EXPLOITATION

INDICATORS

- Child telling someone that sexual abuse has occurred
- Complaining of headaches or stomach pains
- Sexually transmitted infections, bleeding or pregnancy
- Displaying sexual behaviour or knowledge which is unusual for the child's age
- Showing behaviour such as frequent rocking, sucking and biting
- Experiencing difficulties in sleeping
- Having difficulties in relating to adults and peers
- Unexplained absences, unexplained gifts or money are often signs of sexual exploitation

ABUSE TYPE: EMOTIONAL ABUSE

INDICATORS

- Disclosure of abuse
- Developmental delays
- Displaying low self esteem
- Tending to be withdrawn, passive, tearful
- Displaying aggressive or demanding behaviour
- Being highly anxious
- Acting like a much younger child e.g. bedwetting
- Displaying difficulties relating to adults and peers

ABUSE TYPE: NEGLECT

INDICATORS

- Disclosure of neglect
- Frequent hunger
- Malnutrition
- Poor hygiene
- Inappropriate clothing, eg summer clothes in winter
- Left unsupervised for long periods
- Medical needs not attended to
- Consistently last to be picked up without explanation
- Stealing food
- Often being tired, falling asleep
- Displaying aggressive behaviour
- Not getting on well with peers

ABUSE TYPE: ANY OF THE ABOVE

INDICATORS

- Use of drugs and alcohol
- Regular conflict with adults and peers
- Absconding
- Use of adult language