

IF SOMEONE MAKES A DISCLOSURE OR AN ALLEGATION

If someone, particularly a child or young person, discloses or alleges any type of abuse or neglect to you, the way you respond in that moment is likely to have a significant impact on them at the time, and in the future.

Additionally, the way you collect or record the information that is being shared can also have a significant impact on the investigation, and any court procedures that may follow.

Top tips to remember:

- 1 Believe the child or young person, and tell them that you believe them.
- 2 Listen, and show them that you are listening through your body language.
- 3 Avoid asking questions or pushing for more information, it is not your job to investigate.
- 4 Tell them you will take it seriously, and that you will do something about it.
- 5 Confirm if they are safe, now.
- 6 Make an accurate record of the information, as soon as you can.

Additionally:

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Find a safe space to speak in, preferably so others can still see you, but not hear your conversation. ✓ Listen carefully to what the child is saying; let them use their own words. ✓ Stay calm and in control of your feelings. ✓ Tell the child that you are pleased they told you and that they did the right thing by telling you. ✓ Tell the child it is not their fault and they are not responsible for the abuse. ✓ Let the child know what will happen next. ✓ Advise your supervisor and report to police and/or relevant statutory child protection agency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Push the child into giving details of the abuse. ✗ Conduct an investigation. This is <u>not</u> your role – your role is to listen to what the child wants to tell you. ✗ Become overly emotional or anxious. ✗ Indiscriminately discuss the circumstances of the incident with others not directly involved with the child. ✗ Make promises you cannot keep, such as promising that you will not tell anyone. ✗ Tell them to come back later because you are too busy.

IF YOU HAVE A SUSPICION

In most cases, we receive information about abuse or neglect through a range of sources: we might see something, hear something, notice something, or feel something that is telling us that something is not quite right. Even if things might seem minor or insignificant on their own, together they may paint a clearer picture of what is happening.

Top tips to remember:

- 1 Keep a record – emailing notes to a supervisor is a great way to keep them informed and to keep a record at the same time.
- 2 Be more aware – make an effort to observe interactions or behaviours that you may have otherwise not noticed
- 3 Back yourself – ‘instinct’ and ‘gut feeling’ is our body signalling to us to be careful, don’t ignore that!
- 4 Evidence, if we have it, is useful but not necessary. Don’t hold off until you have proof, in most cases your observations and instinct are evidence enough to report.
- 5 Maintain confidentiality – it may be necessary to share your suspicions with a supervisor and even a colleague so you can ensure the person involved is safe, but make sure you only discuss the matter with people that absolutely need to know.
- 6 Continue to maintain a safe environment and culture for everybody where people feel like they belong. This will potentially empower people to raise concerns with you that may support your suspicions.

TOOLS

- [Responding to Abuse & Neglect – How Will I Know?](#)
- [Reporting Abuse & Neglect – Who Needs to Know?](#)
- [Australian Institute of Family Studies: Responding to Children and Young People’s Disclosures of Abuse](#)