

Frequently Asked Questions

Keep Them Safe (KTS)

General KTS:

Q: What strategies are in place for transient families and cross-border towns (e.g. Tweed Heads/Coolangatta, Queanbeyan/ACT)?

A: The risk of significant harm reporting threshold is the result of changes to NSW legislation. It only alters the obligations for reporting children and young people who live in NSW or are present in NSW. The changed threshold is about the way NSW Community Services receives and assesses risk to children and young people. Reporters from other states will continue to contact the Child Protection Helpline direct. Existing practices around exchange of information between states remain the same.

Agencies in other states that deal regularly with Community Services (i.e. those close to NSW borders) will be made aware of the changes accompanying the new threshold. The Child Protection Helpline will also be able to direct interstate reporters to the Mandatory Reporter Guide.

NSW Community Services staff will continue to follow the same process for making interstate risk of harm reports and alerts to other states, territories, and New Zealand.

Q: How will Keep Them Safe be evaluated?

A: An Evaluation Framework is being developed. The framework will establish consistent reporting requirements from key components of the Keep Them Safe: A shared approach to child wellbeing Action Plan to assess the extent to which the plan has met its objectives of improving the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of children in NSW, reasons why aspects of the reforms have or have not been successful, and processes for using the evaluation outcomes to adjust future approaches based on progressive evaluation findings. Once the framework has been agreed, systematic evaluation of different aspects of Keep Them Safe can begin.

Information Exchange:

Q: What does this mean for the privacy of families?

A: It is important that organisations providing a service to a child, young person or their parents/carers inform them early on that information about them may be provided to other organisations. Where appropriate, a client should be informed that information about them is being disclosed to another agency so long as this does not place the child or young person at further risk. Keeping the client informed is part of best-practice case management and helps to maximise

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Q: Do we need consent from parents to discuss cases/share information?

A: No, consent is not necessary for the exchange of information under Chapter 16A. But it is best practice to keep parents and families informed at all stages.

Q: Can I refuse to disclose information when requested?

A: Yes. An agency is not required to disclose information under the new legislative provisions unless it relates to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person or class of children or young people. An agency may also decline to provide information in certain circumstances, such as if it believes it would prejudice an investigation of a possible breach of law, care proceedings or a coronial inquest, endanger a person's life, or is not in the public interest. More details are available in the extended Information Exchange factsheet.

Child Wellbeing Units:

Q: How do non-government organisations contact Child Wellbeing Units?

A: If a non-government organisation (NGO) has concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child, the NGO can contact the Child Wellbeing Unit (CWU) using Chapter 16A provisions. Requests for information or provision of information should be made in writing, using these forms. The forms can then be emailed to the relevant Child Wellbeing Unit.

Department of Education and Communities: cwu@det.nsw.edu.au

NSW Police Force: childWB@police.nsw.gov.au

NSW Health

Northern CWU: NCWU@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au

Greater Eastern and Southern CWU: GESCWU@sesiahs.health.nsw.gov.au

Western CWU: westernchildwellbeingunit@gwahs.health.nsw.gov.au

Q: Why isn't there a Child Wellbeing Unit for non-government organisations?

A: The Special Commission of Inquiry did not recommend the establishment of a Child Wellbeing Unit for non-government organisations (NGOs) as they represent a relatively small number of reports (eight per cent) to Community Services spread across a large number of organisations, while NSW Health, Department of Education and Communities, NSW Police Force, and Department of Family and Community Services are responsible for 60 per cent of all reports, and therefore require centralised support. The KTS Support Line

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(1800 772 479) can provide assistance in using the Mandatory Reporter Guide and identifying suitable services to non-government mandatory reporters.

Where a non-government organisation (NGO) has concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child and they think one of these agencies is currently providing services to the child or family, the NGO can request information from a Child Wellbeing Unit (CWU) using Chapter 16A provisions. However, it is better to exchange information with workers who you know are directly involved with the child or family in the local area (e.g. community health nurse, school principal) rather than contacting a CWU. This is because information exchange should aim to improve local workers' understanding of the case circumstances (including shared concerns), as well as to facilitate coordination of services and supports. CWUs will not generally refer families directly to services where no ongoing local case management is in place.

Mandatory reporters:

Q: Will the identity of reporters be protected under the new system?

A: The reporter's details cannot be exchanged without their permission (whether a report has been made to a Child Wellbeing Unit or directly to the Child Protection Helpline, and whether or not it meets the reporting threshold). From the end of January 2010, an exception to the provisions that protect the identity of reporters came into effect under amendments to Section 29 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998.

Disclosure of the reporter's details is now allowed where the disclosure is made in connection with the investigation of a serious offence alleged to have been committed against a child or young person and where the disclosure is necessary to safeguard or promote the safety, welfare or wellbeing of any child or young person (whether or not the victim of the alleged offence).

However, this disclosure without the consent of the reporter is not permitted unless a senior officer of the law enforcement agency to which the disclosure is to be made has certified in writing that obtaining the reporter's consent would prejudice the investigation of the serious offence, or the person or body that makes the disclosure has certified in writing that it is impractical to obtain the consent of the reporter.

Family Referral Services:

Q: What is the role of Family Referral Services?

A: The role of the Family Referral Service is to assist families in need (who do not meet ROSH) to access specific and appropriate support services.

The intent is prevent a difficult situation from becoming a crisis where a statutory child protection response will be required.

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The Family Referral Service provides services to both the agencies supporting the families and directly to families. It does this by:

- facilitating and improving access to services by providing appropriate information, support and advocacy
- providing telephone and face-to-face services
- providing feedback pathways for callers and services as part of a quality improvement process at both a system and service level
- working towards developing a stronger network of NGO, Government and individual providers who can meet the needs of the families
- where appropriate and possible, providing referrals to specific cultural services such as Aboriginal services, CALD services, etc.

Q: What are the contact details for Family Referral Services?

A: The current Family Referral Services (FRS) sites are operational and contact details are included below:

Western FRS

General Public: 1300 339 016

Service Providers: (02) 6885 8888

Operates 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday

Western Sydney FRS

All callers: 1300 403 373

Operates 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Hunter Central Coast FRS

All callers: 1300 006 480

Operates 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday

Illawarra FRS

All callers: 1800 663 863

Operates 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday

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New England North West FRS

All callers: 1800 597 589

Operates 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday

Far North Coast FRS

All callers: 1300 338 774

Operates 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday

Mid North Coast FRS

All callers: 1300 006 480

Operates: 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday