

How to report risk of significant harm

In an emergency, where there are urgent concerns for the child's health or life, it is important to contact the police, using the emergency line "000".

In other circumstances, all mandatory reporters will report matters to the Child Protection Helpline where they believe a child is at risk of significant harm. They can:

- call 13 3627
- fax 9633 7666 using the designated fax form in accordance with organisation policy
- eReport (where available)

Before making a report, mandatory reporters should consult the MRG to assess whether a child or young person is at risk of significant harm. The MRG will also be available to anyone concerned about a child or young person and who wants help with determining if a report to the Child Protection Helpline is necessary.

All mandatory reporters should also seek direction from their organisation procedures on making a child protection report. Mandatory reporters employed in government organisations that have a Child Wellbeing Unit can call that unit for help when they are in doubt about whether a case meets the new threshold of risk of significant harm

The general public will continue to make reports to the Child Protection Helpline by calling 132 111.

Reports to the Child Protection Helpline must be made by phone where the child is at high or imminent risk of significant harm due to:

- serious physical injury to a child or young person requiring medical attention
- serious neglect to a child or young person of an immediate nature
- domestic violence involving serious injury and/or use of a weapon
- sexual harm involving serious current concern
- a high risk prenatal report where the birth is imminent
- immediate safety issues
- death of a sibling in circumstances which are reviewable by the NSW Ombudsman (See www.ombo.nsw.gov.au for further information)

The report concerns:

- a group of children/young people other than a sibling group
- a child or young person who resides outside of NSW

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- an alleged person causing harm who has access to the child AND there is concern that the child may experience harm in the foreseeable future
- complex information which is more easily communicated verbally than in writing
- the reporter is unsure how to interpret the MRG outcome and needs to discuss this with a Helpline caseworker. Reporters with a Child Wellbeing Unit will discuss such an outcome with the Child Wellbeing Unit.

Information required in a report

The detail and quality of the information provided to the Helpline by the reporter is critical to the quality of the decision making that follows. It is important to provide all relevant information when making a child protection report.

Prepare for making a report to Helpline by gathering all the available information together. Note that reports must still be made where only a little information is known but there is risk of significant harm.

The kind of information which is useful includes risk of significant harm information, as prompted by the MRG, as well as information about the child or young person, the family, the reporter, and the context of the report, as follows:

Child's information

- Name of child or young person (or alias) or other means of identifying them
- Age and date of birth (or approximation)
- If child is Indigenous – Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both
- Cultural background of child, language(s) spoken, religion and other cultural factors
- Name, age of other household children or young people
- Address of child and family
- School or child care details
- If child has a disability – nature/type, severity, impact on functioning
- Is the child/young person subject of an Apprehended Violence Order?
- Is the child or young person under the care of the Minister or residing in out-of-home care?

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Family information

- Name, age of parents/carer and household adults
- Home and/or mobile phone number
- Cultural background of parents, language(s) spoken, religion and other cultural factors
- Information about parental risk factors and how they link to child's risk of harm
- Domestic violence
- Alcohol or other drug misuse
- Unmanaged mental illness
- Intellectual or other disability
- Protective factors and family strengths
- Non-offending carers' capacity to protect child
- Any previous suspicious death of a child or young person in the household?
- Is the parent/carer pregnant?
- Is the parent/carer the subject of an Apprehended Violence Order?
- Description of family structure (for example, biological parents, single parent, blended family)
- Name, age, gender of siblings. Do siblings live with the child or young person?

Reporter details

- Name, organisation address, phone and email details
- Position
- Reason for reporting today
- Nature of contact with child or family
- Nature of ongoing role with child or family (include frequency, duration and type)
- If report is being made by someone else in the organisation, name of the organisation worker who sourced the report

Other information

- Services involved with child/family if known
- Principal language of family and whether an interpreter for a spoken or signed language is required
- If parent knows of report and their response
- If child or young person knows about the report and their views

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How to report risk of significant harm

- Information related to worker safety issues
- Outcome of Mandatory Reporter Guide

Once a report is made to the Child Protection Helpline no further report needs to be made unless new information comes to hand. Reports should be made in one form only, i.e. either by phone or fax or eReport. Duplicating or confirming a report in writing is unnecessary. Note that the summary page or the decision report from the online Mandatory Reporter Guide can be printed and placed on your records. While the legal obligation to report significant harm remains, the penalty applying to mandatory reporters who fail to report concerns about risk of harm was removed from the legislation in late January 2010.