

UNIQ You Handling Disclosures or Suspicions of Harm Policy

Last Updated: 16th of February 2026

Scope

This procedure applies to all Board members, employees, volunteers, advisors and contractors engaged in child related work with UNIQ YOU.

All personnel have a legal and ethical obligation to respond appropriately to disclosures or suspicions of harm.

What is a 'disclosure' of harm?

A disclosure of harm occurs when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened, is happening, or is likely to happen to a child.

Disclosures of harm may start with:

- *'I think I saw...'*
- *'Somebody told me that...'*
- *'Just think you should know...'*
- *'I'm not sure what I want you to do, but...'*

It is important to act quickly and in the best interests of the child or young person after a disclosure of harm is received, irrespective of the alleged source of harm.

What is a 'suspicion' of harm?

A suspicion of harm is when someone has a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering, or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering, significant harm. A child who has been, or may be experiencing, abuse may show behavioural, emotional or physical signs of stress and abuse.

There may also be other circumstances where there is concern for a child's welfare but it does not reach the threshold to be considered a disclosure or suspicion of harm.

Considerations when forming a reasonable suspicion about harm to a child include, but are not limited to:

- Whether there are detrimental effects on the child's body or the psychological state or emotional state
- That are evident to the person, or
- That the person considers are likely to become evident in the future, and
- In relation to any detrimental effects mentioned above
- Their nature and severity, and
- The likelihood that they will continue, and
- The child's age (section 13c of the *child protection act 1999*).

EXAMPLES OF TYPES OF ABUSE

Actions/behaviours by the perpetrator

Physical abuse

- Hitting
- Shaking
- Burning/scalding
- Biting
- Causing bruise or fractures by excessive discipline
- Poisoning
- Giving children alcohol, illegal drugs or inappropriate medication
- Domestic and family violence

Psychological or Emotional abuse

- Scapegoating
- Persistent rejection or hostility
- Constant yelling, insults or criticism
- Cultural affronts
- Teasing/bullying/cyberbullying

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic and family violence
Neglect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not giving a child sufficient food, housing, clothing, enough sleep, hygienic living conditions, health care and adequate supervision Leaving children unattended Children missing school
Sexual abuse or exploitation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kissing or holding a child in a sexual manner Exposing a sexual body part to a child Exposing children to sexual acts or pornography Making obscene phone calls or remarks to a child Having sexual relations with a child or young person under 16 years of age

EXAMPLES OF RESULTING HARM
<i>Impact experienced by the child</i>
Physical <i>Refers to the body</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bruising Fractures Internal injuries Burns
Psychological <i>Refers to the mind and cognitive processes</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning and developmental delays Impaired self-image

Emotional

Refers to the ability to express emotions

- Depression
- Hypervigilance
- Poor self esteem
- Self harm
- Fear/anxiety

Note: this is not a complete list of the types of abuse and resulting harm that may be experienced by children and young people, however it is to be used as a predictive tool for potential signs of harm. Each child's experience is different and depends on a range of factors, including the child or young person's age, the nature of harm, how long the abuse has been occurring, their relationship to the abuser, and their support networks.

General Indicators of Child Abuse

Some general indicators of child abuse include:

- Showing wariness and distrust of adults
- Rocking, sucking or biting excessively
- Bedwetting or soiling
- Demanding or aggressive behaviour
- Sleeping difficulties, often being tired and falling asleep
- Low self-esteem
- Difficulty relating to adults and peers
- Abusing alcohol or drugs
- Being seemingly accident prone
- Having broken bones or unexplained bruising, burns or welts in different stages of healing

- Being unable to explain an injury, or providing explanations that are inconsistent, vague or unbelievable
- Feeling suicidal or attempting suicide
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Being withdrawn or overly obedient
- Being reluctant to go home
- Creating stories, poems or artwork about abuse.

General Indicators of Neglect

Some indicators of neglect include:

- Malnutrition, begging, stealing or hoarding food
- Poor hygiene, matted hair, dirty skin or body odour
- Unattended physical or medical problems
- Comments from a child that no one is home to provide care
- Being constantly tired
- Frequent lateness or absence from school
- Inappropriate clothing, especially inadequate clothing in winter
- Frequent illness, infections or sores
- Being left unsupervised for long periods.

Cultural Safety Considerations

When responding to disclosures involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, personnel must recognise:

- The impacts of intergenerational trauma, colonisation and systemic discrimination
- Potential mistrust of authorities due to historical child removal and government intervention
- The importance of family, kinship systems and community relationships

Responses must be culturally safe and trauma-informed. This includes communicating respectfully, avoiding assumptions, and ensuring that reporting obligations are met in a way that minimises further harm or cultural disconnection where possible.

Where appropriate and safe to do so, consideration should be given to whether culturally appropriate support pathways are available.

How To Report A Disclosure of Suspicions of Harm

If a child is in immediate danger or at risk of serious harm, contact emergency services (000) immediately before following any further reporting steps.

You report a disclosure of suspicions of harm if:

- A child or young person tells you they have been harmed
- Someone else, for example another child, a parent, or an employee, tells you that harm has occurred or is likely to occur
- A child or young person tells you they know someone who has been harmed (it is possible that they may be referring to themselves)
- You are concerned at significant changes in the behaviour of a child or young person, or the presence of new unexplained and suspicious injuries, or
- You see the harm happening.

All UNIQ YOU personnel have a duty of care and a legal obligation to report any reportable suspicion of harm in accordance with the child protection legislation applicable in the relevant Australian state or territory in which the program is delivered.

The process to report a disclosure of suspicions of harm is:

- Remain calm and listen attentively, actively and non-judgmentally
- Ensure there is a private place to talk
- Encourage the person to talk in their own words and ensure just enough open-ended
- Questions are asked to act protectively (e.g. 'can you tell me what happened'...or 'can you tell me more about that'). Don't ask leading questions which tend to suggest an answer.

- Explain that you cannot promise absolute confidentiality and that information will only be shared with people who need to know in order to keep the child safe.
- Reassure the person they have done the right thing by telling you
- Advise the child that you need to tell someone else who can help the child
- Document the disclosure clearly and accurately on a *non-injury incident report form*, including a detailed description of:
 - The relevant dates, times, locations and who was present
 - Exactly what the person disclosing said, using “i said,” “they said,” statements
 - The questions you asked
 - Any comments you made, and
 - Your actions following the disclosure
- Do not conduct your own investigation, question the alleged perpetrator, gather evidence beyond what is necessary to report, or attempt to mediate an outcome.
- Follow any relevant process for reporting a disclosure of harm and consider whether there are requirements to report matters to the queensland police service or child safety.

In relation to a ‘suspicion’ of harm, you may, for example, you should:

- Remain alert to any warning signs or indicators
- Pay close attention to changes in the child’s behaviour, ideas, feelings and the words they use
- Make written notes of observations in a non-judgemental and accurate manner
- Assure a child that they can come to talk when they need to, and listen to them and believe them when they do, and
- Complete a *non-injury incident report form*, available on google drive, and consider whether there are requirements to report matters to the queensland police service or child safety, and consider what support services could be offered to the family if the concern does not meet the relevant threshold to make a report.

Reporting to Relevant Authorities

*The information which **must** be provided to Child Safety*

Under section 13G(2) of the *Child Protection Act 1999*, the written report about a 'reportable suspicion' must contain the following details:

- The basis on which the person has formed the reportable suspicion, and
- The information prescribed by regulation, to the extent of the person's knowledge.

Reporting of a disclosure or suspicion of harm involves a 3-step-process, namely:

1. Considering whether the disclosure or suspicion needs to be reported to the Queensland Police Service
2. Considering whether the disclosure or reasonable suspicion of harm needs to be reported to Child Safety
3. Consider whether referral is required to other support services, including Family and Child Connect

Review of Current Policies and Procedures

A review of the operation of policies and procedures will be undertaken by UNIQ YOU following a disclosure or suspicion of harm being actioned. This is to:

- Consider the application of the policies and whether there are any changes necessary, for example, whether they are suitable for:
- Responding to a child or young person when a disclosure is made
- Protecting children and young people from harm, and
- Assisting involved parties within your organisation, and
- Identify any additional training requirements.

During the review, record what worked well and what may need to be improved upon. If there is a requirement to develop new policies and procedures, information regarding the changes will be provided to relevant stakeholders and staff.

All responses to disclosures or suspicions of harm will be managed in accordance with principles of procedural fairness and in a manner that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children.

Post-incident reviews will also consider whether cultural safety factors were appropriately addressed and whether any systemic improvements are required.

Media attention

All media enquiries relating to a disclosure or suspicion of harm must be directed to the Chief Executive Officer. No staff member or volunteer is authorised to provide comment to the media regarding child safety incidents.

Confidential and identifying information must not be disclosed under any circumstances.