



CHCPRT025

Identify and report children
and young people at risk

LEARNER GUIDE



Copyright

This document was developed by Harvard Management Institute Pty Ltd.

© 2023 Harvard Management Institute Pty Ltd.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior written permission of Harvard Management Institute Pty Ltd.

Version Control & Document History

Date	Summary of Modifications	Version
9 October 2023	Version 1.0 released for publishing	1.0
1 March 2024	Version 1.1 endorsed for use	1.1

Table of Contents

This Learner Guide.....	5
About This Unit of Competency Introduction	6
This Learner Guide Covers	6
Learning Program.....	6
Additional Learning Support	7
Facilitation.....	7
Flexible Learning	8
Space	8
Study Resources.....	9
Time	9
Study Strategies	10
Using This Learner Guide	11
How to Get the Most Out of Your Learner Guide.....	11
Additional Research, Reading, and Note-Taking	12
Disclaimer.....	12
Introduction	13
I. Identify Children and Young People at Risk.....	24
1.1 Observe Signs and Indicators to Identify Children, Families and Young People at Risk.....	25
1.1.1 Signs and Indicators of Abuse	30
1.1.2 Impact of Trauma on Children and Young People.....	34
1.1.3 How to Observe Signs and Indicators to Identify Children, Families and Young People at Risk.....	35
1.2 Collect Information and Document Signs and Indicators of Abuse	37

1.3 Use Communication and Information Gathering Techniques With Children and Young People	47
1.3.1 Using Engagement Techniques With Children and Young People	47
1.3.2 Using Communication and Information Gathering Techniques With Children and Young People	49
1.3.3 Using Information Gathering Techniques With Children and Young People	54
II. Report Indications of Possible Risk of Harm	60
2.1 Ensure Documentation in Person's Record Is Accurate, Detailed and Based on Facts	62
2.2 Report Risk of Harm Indicators, Using the Relevant Reporting Mechanism	66
III. Apply Ethical Practices in Work With Children and Young People	72
3.1 Recognise and Uphold the Rights of Children and Young People in the Provision of Services	73
3.1.1 Rights of Children and Young People	74
3.1.2 Universal Declaration of Human Rights	76
3.1.3 Conventions on the Rights of the Child	78
3.2 Employ Ethical Practices and Observe Professional Boundaries When Working With Children and Young People	81
3.3 Recognise and Report Indicators for Ethical Concerns When Working With Children and Young People	89
References	93

This Learner Guide

CHCPRT025 - Identify and report children and young people at risk (Release 1)

This unit describes the performance outcomes, skills and knowledge required to identify children and young people who are at risk and report in line with legislative requirements. This work occurs within legislative and policy frameworks and carries a duty of care responsibility.

This unit applies to workers in a range of job roles providing services to children and young people including in community services and health contexts.

The skills in this unit must be applied in accordance with Commonwealth and State or Territory legislation, Australian standards and industry codes of practice.

No occupational licensing, certification or specific legislative requirements apply to this unit at the time of publication.

A complete copy of the above unit of competency can be downloaded from the TGA website:

<https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/CHCPRT025>

About This Unit of Competency Introduction

As a worker, a trainee, or a future worker, you want to enjoy your work and become known as a valuable team member. This unit of competency will help you acquire the knowledge and skills to work effectively as an individual and in groups. It will give you the basis to contribute to the goals of the organisation which employs you.

It is essential that you begin your training by becoming familiar with the industry standards to which organisations must conform.

This Learner Guide Covers

Identify and report children and young people at risk

- I. Identify children and young people at risk
- II. Report indications of possible risk of harm
- III. Apply ethical practices in work with children and young people

Learning Program

As you progress through this unit of competency, you will develop skills in locating and understanding an organisation's policies and procedures. You will build up a sound knowledge of the industry standards within which organisations must operate. You will become more aware of the effect that your own skills in dealing with people have on your success or otherwise in the workplace. Knowledge of your skills and capabilities will help you make informed choices about your further study and career options.

Additional Learning Support

To obtain additional support you may:

- Search for other resources. You may find books, journals, videos and other materials which provide additional information about topics in this unit.
- Search for other resources in your local library. Most libraries keep information about government departments and other organisations, services and programs. The librarian should be able to help you locate such resources.
- Contact information services such as Equal Opportunity Commission, Fair Work Commission, Ombudsman, union organisations, ASQA and information services provided by various government departments. Many of these services are listed in the telephone directory or online.
- Contact your facilitator.

Facilitation

Your training organisation will provide you with a facilitator. Your facilitator will play an active role in supporting your learning. Your facilitator will help you at any time during working hours to assist with:

- How and when to make contact
- What you need to do to complete this unit of study
- What support will be provided.

Here are some of the things your facilitator may do to make your study easier:

- Give you a clear visual timetable of events for the semester or term in which you are enrolled, including any deadlines for assessments
- Provide you with online webinar times and availability
- Use 'action sheets' to remind you about tasks you need to complete, and updates on websites
- Make themselves available by telephone for support discussion and provide you with industry updates by email where applicable
- Keep in touch with you during your studies

Flexible Learning

Becoming competent is an interesting and exciting thing to do. By completing this program, you will develop the skills and knowledge required to work in your target role, while learning about current issues in the industry. You will establish relationships with other students, fellow workers and clients. You will learn about your own ideas, attitudes and values. You will also have fun. (Most of the time!)

At other times, studying can seem overwhelming and impossibly demanding, particularly when you have an assignment to do and you aren't sure how to tackle it, your family and friends want you to spend time with them, or a movie you want to see is on television.

Sometimes being a student can be hard.

Here are some ideas to help you through the hard times. To study effectively, you need space, resources, and time.

Space

Try to set up a place at home or at work where you can:

- Keep your study materials
- Be reasonably quiet and free from interruptions
- Be reasonably comfortable, with good lighting, seating, and a flat surface for writing

If it is impossible for you to set up a study space, perhaps you could use your local library. You will not be able to store your study materials there, but you will have a quiet place, a desk and chair, and easy access to the other facilities.

Study Resources

The most basic resources you will need are:

- A chair
- A desk or table
- A computer with Internet access
- A reading lamp or good light
- A folder or file to keep your notes and study materials together
- Materials to record information (pen and paper or notebooks, or a computer and printer)
- Reference materials, including a dictionary

Do not forget that other people can be valuable study resources. Your fellow workers, work supervisor, other students, your facilitator, your local librarian, and workers in this area can also help you.

Time

It is important to plan your study time. Work out a time that suits you and plan around it. Most people find that studying in short, concentrated blocks of time (an hour or two) at regular intervals (daily, every second day, once a week) is more effective than trying to cram a lot of learning into a whole day. You need time to 'digest' the information in one section before you move on to the next, and everyone needs regular breaks from study to avoid overload. Be realistic in allocating time for study. Look at what is required for the unit and look at your other commitments.

Make up a study timetable and stick to it. Build in 'deadlines' and set yourself goals for completing study tasks. Allow time for reading and completing activities. Remember that it is the quality of the time you spend studying rather than the quantity that is important.

Study Strategies

Different people have different learning 'styles'. Some people learn best by listening or repeating things out loud. Some learn best by 'doing', some by reading and making notes. Assess your own learning style and try to identify any barriers to learning which might affect you.

Are you easily distracted? Are you afraid you will fail? Are you taking study too seriously? Not seriously enough? Do you have supportive friends and family?

Here are some ideas for effective study strategies:

1. **Make notes.** This often helps you to remember new or unfamiliar information. Do not worry about spelling or neatness, as long as you can read your own notes. Keep your notes with the rest of your study materials and add to them as you go. Use pictures and diagrams if this helps.
2. **Underline keywords** when you are reading the materials in this Learner Guide. (Do not underline things in other people's books.) This also helps you to remember important points.
3. **Talk to other people** (fellow workers, fellow students, friends, family, or your facilitator) about what you are learning. As well as help you to clarify and understand new ideas, talking also gives you a chance to find out extra information and to get fresh ideas and different points of view.



Using This Learner Guide

A Learner Guide is just that, a guide to help you learn. A Learner Guide is not a textbook. Your Learner Guide will:

1. Describe the skills you need to demonstrate to achieve competency for this unit.
2. Provide information and knowledge to help you develop your skills.
3. Provide you with structured learning activities to help you absorb knowledge and information and practice your skills.
4. Direct you to other sources of additional knowledge and information about topics for this unit.

How to Get the Most Out of Your Learner Guide

Some sections are quite long and cover complex ideas and information. If you come across anything you do not understand:

1. Talk to your facilitator.
2. Research the area using the books and materials listed under Resources.
3. Discuss the issue with other people (your workplace supervisor, fellow workers, fellow students).
4. Try to relate the information presented in this Learner Guide to your own experience and to what you already know.
5. Ask yourself questions as you go. For example, 'Have I seen this happening anywhere?' 'Could this apply to me?' 'What if...' This will help you to 'make sense' of new material, and to build on your existing knowledge.
6. Talk to people about your study. Talking is a great way to reinforce what you are learning.
7. Make notes.
8. Work through the activities. Even if you are tempted to skip some activities, do them anyway. They are there for a reason, and even if you already have the knowledge or skills relating to a particular activity, doing them will help to reinforce what you already know. If you do not understand an activity, think carefully about the way the questions or instructions are phrased. Read the section again to see if you can make sense of it. If you are still confused, contact your facilitator or discuss the activity with other students, fellow workers or with your workplace supervisor.

Additional Research, Reading, and Note-Taking

If you are using the additional references and resources suggested in the Learner Guide to take your knowledge a step further, there are a few simple things to keep in mind to make this kind of research easier.

Always make a note of the author's name, the title of the book or article, the edition, when it was published, where it was published, and the name of the publisher. This includes online articles. If you are taking notes about specific ideas or information, you will need to put the page number as well. This is called the reference information. You will need this for some assessment tasks, and it will help you to find the book again if you need to.

Keep your notes short and to the point. Relate your notes to the material in your Learner Guide. Put things into your own words. This will give you a better understanding of the material.

Start off with a question you want answered when you are exploring additional resource materials. This will structure your reading and save you time.

Disclaimer

This Learner Guide contains links to external websites and references that were current at the time of writing. Please note that the availability, content, and information provided on external websites may change over time. While we make efforts to provide accurate and relevant links, please be aware that external content may change or become unavailable over time. This could lead to links becoming outdated or resulting in broken links. Users are encouraged to verify the information and explore any updates that may have occurred since the publication of this guide.

For concerns, email feedback@compliantlearningresources.com.au

Introduction

In Australia, protecting children and young people from harm is crucial. Everyone has a responsibility to recognise and help when they suspect a child might be at risk. The Australian and state/territory governments have a system for identifying and reporting children and young people who may be at risk.

Children and young people at risk are persons under 18 who may face potential harm due to abuse, neglect or violence. Note that age ranges for children and young people vary by state or territory. Some states and territories use both terms, while others only use one. The table below lists the age range for children and young people by each state or territory.

State/territory	Age range of children	Age range of young people
Australian Capital Territory	0 to 11 years old	12 to 17 years old
New South Wales	0 to 15 years old	16 to 17 years old
Northern Territory	0 to 17 years old	Not specified
Queensland	0 to 17 years old	Not specified
South Australia	0 to 17 years old	0 to 17 years old
Tasmania	0 to 17 years old	Not specified
Victoria	0 to 17 years old	Not specified
Western Australia	0 to 17 years old	Not specified

'Mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect', Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia, CC BY 4.0

This Learner Guide will help you develop the needed skills to identify and report children and young people who may be at risk. *Identifying* means recognising signs and situations that suggest a child or young person may be at risk. On the other hand, *reporting* involves following procedures to inform relevant authorities about your concerns.

This unit is relevant for job roles that come into contact with children and young people, such as in community services and health contexts. This can also be helpful when working in child protection. By completing this unit, you will learn how to:

- Recognise signs of potential risks
- Follow the appropriate procedures to report your concerns in line with legislative requirements

As the learner of this guide, you must learn these skills. These enable you to protect the wellbeing and safety of children and young people you may encounter in your work. By identifying and reporting potential risks, you can intervene early. Doing so will prevent further harm and ensure appropriate support is provided.

Not knowing how to identify and report at risk children and young people can have serious consequences. It may lead to prolonged abuse, neglect or even loss of life for those needing protection. Additionally, legal obligations and professional responsibilities require individuals working with children and young people to safeguard their welfare. This is also known as the child-focused work practice.



Child-Focused Work Practices

Child-focused work practices prioritise the child or young person's wellbeing and safety. These practices are guided by principles that promote the rights and protection of children and young people. Here are some key characteristics of child-focused work practices that you should know:

- **Child-centred approach** – The child or young person's needs and opinions are considered, and they are encouraged to participate in decision-making.
- **Individualised approach** – It recognises that every child or young person is unique, so the approach should consider their background, experiences and challenges.
- **Strengths-based approach** – It focuses on identifying and building upon the strengths, abilities, and positive qualities of children and young people. Instead of only looking at problems, you also recognise their potential and what they are good at.
- **Effective communication** – A safe space for children and young people is created to help them express themselves and be heard.
- **Collaboration** – Child-focused work practices involve working with experts, families and others who are a part of the child or young person's life. This collaboration helps create a comprehensive plan to support the child or young person.

Here are some simple examples of child-focused work practices:

Paying attention, showing empathy and encouraging open communication, ensuring that the child or young person feels heard and valued

Involving children and young people in decision-making processes that affect them

Building a trusting and positive relationship with children and young people

Adapting approach based on the child or young person's capabilities, interests and unique circumstances, ensuring that interventions and support align with their specific needs

Looking for potential risks to the child or young person's wellbeing and creating plans to keep them safe

Collaborating with other professionals, families and relevant stakeholders involved in the child or young person's life to address their needs

Creating trauma-sensitive environments, employing strategies to minimise re-traumatisation and providing support that acknowledges and addresses trauma-related needs

Valuing the cultural backgrounds of children and young people, considering their beliefs and traditions

Child-focused work practices aim to create a safe and caring environment for children and young people. These practices can help identify and report those at risk while respecting their rights and wellbeing.



Further Reading

Find out more about child-focused work practice by accessing the link below for the overview of child-centred support uploaded on the Department of Social Services website.

[CaFIS 1B - Child Centred Family Focused Support](#)

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* guides child-focused work practices and policies. As a signatory to the UNCRC, Australia commits to upholding the principles and provisions outlined in the convention.

In 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. The International Convention on the Rights of a Child is committed to protecting children. It outlines the responsibilities that parents and governments must provide and children's rights. The Australian Government signed this convention to agree to meet the standards outlined.

The UNCRC is made up of 54 articles. It outlines the minimum standards governments must meet to support children and their families in education, welfare and health. It is internationally recognised in the community that children (as human beings) are entitled to human dignity. Children should have full enjoyment in their lives.

The UNCRC has four critical principles that guide how children should be protected. These principles are described in the table below.

Principles	Description
Non-discrimination	This means that every child has the right to be treated fairly, no matter where they come from, how they look or what their parents do.
Best interest of the child	This principle says that when adults decide about children, they should consider what is best for them. The child's needs and wellbeing should come first.
Right to life, survival and development	Children have the right to live and be safe. They should have what they need to grow up healthy and happy.
Respect for the view of the child	Children have the right to express their opinions and be listened to in matters that affect them. They should have a say in decisions that concern them.



Multimedia

Watch the video through the link below to learn more about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

[United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child](#)

Some developments in Australia that support the Convention include:

Implementation of federally based access and equity policy in children's services that has as its priorities, specifically:

- Children at risk of being abused or neglected
- Children from diverse cultural backgrounds
- Accommodation of disability in children

Application of mandatory reporting in some form in most states/territories

Introduction of the National Quality Framework (NQF)

Adoption of regulations and standards and voluntary codes of practice in children's services

Development of and adherence to the Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics 2006

The UNCRC is a fundamental framework that informs the development of laws, policies and services related to child protection and welfare. It ensures the country's commitment to placing children at the centre of decision-making processes. This ensures the children's best interests are prioritised in all actions and interventions.

Support workers can use the UNCRC as a guide to ensure they respect and promote children's and young people's rights. This helps them know what they need and what makes them vulnerable. It also shows how to make safe and nurturing environments.



Further Reading

Find out more about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child by clicking the link below.

[Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

The legal system in Australia is essential for keeping children and young people safe. It includes laws and rules that protect them from domestic violence, abuse and neglect. Understanding the legal system is essential for professionals who work with children and young people. It guides actions and responsibilities in identifying and reporting cases of potential harm.

Child Protection Legislation in the Relevant State or Territory

Child protection legislation is one of the fundamental laws pertaining to children's and young people's safety. This exists at both the federal and state/territory levels. These laws outline the duties of professionals, caregivers and the community in ensuring the welfare of children.

The [Family Law Act 1975](#) (Cth) addresses various aspects related to the wellbeing and protection of children within family law matters. The table below shows the child and youth protection legislation for each state/territory.

State/territory	Legislation
Australian Capital Territory (ACT)	Children and Young People Act 2008
New South Wales (NSW)	Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 No 157
Northern Territory (NT)	Care And Protection of Children Act 2007
Queensland (Qld)	Child Protection Act 1999 No. 10
South Australia (SA)	Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017
Tasmania (Tas)	Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997
Victoria (Vic)	Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
Western Australia (WA)	Children and Community Services Act 2004

Child protection legislation affects the job role of workers, particularly those involved in child and youth protection. These set the requirements for identifying, reporting and responding to child and youth protection concerns. Compliance with these legislations ensures the safety and wellbeing of at risk children and young people. Here is how child protection legislation pertains to the job role:



- **Mandatory reporting** – These legislations make it mandatory for certain workers, including support workers, to report suspected child abuse or neglect. Reporting helps investigate potential risks.
- **Recognising signs** – The legislation provides information about different signs of child abuse and neglect. This helps workers identify possible harm early and support vulnerable children and young people.
- **Reporting protocols** – Child protection legislation outlines the steps for reporting suspected abuse or harm. They specify who to report to and within what time.
- **Confidentiality and immunity** – The legislation protects workers who report in good faith. They can fulfil their reporting duties without fear of punishment.
- **Collaboration and communication** – Child protection legislation stresses the importance of working with relevant agencies and professionals. This helps create a coordinated response to child protection concerns.
- **Child protection procedures** – These legislations may guide organisations in developing internal child protection procedures. Workers must know and follow these procedures to meet legal requirements and best practices.
- **Court proceedings** – In severe cases, workers might need to be part of court proceedings. Understanding the legal process is vital to ensure the child or young person's safety and provide necessary information to the court.



Further Reading

Read more about child protection legislation from the Australian Institute of Family Studies website resource sheet below.

[Australian child protection legislation](#)

Statutory and Policy Requirements Relating to Job Role

Your job role is subject to both statutory requirements, which are mandated by law and policy requirements set by your organisation. These requirements direct how you carry out your duties and responsibilities.

The following are examples of statutory and policy requirements relating to child and youth protection job roles:

Statutory requirements	Policy requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory reporting of child abuse • Working with children check • Child safe standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child and youth protection policies and procedures • Code of conduct for child and youth protection • Cultural safety and inclusion

■ Statutory requirements

○ **Mandatory reporting of child abuse**

Community service workers must report suspected child abuse or neglect cases to authorities. This ensures that potential risks to children are promptly addressed and investigated.

○ **Working with children check**

In all jurisdictions across Australia, workers in roles involving child protection should undergo a Working with Children Check or similar screening process. This ensures individuals who interact with children in their job role are assessed for suitability. It also ensures they do not pose a risk to children or young people's safety.

○ **Child safe standards**

In certain jurisdictions, child protection legislation includes specific child safe standards. These outline the minimum requirements for organisations working with children and young people. Compliance with these standards ensures that children and young people are protected within the organisation's care.

- **Policy requirements**

- **Child and youth protection policies and procedures**

Many organisations have their own internal child and youth protection policies and procedures. These policies provide guidelines for workers on how to respond to child and youth protection concerns. These include reporting, maintaining confidentiality and ensuring the child and young person's safety.

- **Code of conduct for child and youth protection**

Some organisations may have a specific code of conduct relating to child and youth protection. This policy outlines the expected behaviour when working with children and young people. Following this code of conduct is vital for maintaining a safe and respectful environment for children and young people.

- **Cultural safety and inclusion**



Some organisations may have policies for cultural inclusion when working with children and young people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Workers must be aware of and adhere to these policies. Doing so ensures that services provided are culturally appropriate, respectful and inclusive.

Workers can contribute to child and youth protection efforts by adhering to these requirements. This ensures the safety and wellbeing of children and young people at risk.

Duty of Care

There is a close link between a child-centred practice and the legal responsibility called *duty of care*. Duty of care describes employers and employees' obligations to each other and those cared for. This ensures you provide appropriate care to meet children and young people's needs, treat them respectfully, and maintain their right to privacy.

Your duty of care is to ensure your children's and young people's safety. In common law, you have a duty of care when:

-  The welfare of other people is entrusted to you
-  Your actions or lack thereof may cause harm to the people under your care

Responsibilities associated with the duty of care encompass actions such as maintaining a safe environment, respecting confidentiality, providing appropriate supervision and reporting any concerns or incidents promptly.

The duty of care requirements for each state/territory are further explained in each legislation below.

State/territory	Legislation
Australian Capital Territory	Civil Law (Wrongs) Act 2002
New South Wales	Civil Liability Act 2002 No 22
Northern Territory	Personal Injuries (Liabilities and Damages) Act 2003
Queensland	Civil Liability Act 2003 No. 16
South Australia	Civil Liability Act 1936
Tasmania	Civil Liability Act 2002
Victoria	Wrongs Act 1958
Western Australia	Civil Liability Act 2002

As mentioned, the duty of care is a legal obligation for all workers. As a support worker, you should give reasonable care to ensure the child's or young person's safety. You need to protect them to the best of your ability.

If a child or young person is injured while caring for someone other than the parents or legal guardians, that person can be held responsible and may be sued for negligence. The law compensates for damage that is:

physical	psychological	emotional or social	financial.
----------	---------------	---------------------	------------

It is possible in some cases to be sued for giving negligent advice. This could involve an individual or the service they represent. However, if the person deemed negligent was an employee when the damage occurred, they are unlikely to bear personal responsibility. A court usually awards damages against the children and young people's service. As a result, services have public liability insurance against such an event.

Negligence must be proven in four ways:

The defendant had a duty of care towards the child or young person.

The defendant failed to exercise a reasonable degree of care in the given circumstances.

The child or young person suffered harm or injury.

There is a causal connection between the defendant's breach of duty and the harm inflicted on the child or young person.

- i.e. The injury was a direct result of the defendant's failure to uphold their duty of care.

The law places a general duty of care on all individuals in a workplace setting. This obligation also extends to those responsible for the welfare of children. The aim is to foster collaboration between employers and employees to maintain a healthy and safe workplace environment.

You must exercise your duty of care diligently and proactively. This means being aware of potential risks and hazards during your work and taking appropriate measures to prevent harm. It also involves acting in the children's and young people's best interests while respecting their rights.

Overall, having a solid grasp of the legal system and its implications for the job role is vital for professionals to fulfil the duty in:

Protecting the wellbeing and safety of children and young people



Contributing to the creation of a safe and nurturing environment for them



In this Learner Guide, you will learn how to:

- Identify children and young people at risk
- Report indications of possible risk of harm
- Apply ethical practices in work with children and young people

Identify Children and Young People at Risk

Identifying children and young people at risk means recognising those in danger or facing difficult situations that could harm them. As a support worker, you must notice signs that suggest someone needs help or protection. It is essential to identify children and young people at risk because of the following:

- Spotting problems allows you to step in and offer help before things get worse.
- Identifying risks enables you to step in and protect those who may be more vulnerable.
- Taking the initiative to identify risks and offer support demonstrates your commitment to their welfare.

Following established protocols and guidelines is crucial when identifying children and young people at risk, ensuring their rights and confidentiality are respected throughout the process.

Not knowing how to identify children and young people at risk can have significant consequences, both for the individuals involved and the community services industry. Some of the key consequences are the following:

Without the ability to identify risks, vulnerable children and young people may not receive the necessary support and protection they need.

Failing to recognise early warning signs means missing the chance to intervene before situations worsen.

Inadequate identification of risks may lead to non-compliance with legislative requirements and ethical responsibilities.

By acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills, you can better fulfil your responsibilities and protect the wellbeing of those you serve. Additionally, staying updated on best practices ensures that you remain effective in your roles and continue to provide high-quality care and support to those in need.

In this chapter, you will learn how to:

- Observe signs and indicators to identify children, families and young people at risk
- Collect information and document signs and indicators of abuse
- Use communication and information gathering techniques with children and young people

1.1 Observe Signs and Indicators to Identify Children, Families and Young People at Risk

You need to observe signs and indicators to identify at risk children, families and young people. This involves paying close attention to their behaviour, appearance and interactions to detect potential signs of harmful situations.

It is crucial to observe signs and indicators to identify children, families and young people at risk. This allows for early intervention, child protection, support for families and the creation of safer environments, all contributing to the wellbeing and safety of those in need.

This process requires being vigilant and sensitive to any signs and indicators that suggest they may be experiencing or vulnerable to the following:



The importance of recognising these signs and indicators cannot be overstated, as it is crucial for early intervention, ensuring safety, providing support, fulfilling legal obligations and facilitating access to help services. These points will be elaborated further in Section 1.1.1.

Various characteristics may make children, families and young people more vulnerable to risks and potential harm. These characteristics can be personal, family-related or environmental factors that increase their susceptibility to negative outcomes. Some of the different characteristics of children and young people at risk are described in the table below.

Characteristics of children and young people at risk	Description
Family instability	Children and young people from families experiencing instability, such as frequent moves, parental separation or domestic violence, may be at higher risk.
Abuse history	Those who have experienced previous abuse may be more vulnerable to further victimisation.

Characteristics of children and young people at risk	Description
Poverty	Children and young people living in poverty may face increased risks due to limited access to resources and support services.
Disability	Those with a physical, intellectual or developmental disability may be more susceptible to abuse or neglect.
Mental health issues	Children and young people with mental health illnesses, psychosocial disabilities or psychiatric conditions may be at risk, especially if their needs are not adequately addressed.
Lack of social support	Individuals who lack a strong social support network, including friends, family or community connections, may be more vulnerable.
Substance abuse in the family	Children and young people living in households where caregivers struggle with substance abuse may be exposed to unsafe environments.
Parental mental health problems	Having parents or caregivers with untreated mental health issues can pose risks to the wellbeing of children and young people.
Cultural and ethnic factors	Children and young people from culturally diverse backgrounds may face risks of discrimination or cultural isolation.
School-related issues	Academic difficulties, absenteeism or bullying at school can impact a child or young person's safety and wellbeing.
Isolation	Children and young people who are socially isolated or withdrawn may be more susceptible to manipulation or victimisation.

It is important to note that these characteristics alone do not imply abuse or harm but may indicate increased vulnerability. Identifying and addressing these risk factors is crucial for workers to provide appropriate support and protection to children and young people in need. Remember, it is essential to handle these situations with care and seek professional advice when necessary.

When observing signs and indicators to identify children, families and young people at risk of abuse, neglect and domestic violence, it is crucial to consider protective and risk factors that may apply to different groups. Understanding and respecting the diversity within these groups is essential for providing effective and inclusive support to individuals within the community services industry, especially when dealing with child protection and identifying those at risk.

A *protective factor* refers to any aspect or characteristic of a person's life, environment or behaviour that acts as a buffer or shield against the development of negative outcomes, such as abuse, neglect or other harm. On the other hand, a *risk factor* refers to any element or condition in a person's life, environment or behaviour that increases their vulnerability to negative outcomes.

These factors can influence a person's vulnerability to abuse and ability to cope with challenging situations.



The table provided below offers a detailed description of each group category, along with the associated protective and risk factors pertaining to each category.

Category	Description	Protective factors	Risk factors
Age	This refers to an individual's life stage, such as being a child, teenager, adult or older person. It can impact a person's capabilities, independence and vulnerability to various risks.	Older children and adolescents may have increased independence and the ability to seek help. Younger children, on the other hand, may receive more supervision and protection from adults, reducing their exposure to risks.	Young children are particularly vulnerable due to their dependency on caregivers, making them more susceptible to abuse or neglect. Adolescents may face additional risks related to peer pressure, substance use and online dangers.
Gender	This refers to the social, cultural and behavioural characteristics associated with being male, female or nonbinary. It goes beyond biological sex and can influence how individuals are perceived and treated in society.	The presence of positive role models and supportive relationships can serve as protective factors for people of all genders. Open communication and education about gender equality may also contribute to reducing risks.	Girls may face higher risks of sexual abuse or exploitation. Boys may be more likely to experience physical abuse or engage in risky behaviours due to societal expectations of masculinity. Nonbinary children or youth are at risk of experiencing violence and harassment, which can significantly impact their mental health and wellbeing.
Disability	This refers to physical, intellectual, sensory or mental impairment that may affect a person's daily life activities. People with disability may require additional support or accommodations to participate fully in society.	Access to appropriate support services, understanding caregivers and inclusive educational environments can be protective factors for children and young people with disability.	Individuals with disability may face increased vulnerability to abuse due to communication barriers, dependence on others for care and potential isolation from support networks.

Category	Description	Protective factors	Risk factors
Culture	This encompasses the group's beliefs, customs, traditions, language and values. It influences how individuals perceive the world and interact with others.	Cultural norms prioritising children's wellbeing and protection can act as protective factors. Protective factors include access to trauma-informed support services, counselling, educational support and community integration programs. Strong community support and a sense of belonging can also contribute to resilience.	Cultural practices perpetuating violence or marginalising certain groups may increase the risk of abuse within specific communities. Language barriers may also hinder communication about potential risks.
Sexuality	This refers to a person's emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to others. It includes heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual and asexual orientations, among others.	Accepting and supportive environments, including family, friends or community, can protect children and young people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity.	Stigmatisation, discrimination and bullying based on sexuality or gender identity can increase vulnerability to abuse and mental health challenges.

1.1.1 Signs and Indicators of Abuse

Abuse refers to any behaviour, action or lack of action that harms, threatens, exploits or negatively impacts a child's or young person's wellbeing. Before observing the signs and indicators of abuse, you need to know the different types of abuse.

Awareness of the different types of abuse helps you recognise the specific harm a child or young person may be experiencing. This knowledge enables you to conduct thorough assessments and identify the appropriate interventions to ensure the child and young person's safety and wellbeing.

The following are the different types of abuse and the signs and indicators for each type:



- **Physical abuse** – Involves using physical force that causes injury or harm to a child or young person. This can include hitting, slapping, shaking, kicking, burning or any other form of physical harm. Some common signs and indicators of physical abuse include but are not limited to:
 - Unexplained bruises, welts, cuts or burns in various stages of healing
 - Frequent injuries or injuries that are inconsistent with the explanation given
 - Marks in the shape of objects (e.g. belt buckle, handprints) on the body
 - Reluctance to go home or fear of a specific caregiver
- **Emotional abuse** – Refers to behaviours that attack a child or young person's emotional wellbeing and self-worth. This can include constant criticism, humiliation, belittling, rejection or isolation from loved ones. Signs and indicators of emotional abuse include but are not limited to:
 - Low self-esteem and lack of confidence
 - Withdrawal and social isolation
 - Exhibiting overly compliant or passive behaviour
 - Extreme emotions or mood swings
 - Delayed development in speech or cognitive abilities due to lack of stimulation

- **Psychological abuse** – Involves using psychological tactics to control and manipulate a child or young person’s thoughts, feelings or behaviours. This can include threats, intimidation, gaslighting or creating an atmosphere of fear. Here are some common signs and indicators of psychological abuse:
 - Frequent humiliation, criticism or degradation
 - Fearful or anxious behaviour around a specific individual
 - Displaying signs of depression, anxiety or trauma
 - Emotional outbursts or regressive behaviour
 - Expressing feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness
- **Sexual abuse** – Involves any sexual activity or behaviour imposed on a child or young person without their consent or understanding. This includes inappropriate touching, exposure to sexual content or forcing a child or young person to participate in sexual acts. Common signs and indicators of sexual abuse include the following:
 - Behavioural changes, especially around a specific individual
 - Displaying sexual knowledge beyond their age level
 - Inappropriate sexual behaviour or language
 - Unexplained sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or pregnancy
 - Fear or avoidance of certain places or activities
- **Neglect** – Occurs when a child or young person’s basic needs, such as food, shelter, clothing, education, medical care or emotional support, are not adequately met by their caregivers or the people responsible for their care. *Caregivers* can be biological parents, adoptive parents, legal guardians, foster parents, relatives or others who have assumed the responsibility of caring for a child or young person. Signs and indicators of neglect include but are not limited to:
 - Poor hygiene and appearance
 - Consistently hungry or begging for food
 - Inadequate clothing or unsuitable clothing for weather conditions
 - Frequent absenteeism from school or medical appointments
 - Left unsupervised for extended periods, especially at a young age



- **Parental abuse** – Can occur when children or young people engage in abusive behaviours towards their parents or caregivers. This can manifest as physical, emotional or verbal abuse, often indicating underlying family issues. Signs and indicators of parental abuse include but are not limited to:
 - Threatening or intimidating parents or caregivers
 - Controlling or manipulative behaviour
 - Unreasonable demands or expectations
 - Destruction of property or belongings
- **Pre-natal abuse** – Refers to actions or behaviours that harm an unborn child during pregnancy. It can be caused by substance abuse, violence exposure, or pre-natal care neglect. Signs and indicators of pre-natal abuse include but are not limited to:
 - Evidence of substance abuse during pregnancy
 - Lack of prenatal care or missed prenatal appointments
 - Premature birth or low birth weight due to the mother's actions
 - Neonatal abstinence syndrome (withdrawal symptoms) in the newborn due to drug exposure while in the womb
- **Domestic violence** – Refers to abusive behaviour or patterns of control within intimate or family relationships within the household. This involves physical, emotional, psychological or sexual harm to one or more household members. Domestic violence can have serious and lasting impacts on children and young people, making it essential for support workers to recognise its signs and indicators. Some signs and indicators of domestic violence in children and young people include but are not limited to the following:
 - Unexplained bruises, cuts or injuries, especially in various stages of healing
 - Sudden mood swings, withdrawal, anxiety, depression or aggression
 - Fear or discomfort around a specific family member or caregiver
 - Frequent absences from school or other activities without valid explanations
 - Expressing feelings of hopelessness or engaging in self-destructive behaviours



It is important to note that the presence of these signs and indicators does not automatically confirm abuse, but they may warrant further investigation.

Aside from these signs and indicators, you also need to understand the dynamics of abuse. The *dynamics of abuse* are the patterns and processes that characterise abusive relationships. Your knowledge of these dynamics can assist you in understanding the situation and supporting those involved. Some key dynamics include:

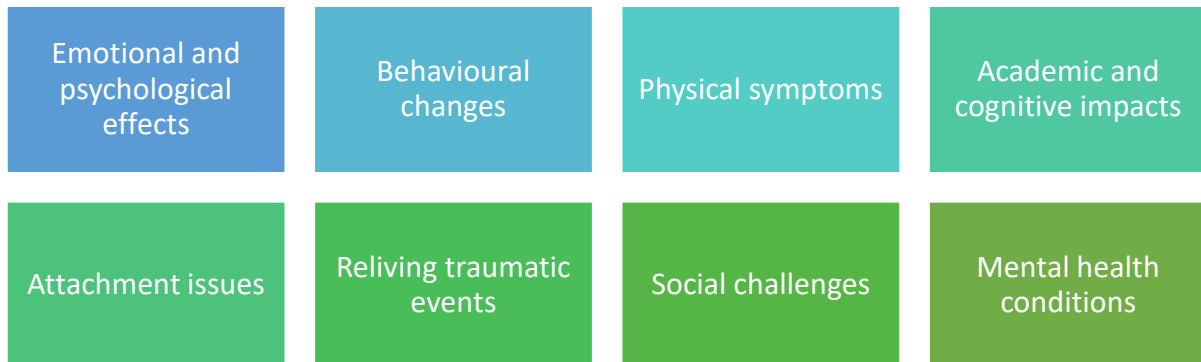


- **Power and control** – Abusers often seek to exert power and control over their victims. This can be achieved through physical violence, emotional manipulation or isolation from support networks.
- **Cycle of abuse** – In many abusive relationships, there is a cyclical pattern of tension-building, followed by an explosive incident of abuse and then a period of reconciliation and calm. This cycle can repeat over time.
- **Isolation** – Abusers may isolate their victims from friends, family or other support systems to make it harder for the victim to seek help or leave the abusive situation.
- **Grooming** – Abusers may groom their victims, especially in cases of sexual abuse, by building trust and exploiting vulnerabilities before engaging in abusive behaviour.
- **Blame and gaslighting** – Abusers often shift the blame onto the victim or deny their abusive behaviour. Gaslighting, a form of psychological manipulation, makes the victim doubt their perception of reality.
- **Intergenerational patterns** – In some cases, abuse can be perpetuated across generations, as individuals who have been victims of abuse may later become abusers themselves.

Understanding the dynamics of abuse enables you to create effective interventions for children and young people in abusive situations. This also helps you empathise with the experiences and challenges faced by children and young people who are victims of abuse.

1.1.2 Impact of Trauma on Children and Young People

Experiencing trauma because of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence can strongly impact children and young people. *Trauma* is any event or series of events that overwhelms a person's ability to cope, leading to feelings of fear, helplessness and a loss of control. Here are some ways trauma can affect them:



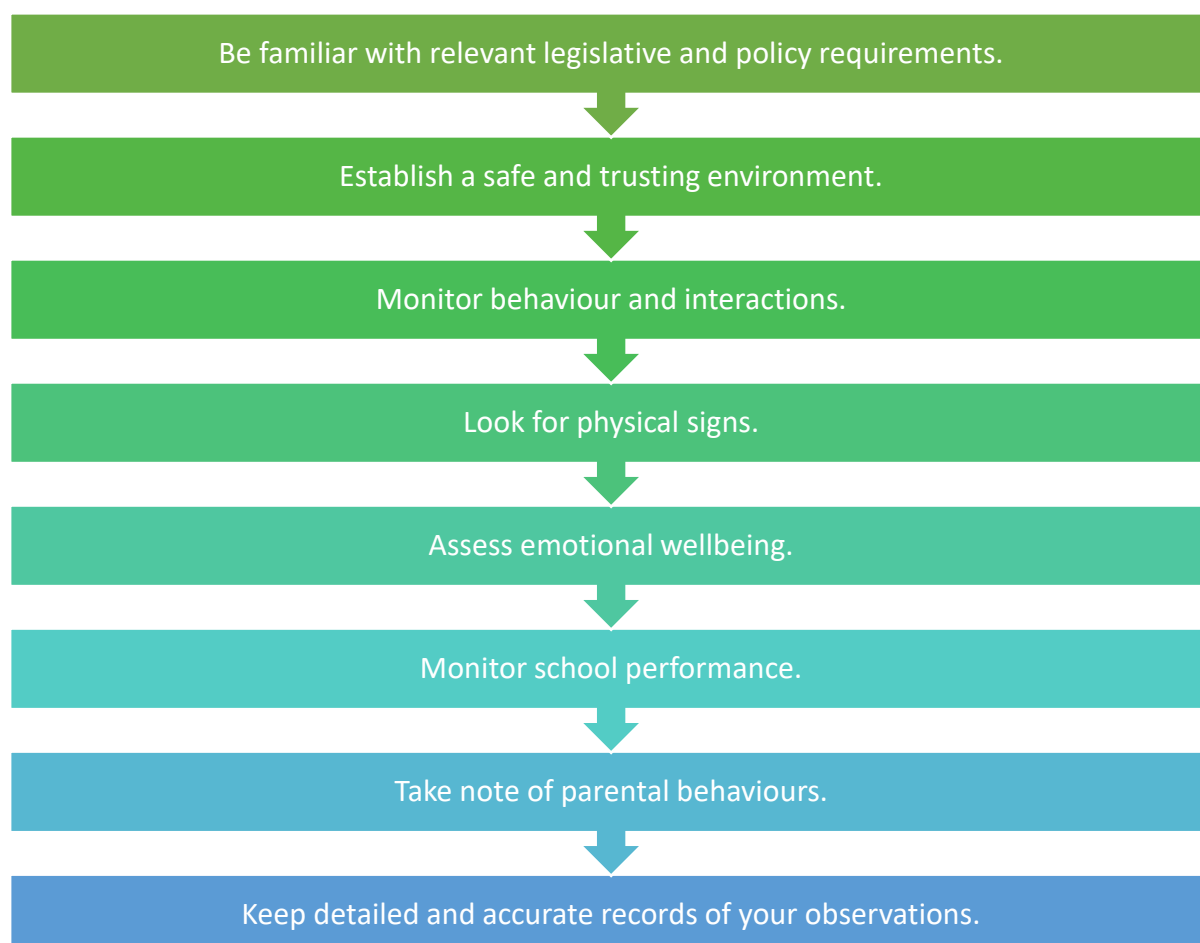
- **Emotional and psychological effects** – Trauma can lead to intense emotions like fear, anxiety, anger and sadness. Children and young people may also experience nightmares, flashbacks and difficulty concentrating. Their self-esteem and self-worth may be affected, leading to feelings of shame or guilt.
- **Behavioural changes** – Traumatized children and young people might display changes in behaviour, such as increased aggression, withdrawal from social interactions or engaging in risky activities. They may also exhibit regressive behaviours, reverting to behaviours typical of a younger age.
- **Physical symptoms** – Trauma can manifest in physical symptoms, including headaches, stomach aches and fatigue, even when no apparent medical cause exists.
- **Academic and cognitive impacts** – Trauma can interfere with a child or young person's ability to learn and concentrate, leading to a decline in academic performance. They may have difficulty organising their thoughts and processing information effectively.
- **Attachment issues** – Children and young people who have experienced trauma may struggle with forming secure attachments to caregivers or significant others. They might have difficulty trusting and feel unsafe even in seemingly secure environments.
- **Reliving traumatic events** – Children and young people may involuntarily relive the traumatic experiences through nightmares or flashbacks, making moving on from the past challenging.

- **Social challenges** – Trauma can impact a child or young person’s ability to build and maintain healthy relationships with peers and adults. They may isolate themselves or display aggressive behaviours, making it difficult to form positive connections.
- **Mental health conditions** – Untreated trauma can increase the risk of developing mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other behavioural disorders.

Understanding the impact of trauma on children and young people is fundamental for support workers when observing signs and indicators of abuse, neglect and domestic violence. It guides appropriate responses, supports early intervention and contributes to a more holistic approach to child protection and support services.

1.1.3 How to Observe Signs and Indicators to Identify Children, Families and Young People at Risk

Observing signs and indicators to identify children, families and young people at risk of abuse, neglect, and domestic violence requires a careful and sensitive approach. Here are some steps to observe and identify potential risks effectively:



1. **Be familiar with relevant legislative and policy requirements.** Before engaging in this role, ensure you have received proper training on child protection, abuse, neglect and domestic violence. Familiarise yourself with the relevant legislative and policy requirements to work within the required guidelines.
2. **Establish a safe and trusting environment.** Create a safe and supportive environment for children, families and young people to make them more comfortable and open to sharing their experiences if needed.

Practise active listening when interacting with children, young people and their families. Give them the space to express themselves and share any concerns they might have. Be culturally sensitive in your observations, understanding that signs and indicators may manifest differently across diverse cultural backgrounds.

3. **Monitor behaviour and interactions.** Pay close attention to the behaviour and interactions of the children, young people and families you work with. Observe for any unusual or concerning patterns that might indicate potential risks.
4. **Look for physical signs.** Be attentive to any physical signs of abuse or neglect, such as unexplained injuries, bruising or signs of malnourishment.
5. **Assess emotional wellbeing.** Observe the emotional wellbeing of the child or young person, looking for signs of fear, anxiety, depression, withdrawal or sudden changes in mood and behaviour.
6. **Monitor school performance.** Monitor the child or young person's school performance and attendance. Frequent absences, declining grades or behavioural issues may indicate potential problems.
7. **Take note of parental behaviours.** Observe parental behaviours, especially around children or young people. Look for signs of controlling, aggressive or neglectful behaviours that could put the children at risk.
8. **Keep detailed and accurate records of your observations.** This documentation is crucial for reporting and intervention purposes. This will be discussed in the next subchapter.

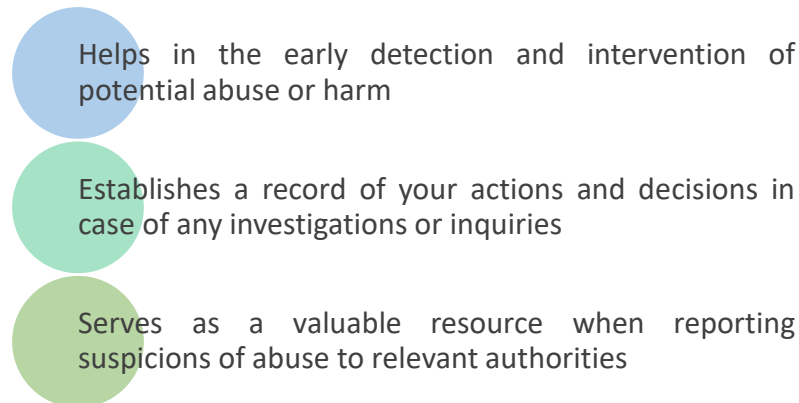


By following these steps, you play a vital role in identifying and protecting children and young people at risk of abuse, neglect and domestic violence and ensure their safety and wellbeing.

1.2 Collect Information and Document Signs and Indicators of Abuse

In the previous subchapter, you learnt how to observe signs and indicators to identify at risk children and young people. This subchapter will teach you to collect information and document these signs and indicators. This means gathering and recording relevant data and observations related to potential abuse or harm to children and young people.

Doing so is vital because this:



You will do this in line with legislative requirements and organisational policies and procedures. *Legislative requirements* refer to the laws, regulations and legal standards that govern child protection and reporting practices. Compliance with legislative requirements is essential to ensure legal accountability and the protection of children.

Organisational policies are general rules that guide decisions and actions in the organisation. These are grounded on legislative requirements and organisational principles and values. On the other hand, *organisational procedures* are more specific actions you can take when dealing with child protection and reporting to comply with policies. Policies and procedures may continuously change and improve to align with policies and industry best practices.

Collecting information and documenting the signs and indicators of abuse is critical to the child protection system. It must be done in strict accordance with legislative requirements, including responses to reporting and interagency policies.

The *child protection system* is a vital framework designed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Government agencies and various organisations establish it to protect children from harm and uphold their rights. This system consists of important rules, services and strategies aimed at the following:

- Preventing child abuse and neglect
- Identifying cases of harm
- Responding effectively to keep children safe

Many individuals and groups work together as a team within this system, all with the common goal of safeguarding children and young people. These include government departments, child welfare agencies, law enforcement, healthcare professionals and community organisations.



Further Reading

Read more about the child protection system by clicking the link below.

[Child protection](#)

When collecting information and documenting signs and indicators of abuse, you need to consider the following aspects of the child protection system:



▪ Reporting protocols

Reporting protocols are the established procedures and guidelines that tell how to report suspected child abuse or neglect cases. These protocols outline the specific steps required when reporting concerns to the appropriate authorities.

These rules are essential because they ensure that reports about possible child abuse are made consistently, accurately and quickly. Following these rules helps you do your legal duty and allows quick action to protect the child. This keeps the child protection system working well.

Reporting protocols have the following elements:

○ Recognising indicators

Recognising indicators means spotting signs that a child or young person might be in trouble or danger. This skill is crucial for support workers because it helps them notice potential problems early and take action to help the child or young person.

- **Reporting obligations**

Reporting obligations are the rules that support workers must inform the right people if they think a child or young person is unsafe. Support workers need to know these rules well. It is your job to report any concerns you have about a child or young person to make sure the child or young person stays safe.

- **Reporting process**

The reporting process is the set of steps you must follow when reporting concerns about a child or young person. Support workers need to understand how this process works. You are responsible for starting the reporting process correctly and quickly when needed.

- **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality means keeping things private and not telling anyone about the child or young person's situation unless necessary. Support workers must understand and uphold confidentiality requirements. It ensures that sensitive information is protected. This respects the privacy of the child or young person and their family and ensures they comply with legal and ethical standards.

- **Timeliness**

Timeliness emphasises the importance of reporting concerns promptly, without unnecessary delays. Being quick is important for support workers. When you think a child is in trouble, you must report it quickly so that help can come quickly.

- **Documentation and record-keeping**

Documentation and record-keeping involve accurately recording all relevant information related to the report. This includes observations and actions taken. Support workers have to be good at keeping records. You must ensure everything you do and see is written down correctly. This helps with investigations and making sure you did things right.



You need to access and review the reporting protocols of your organisation to ensure compliance.

■ Responses to reporting requirements

Responses to reporting requirements encompass the actions taken by individuals, relevant authorities or child protection agencies when they receive a report of suspected child abuse or neglect. These responses may include investigations, assessments and interventions to ensure the child's or young person's safety and wellbeing.

Your response to reporting requirements is crucial because it can help ease the situation for the child or young person and their family. It might involve providing emotional support, connecting them to appropriate services or ensuring they understand what is happening. Your actions can make a big difference in helping the child, young person and their family cope with the situation.

The table below describes how support workers should respond to different reporting requirements.

Reporting requirements	Description
Mandatory reporting	<p>Mandatory reporting is a legal requirement that mandates support workers to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the relevant authorities or child and youth protection agencies.</p> <p>It means you must report when you have reasonable grounds to believe that a child or young person is at risk.</p>
Timely reporting	<p>Timely reporting means that when you suspect a child or young person is in danger or at risk, you should report it without unnecessary delays. It emphasises the importance of acting quickly.</p>
Information sharing	<p>Information sharing involves sharing relevant information about a child or young person's situation with other professionals and agencies involved in child and youth protection. It helps ensure everyone has the information required to protect the child or young person.</p>

Reporting requirements	Description
Maintaining confidentiality	Maintaining confidentiality is crucial for protecting the privacy and dignity of the child or young person and their family. Support workers must comply with legal and ethical standards while respecting the sensitive nature of child and youth protection cases.
Documentation	Documentation is essential for accountability and evidence purposes. It helps support workers and agencies keep a clear record of what was observed and done, which can be crucial for investigations, legal proceedings and ensuring that proper procedures were followed.

Responses to reporting requirements aim to protect the child and prevent further harm. The effectiveness of the child protection system relies on appropriate responses to reports. Timely and thorough responses are essential to assess the child's risk level and determine the necessary actions. These actions may include the following:

- Removing the child from harm
- Providing support services to the family
- Initiating legal proceedings against the perpetrator

▪ **Responses to interagency policies**

Responses to interagency policies involve how support workers collaborate and work together with other organisations and agencies when dealing with child protection cases. These policies guide how information is shared, and actions are coordinated.

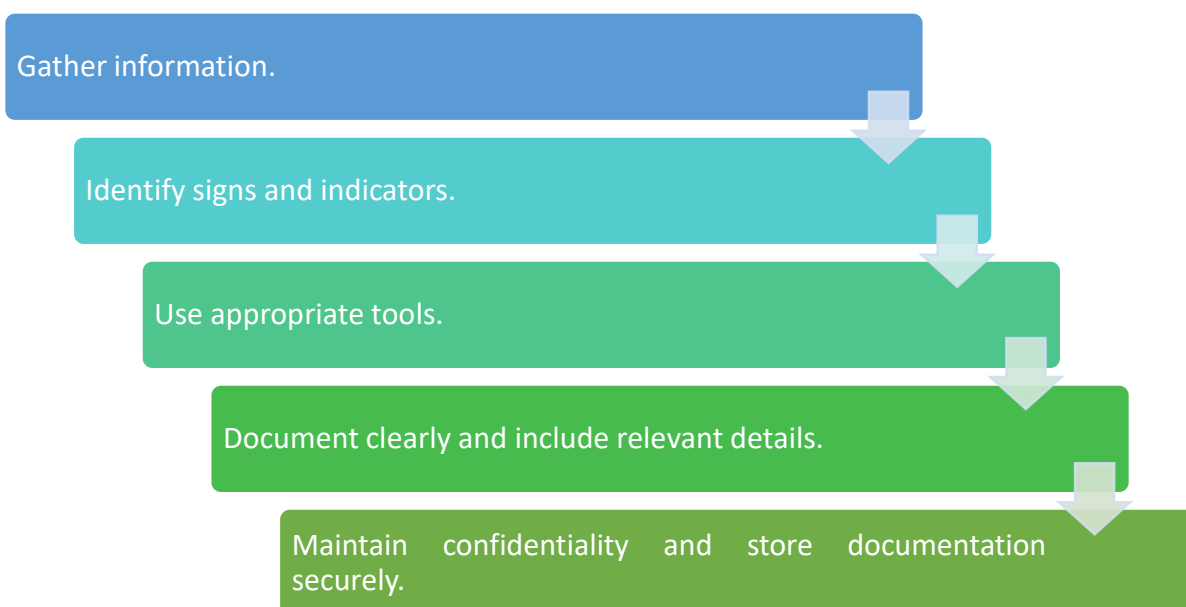
The table below describes how support workers should respond to interagency policies.

Interagency policy	Description
Collaboration and communication	This policy establishes guidelines for effective collaboration and communication between multiple agencies. Support workers work closely with other agencies. You talk to these agencies and share information to ensure everyone is on the same page about keeping children or young people safe.
Referral	This policy outlines protocols for referring individuals and families to appropriate services and programs. When families need extra help, support workers follow the rules for sending them to the right services. This makes sure families get the help they need.
Case conferencing	This policy provides a framework for conducting case conferences or multidisciplinary meetings for complex cases. For tough cases, support workers join meetings with other professionals. You talk and work together to devise a plan to help the child or young person and family.
Health and social services	This policy facilitates coordination and cooperation between healthcare providers, social services and community organisations. Support workers team up with healthcare and social services. You ensure that children, young people and their families get all the services they need for their health and wellbeing.
Youth services	This policy establishes mechanisms for collaboration between youth service providers and government departments. Support workers partner with youth service providers and government departments. You work together to help young people and address their unique challenges.

Interagency policy	Description
Training and professional development	This policy highlights the importance of ongoing training and development for agency professionals. Support workers know that learning is essential. They attend training to improve their job and help children or young people and families more effectively.
Indigenous affairs	This policy outlines interagency collaboration and engagement with Indigenous communities to address social and cultural issues. Support workers collaborate with Indigenous communities and respect their culture. They involve Indigenous communities in child protection and work together to understand and solve social and cultural issues.

Interagency responses are crucial because child and youth protection often requires the involvement of various stakeholders. Effective responses to interagency policies promote seamless communication and cooperation among these entities. This ensures that all aspects of a child or young person's safety and wellbeing are addressed comprehensively.

When collecting information on the signs and indicators of abuse, you can follow these steps:



- 1. Gather information.** Begin by gathering relevant information about the child or young person and their situation. This may include any reports, observations or concerns from colleagues, caregivers or the child or young person. Be sure to follow your organisational policies and procedures for gathering information.

The table below shows an example of organisational policies and procedures for gathering information.

Organisational policy for gathering information	Organisational procedure for gathering information
Ensure that accurate and relevant information is collected while respecting the rights and privacy of individuals.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Before collecting any information about a child or young person, always obtain informed consent from the child's legal guardian or the young person (if competent to provide consent). 2. Use standardised forms or templates designed for information gathering, ensuring they are aligned with legislative requirements. 3. Gather information from multiple sources, including caregivers, teachers and other relevant individuals, to ensure a comprehensive assessment. 4. Record the details of consent obtained, including who provided it, when it was given and the purpose for which the information will be collected. 5. Regularly review and update the consent as required, especially if the purpose of information collection changes.

- 2. Identify signs and indicators.** Carefully observe and identify signs and indicators of abuse. These may include physical injuries, behavioural changes, emotional distress or disclosure of abuse from the child. You can review how to do this, as discussed in Subchapter 1.1.
- 3. Use appropriate tools.** Utilise any assessment tools or forms recommended by your organisation or legislative requirements to document the information. Ensure that these tools align with legal and organisational standards.

- 4. Document clearly and include relevant details.** Document your observations and findings clearly and concisely. Use plain language to describe the signs and indicators you have identified. Avoid making assumptions or judgements.

The table below shows an example of organisational policies and procedures for documentation.

Organisational policy for documentation	Organisational procedure for documentation
Ensure that all signs and indicators of abuse are accurately and consistently documented.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employ standardised documentation forms to record signs and indicators of abuse, ensuring uniformity and compliance with legislative requirements. 2. Clearly describe the context in which the signs or indicators were observed, including the date, time, location and witnesses. 3. Use plain language and avoid assumptions or judgements when documenting signs and indicators. Focus on objective observations. 4. Record observations as soon as possible after they are made to maintain accuracy and reliability. 5. Ensure that relevant personnel, such as supervisors or designated individuals, review and verify documentation for accuracy.

- 5. Maintain confidentiality and store documentation securely.** Handle all collected information with the utmost confidentiality and respect for privacy, following organisational policies and legislative requirements.

Safely store all documentation in accordance with organisational policies and legal requirements, ensuring it is accessible only to authorised personnel.

The table below shows examples of organisational policies and procedures relevant to privacy and confidentiality.

Organisational policy	Organisational procedure
<p>Ensure the privacy of individuals when documenting signs and indicators of abuse.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limit access to documentation of signs and indicators of abuse to authorised personnel directly involved in the child and youth protection process. 2. Store physical documents securely, such as a locked cabinet or drawer, accessible only to authorised personnel. 3. Implement strong security measures for electronic documentation, including password protection and encryption. 4. Ensure that any electronic transmission of sensitive documentation is done through secure channels to prevent interception. 5. When sharing documentation with external parties, redact any information not necessary for their involvement or as required by law.
<p>Maintain the confidentiality of all documentation related to signs and indicators of abuse.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure all personnel handling documentation are trained on the importance of confidentiality and the organisation's confidentiality policies. 2. Restrict access to documentation to only individuals with a legitimate need to know. 3. Establish procedures for the secure disposal of physical documents, such as shredding and the permanent deletion of electronic documents. 4. Maintain an audit trail of who accesses and modifies documentation, enabling accountability. 5. Avoid displaying sensitive documentation on screens or sharing printed materials openly during meetings or discussions. Use secure methods for presentation. 6. When sharing documentation with external parties, require them to sign non-disclosure agreements. This legally enforces the principle of confidentiality.

Remember that the specific steps may vary slightly depending on your organisation's policies and procedures. Being familiar with these guidelines and any relevant legislative requirements in your area is essential. Always prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person in your care.

1.3 Use Communication and Information Gathering Techniques With Children and Young People

When collecting information, you can use different communication and information gathering techniques. This means employing specific approaches and methods to collect information when interacting with children and young people. You should do this while adhering to the organisation's established guidelines and protocols. This process ensures that communication is effective, respectful and safe for the children or young people.

You can use the following techniques when identifying children and young people at risk:



1.3.1 Using Engagement Techniques With Children and Young People

Engagement techniques are methods to create a good relationship with people, like children and young people. These methods help make them feel comfortable and trusting so you can talk to them effectively.

The different engagement techniques include the following:

- **Active listening** – This involves fully focusing on and understanding what the child or young person is saying verbally and non-verbally. Here are some different active listening techniques you can use with children and young people:
 - Make consistent eye contact with the child or young person to show that you are attentive and interested in what they are saying.
 - Use non-verbal cues like nodding and smiling to acknowledge the child or young person and encourage them to continue talking.
 - Repeat what the child or young person has said in your own words to confirm your understanding and show that you are actively processing the information.
 - Let the child or young person finish their thoughts before responding. Avoid interrupting or finishing their sentences.

- Use verbal cues like 'I see', 'I understand' or 'Tell me more' to show your engagement and encourage them to share more.
 - Sometimes, giving the child or young person space and time to gather their thoughts or emotions can be an effective active listening technique. Pauses can also encourage them to continue sharing.
 - Minimise distractions to maintain your focus on the child or young person. This includes checking your phone or looking around the room.
 - Offer responses that convey understanding and empathy, such as 'I can imagine how that would feel' or 'That must have been difficult'.
 - Suspend judgement and avoid criticising or evaluating what the child or young person is saying. Create a safe and non-judgemental space for them to express themselves.
 - Encourage the child or young person to share their thoughts on feeling heard and understood. Be open to adjusting your listening approach based on their feedback.
- **Empathy** – Demonstrate empathy by understanding and acknowledging the child or young person's emotions and experiences. This helps build trust and rapport.
 - **Use of play** – With younger children, use play and creative activities to engage and communicate. Play can help children express themselves more comfortably.
 - **Rapport building** – Develop a positive and respectful relationship with the child or young person over time. Doing so can help them feel comfortable sharing information with you. You can do any of the following to establish rapport with the child or young person:
 - Use friendly and non-threatening body language, maintain eye contact and smile to create a welcoming atmosphere.
 - Address the child or young person by their preferred name and demonstrate respect for their preferences and boundaries.
 - Show empathy and understanding by acknowledging their feelings and experiences without judgement.



- **Open-ended questions** – Ask questions that require more than a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer. Encourage the child or young person to elaborate and share their thoughts and feelings.
- **Non-leading questions** – Ask questions that do not suggest a specific answer or influence the person’s response. They are open-ended questions encouraging children and young people to express themselves freely and provide their thoughts, feelings or information. Avoid leading questions that suggest a specific answer or may influence the child or young person’s response, as they can compromise the accuracy of the information gathered.

1.3.2 Using Communication Techniques With Children and Young People

Communication techniques are ways to talk or share ideas clearly with children and young people. These include how you speak, listen and use body language. Good communication helps ensure that your messages are understood. Different communication techniques can be categorised into various forms, such as the following:

Verbal communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This involves the use of spoken or written words to convey messages, ideas and information.
Non-verbal communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This refers to the exchange of information and emotions without using words.
Written communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This involves the use of written or typed words to convey information, thoughts and messages.
Visual communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This uses visual aids to convey information and ideas. • It relies on visual elements to enhance understanding and engagement.

Examples of communication techniques within these categories include the following:

- **Verbal communication**

- **Speaking** – The most common form of verbal communication involves using words and voice to convey messages. Using clear and age-appropriate language helps convey important messages, instructions and information about the child and young person's rights and safety.
- **Listening** – Actively paying attention to what the child and young person are saying and providing feedback when necessary. Actively listening to children and young people is crucial in protection work. It allows them to express concerns, share experiences and feel heard and valued.



- **Clarifying** – In child protection, asking questions and seeking clarification helps ensure that both parties understand each other. It can be imperative when discussing sensitive topics to avoid misunderstandings.
- **Paraphrasing** – Restating what children and young people have shared in your own words confirms that you have understood them correctly. This technique promotes trust and shows that their voices are valued.
- **Summarising** – Condensing and highlighting key points from a discussion or presentation. Summarising discussions or safety plans helps reinforce key points and ensures everyone is on the same page regarding protective measures.
- **Empathising** – Demonstrating understanding and empathy toward the emotions and perspectives of others. This is crucial in building trust and rapport with children and young people, making them more comfortable discussing their concerns.

■ Non-verbal communication

- **Body language** – Gestures, facial expressions, posture and eye contact to convey feelings, attitudes and intentions. Maintaining open and welcoming body language when working with children and youth conveys safety and trust. It encourages them to express themselves without fear of judgement.
- **Tone of voice** – Your voice's pitch, volume and intonation can significantly impact your message. A calm and supportive tone of voice reassures children and young people during conversations about sensitive issues, helping to create a safe environment.
- **Proximity** – How close or far you position yourself from someone can communicate comfort, intimacy or personal space boundaries. Respecting personal space boundaries is essential. It ensures that children and young people feel comfortable and safe when interacting with protection professionals.
- **Handshakes and touch** – Physical touch can convey warmth, trust or familiarity, depending on cultural norms. Physical touch should only be used when culturally appropriate and with utmost care. This can communicate trust and comfort but can also be sensitive and potentially misunderstood.



- **Eye contact** – Maintaining appropriate eye contact with the child or young person can signal engagement, confidence and sincerity.

▪ Written communication

- **Emails** – Sending written messages electronically, often for formal and informal communication. Sending emails can help share information, progress updates and appointment reminders with parents or guardians in child protection cases.



- **Reports** – Providing detailed information, analysis and recommendations in a structured format. These provide a clear and organised record for decision-making and legal purposes.
- **Memos** – Brief, internal documents conveying important information within an organisation. Internal memos can share important updates, policies or procedures with staff.
- **Letters** – Formal written communication often used for professional or personal correspondence. Formal letters can be employed when communicating with parents, guardians or external stakeholders about child protection matters to ensure clarity and formality.
- **Text messages** – Informal written communication through mobile devices. Text messages can be quick and informal communication tools for scheduling appointments or follow-up messages.
- **Social media** – Using online platforms to share written content with a broader audience. These can be used to disseminate educational content and awareness campaigns related to child and youth protection to a broader audience.

▪ Visual communication

- **Charts and graphs** – Using visual aids to present data and statistics. Visual representations of data can help illustrate trends or statistics related to child and youth protection, making information more accessible to stakeholders.
- **Infographics** – Combining text and images to convey complex information in an easily digestible format. These ensure a wide range of audiences, including children and young people, easily understand key messages.
- **Presentations** – Using slides or visual aids to accompany verbal communication during meetings or speeches. Visual aids in presentations can engage children and young people during awareness sessions or educational workshops on protection topics.
- **Videos** – Creating and sharing video content to engage and inform an audience. Creating informative and age-appropriate videos can help convey important messages about child protection.
- **Diagrams and flowcharts** – Visual representations to illustrate processes, systems or concepts. Visual tools like diagrams and flowcharts can simplify explanations of child protection procedures and reporting pathways for children and young people. These make it easier for them to understand and navigate the system.

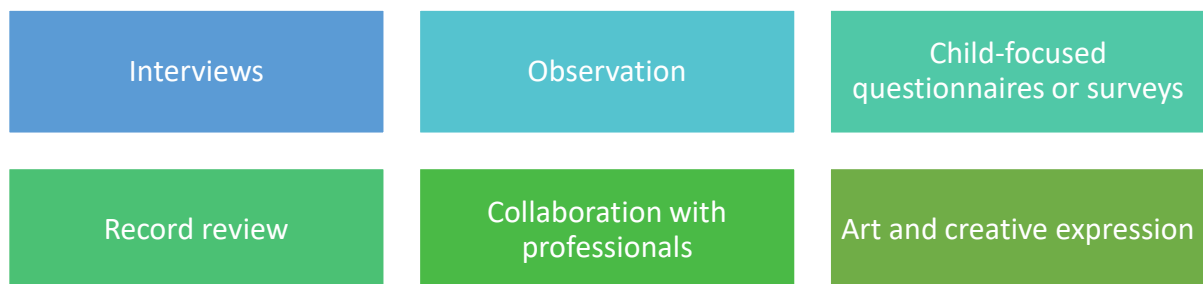
Effective communication often requires a combination of these techniques. Mastering these techniques can improve interpersonal relationships and communication effectiveness with children and young people.



1.3.3 Using Information Gathering Techniques With Children and Young People

Aside from these communication techniques, you can also use information gathering techniques with children and young people. *Information gathering techniques* are ways to collect facts and details from different sources. You use these methods to get the necessary information for specific purposes, like making decisions or solving problems. In child and youth protection, these methods help you learn about children's and young people's wellbeing.

The following are examples of information gathering techniques you can use with children and young people:



- **Interviews** – Conduct interviews with children and young people in a sensitive and age-appropriate manner. This can provide valuable information about their safety and wellbeing. Child-friendly interview techniques and the involvement of professionals trained in these methods are crucial for this process.
- **Observation** – Observe the behaviour and interactions of children and young people in their natural environments. Doing so can provide insights into potential risks or concerns. This could include observing how they interact with caregivers, peers or teachers.
- **Child-focused questionnaires or surveys** – Age-appropriate surveys or questionnaires designed with children and young people in mind can help gather information about their experiences and perceptions of safety.
- **Record review** – Review relevant records, such as school reports, medical records or previous assessments. You can gather historical information that may be pertinent to their current situation.
- **Collaboration with professionals** – Collaborate with other professionals, such as teachers, counsellors or healthcare providers. This helps gather information and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the child or young person's circumstances.
- **Art and creative expression** – Encourage children and young people to express themselves through art, writing or other creative means. This can provide valuable insights into their emotions and experiences.

To use these techniques when identifying children and young people at risk, you can follow these steps:

1. Start by familiarising yourself with your organisation's policies and procedures related to communication and information gathering with children and young people. These documents will outline the specific guidelines and expectations you need to follow.
2. Create a welcoming and safe space where children and young people feel comfortable expressing themselves. This environment should promote trust and openness.
3. Actively listen when children and young people communicate with you. This involves giving them your full attention, maintaining eye contact and showing empathy and understanding.
4. Adapt your communication style and language to the child's or young person's age and developmental level. Use simple and clear language that they can easily understand.
5. Establish a positive rapport by being approachable, friendly and non-judgemental. Building trust is crucial for effective communication.
6. Encourage children and young people to express their thoughts, feelings and concerns. Create opportunities for them to talk and share their experiences.



7. Instead of asking yes or no questions, use open-ended questions that require more detailed responses. This allows for a deeper understanding of their situation.

8. Emphasise the importance of confidentiality. Assure children and young people that their information will be kept confidential, except in cases where it must be reported in accordance with legal obligations.
9. Pay attention to non-verbal cues such as body language and facial expressions. These can provide valuable insights into their emotions and concerns.
10. When necessary, seek informed consent from parents, guardians or legal authorities before gathering or sharing information about children and young people.
11. Offer feedback and support to children and young people when appropriate. Let them know that their input is valued and that actions will be taken to address their concerns.

It is important to note that support workers must always follow organisational policies and procedures when using these techniques. Doing so ensures the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person. Additionally, obtaining informed consent from parents or legal guardians may be necessary in some cases, depending on the circumstances and legal requirements.



The table below shows examples of organisational policies and procedures for communication and information gathering techniques.

Organisational policy	Organisational procedure
<p>Information about children and young people must be collected systematically and sensitively to ensure their safety and wellbeing.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Before gathering information, support workers must follow the organisation's Consent Procedure, obtaining informed consent from the child, their guardian or a competent young person, explaining the purpose and use of the information. 2. Conduct structured interviews using standardised forms or questionnaires provided by the organisation. These forms must align with organisational guidelines and legal requirements. 3. When observing a child or young person, follow the Observation Guidelines outlined in the organisation's policies, documenting objective observations without making judgements or assumptions. 4. Use the organisation's approved methods and tools for recording gathered information, ensuring clarity, accuracy and compliance with privacy and confidentiality standards. 5. Information should be documented promptly following the interaction or observation, and any changes or developments should be recorded promptly. 6. Information gathered must be reviewed by designated support workers within the organisation to ensure completeness, accuracy and adherence to policy.

Organisational policy	Organisational procedure
<p>Communication with children and young people must be respectful, age-appropriate and in line with the organisation's values and principles.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support workers must use age-appropriate language and communication styles based on the child or young person's developmental stage and level of understanding. 2. Maintaining a respectful and non-judgemental tone when communicating with children and young people ensures their feelings and perspectives are valued. 3. When appropriate, employ visual aids, such as drawings or pictures, to facilitate communication, especially with younger children or those with communication challenges. 4. Explain the purpose of any communication, interviews or discussions with the child or young person and obtain informed consent following the organisation's consent procedure. 5. Practise active listening by giving full attention, using non-verbal cues like nodding or maintaining eye contact and reflecting on the child or young person's words to demonstrate understanding. 6. As outlined in organisational privacy and confidentiality policies, respect the child or young person's privacy by conducting sensitive conversations in a private and secure environment. 7. Encourage open dialogue and provide clear information about the process, addressing any concerns or questions. Follow organisational reporting procedures if necessary.



Checkpoint! Let's Review

1. Abuse refers to any behaviour, action or lack of action that harms, threatens, exploits or negatively impacts a child's or young person's wellbeing.
2. Neglect occurs when a child or young person's basic needs, such as food, shelter, clothing, education, medical care or emotional support, are not adequately met by their caregivers or the people responsible for their care.
3. Collecting information and documenting signs and indicators means gathering and recording relevant data and observations related to potential abuse or harm to children and young people.
4. When collecting information, you can use different communication and information gathering techniques.



Learning Activity for Chapter 1

Well done completing this chapter. You may now proceed to your **Learning Activity Booklet** (provided along with this Learner Guide) and complete the learning activities associated with this chapter.

Please coordinate with your trainer/training organisation for additional instructions and guidance in completing these practical activities.

Report Indications of Possible Risk of Harm

In the previous chapter, you learnt how to identify at risk children and young people. You learnt how to identify, collect information and document signs and indicators of domestic violence, abuse and neglect. You also learnt how to use communication and information gathering techniques with children and young people.

In this chapter, you will learn how to report indications of possible risk of harm. *Risk of harm* refers to the potential danger or negative consequences that individuals or groups may face due to various environmental factors or circumstances.

Reporting indications of possible risk of harm means notifying relevant authorities or supervisors about signs or clues that suggest a child or young person might be in danger or at risk of harm. Child and youth protection involves sharing information regarding any concerning situations or behaviours you observe or become aware of during work with children and young people.



It is crucial to report indications of possible risk of harm for several reasons:

- Reporting helps ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. It allows timely intervention and support, potentially preventing harm or further endangerment.
- Legislative requirements mandate professionals working with children and young people report any signs of possible harm or abuse. Failure to report can result in legal consequences.
- Reporting responds to existing concerns and can help prevent future harm. Early reporting can lead to early intervention and support, potentially stopping issues from escalating.

Consequences of not reporting indications of possible risk of harm include continued harm, legal consequences and professional repercussions.

Examples of risk of harm and their impact on children or young people are shown in the table below.

Risk of harm	Impact on children or young people
Risk of physical harm or injury to a child or young person, such as hitting, slapping, kicking or using excessive force	Physical abuse can hurt children or young people both physically and emotionally. It can leave them with bruises, broken bones or burns, causing pain. It can also make them scared and anxious. Over time, it may lead to health problems and make it hard for them to feel safe and trust people.
Risk of physical or emotional harm due to neglect or failing to provide essential care, such as adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision	Neglect is when children or young people do not get the care they need. It can make them go without enough food, clothes or medical help, hurting their bodies. Neglect can also slow their emotional and social growth, making them feel worthless and have low self-esteem. It can be tough for them to build good relationships.
Risk of emotional abuse arises when a caregiver consistently belittles, humiliates or demeans a child or young person	Emotional abuse can make them anxious or sad and mess up their self-confidence. They might struggle to make good friends or feel safe in relationships. This type of abuse can leave long-lasting emotional scars.
Risk of substance abuse by caregivers	When parents use drugs or alcohol too much, they might forget to care for their children. This can be dangerous, and they might get hurt. They might feel scared and sad because their parents are not okay.
Risk of bullying when a child or young person is consistently targeted by their peers at school or online	Bullying makes children or young people feel bad. It can lead to stress and sadness, and they might stay away from friends. Their self-esteem might drop, and school life could become tough.

These impacts highlight the serious and often long-lasting consequences that different risks of harm can have on the wellbeing and development of children and young people. Recognising these signs and taking appropriate action is crucial to protect them from harm.

In this chapter, you will learn how to:

- Ensure documentation in person's record is accurate, detailed and based on facts
- Report risk of harm indicators, using the relevant reporting mechanism

1.4 Ensure Documentation in Person's Record Is Accurate, Detailed and Based on Facts

When reporting indications of possible risk of harm, you need to ensure accurate documentation in a person's record. This means the record includes all relevant details and specifics related to the person's situation or case, leaving no critical information out. This also entails recording information based on concrete facts and observations rather than assumptions or opinions.

You must do this following your organisational policies and procedures for privacy and confidentiality. You must ensure the information recorded is kept private and confidential only to be accessible to authorised individuals. Review the examples of organisational policies and procedures for privacy and confidentiality in Subchapter 1.2.

Doing so is important because of the following:

- It helps your organisation comply with legal requirements for record-keeping and confidentiality. This prevents potential legal issues.
- Accurate and detailed documentation ensures the child or young person receives the appropriate care and support tailored to their needs. This provides a clear picture of their situation.
- Well-documented records can be shared among team members or professionals involved in the person's care. This promotes effective communication and coordination of services.

A *person's record* refers to a comprehensive collection of documentation and information concerning an individual. It typically involves the following details:

Personal information	Family background	Medical and health information
Education and development	Incident and observation reports	Service interactions
Assessments and risk factors	Legal and case notes	Communication records

- **Personal information**

This section includes the individual's basic details, such as their name, date of birth, contact information and any relevant identification numbers. This information helps in correctly identifying and differentiating the individual from others.



- **Family background**

The record contains information about the individual's family, including parents or guardians, siblings and other significant family members. Understanding family dynamics is crucial in assessing the child or young person's environment and potential risk factors.

- **Medical and health information**

This section details the child or young person's health history, including any medical conditions, allergies, medications and immunisation records. It helps ensure the child or young person's physical wellbeing and addresses any health-related concerns.

- **Education and development**

Information about the child or young person's educational background, school attendance, developmental milestones, and special educational needs is recorded here. This aids in assessing the child or young person's overall growth and development.

- **Incident and observation reports**

Support workers document any incidents, behaviours or observations related to the child or young person's wellbeing and safety. This may include reports of suspected abuse or neglect, changes in behaviour or signs of distress.

- **Service interactions**

Records of interactions with service providers, including dates, services received and outcomes, are kept to track the child or young person's history of support and assistance.

- **Assessments and risk factors**

Support workers use this section to record assessments of the child or young person's safety and wellbeing. They may identify specific risk factors or concerns and document plans for intervention and support.

▪ Legal and case notes

This part of the record includes any legal proceedings, court orders, or case notes related to the child or young person's situation. It ensures support workers have access to the most up-to-date legal information.

▪ Communication records

Any communication between support workers, caregivers or agencies regarding the child or young person's situation is documented. This helps maintain transparent and effective communication.

Maintaining accurate, up-to-date and confidential personal records is essential for support workers. It aids in assessing risk, making informed decisions and coordinating services. Additionally, these records serve as a historical account of the child or young person's journey through the support and protection system. This, in turn, facilitates accountability and adherence to legislative requirements.

To ensure documentation in a person's record is accurate, detailed and based on facts, you can follow these steps:

1. Begin by familiarising yourself with your organisation's policies and procedures regarding record-keeping, privacy and confidentiality. If your organisation provides specific templates or forms for record-keeping, use them as directed to maintain consistency.
2. Collect all relevant and accurate information about the person, such as:

personal details

history

any recent interactions
or observations.

3. Write in plain language, avoiding jargon or technical terms, to ensure that anyone reading the documentation can understand it.
4. Record what you have observed or what is supported by concrete evidence. Avoid making assumptions or judgements.
5. Ensure you include all pertinent information related to the person's situation, concerns or incidents. Do not leave out important facts.
6. Note the dates and times of observations, interactions or incidents accurately. This provides a chronological account of events.
7. Before finalising the documentation, review it for accuracy and completeness. Ensure that it aligns with organisational policies.
8. Sign and date your entries to clearly record who made each entry and when.

Aside from following these steps, you can also consider the following strategies:

If you are unsure about any aspect of the documentation process, seek guidance or supervision from a senior colleague or supervisor.

Make sure that records are updated promptly after any relevant interaction or event to ensure they are current.

Handle the documentation with care, following privacy and confidentiality guidelines.

- Store records securely and limit access to authorised personnel.

When records are no longer needed, dispose of them according to your organisation's policies, ensuring that personal information is irretrievable.

Stay informed about any changes in organisational policies, legal requirements or best practices related to documentation and privacy.

Another strategy is to produce digital reports. *Digital reports* are electronic documents or records containing information, observations or findings in a digital format. These reports are created, stored and shared electronically, often using computer software or digital platforms. To produce digital reports, you can follow these simplified steps:

1. Log in to the digital system or software your organisation uses for record-keeping. Ensure you have the necessary permissions and access rights.
2. Input the relevant details about the child or young person involved, such as their name, date of birth and any identification or reference numbers.
3. Write the report in plain and straightforward language, avoiding complex terminology.
4. Enter accurate and factual information based on what you have observed or encountered. Avoid making assumptions or judgements.
5. Record the dates and times of incidents, interactions or observations accurately to establish a chronological timeline.
6. If any documents, photos or files are related to the report, attach them as supporting evidence if your digital platform permits.
7. Before finalising the report, review it for accuracy, completeness and clarity. Edit any errors or unclear information.
8. Save the report within the digital system and submit it per your organisation's procedures. Follow any prompts or instructions provided by the system.
9. Confirm that your report has been successfully submitted and is recorded in the system. Keep a record of the submission confirmation for your reference.
10. Depending on your organisation's policies, consider keeping a copy of the digital report for your records, especially if you need to refer to it later.

1.5 Report Risk of Harm Indicators, Using the Relevant Reporting Mechanism

After ensuring the person's record is accurate, you must report the *risk of harm indicators*. These refer to signs, cues or evidence that suggest a child or young person may be at risk of experiencing harm, abuse, neglect or danger to their wellbeing. These indicators vary widely but often include behavioural, physical, emotional or environmental signals. Identifying these indicators is crucial for early intervention and ensuring children's and young people's safety.

You need to do this using a reporting mechanism in accordance with legislative requirements. *Reporting mechanisms* specify how and where support workers should report risk of harm indicators. These mechanisms typically outline who should be notified, the method of reporting (e.g. phone, online form or in-person) and the timeframe for reporting. Reporting mechanisms ensure reports are handled appropriately, confidentially and in accordance with legislative requirements.

The following are reporting requirements relevant to the job role of support workers:



- **Notifying risks**

Notifying risks refers to the responsibility of support workers to identify and report any potential risks or hazards that may threaten the safety, wellbeing or rights of the children and young people they are working with. This includes recognising situations or conditions that could lead to harm, abuse, neglect or exploitation. Support workers should proactively notify their supervisors or relevant authorities of these risks, ensuring that preventive measures can be taken to mitigate or eliminate them.

- **Identifying suspected harm**

Identifying suspected harm involves recognising signs, indicators or circumstances that suggest a child or young person may have experienced harm, abuse, neglect or exploitation. Support workers should be trained to detect physical, emotional or behavioural changes and other warning signs indicating potential harm.

When they suspect a child or young person is in danger or has been harmed, they must report these suspicions to the appropriate authorities or designated professionals within their organisation, following established reporting procedures.

▪ Mandatory reporting

Mandatory reporting is a legal requirement in many jurisdictions that mandates support workers to report child protection concerns to the relevant child protection authority or department. These concerns typically involve child abuse, neglect or other forms of harm. Mandatory reporters are legally obligated to report such concerns, which may result in legal consequences. Mandatory reporting laws ensure that child protection concerns are addressed promptly and professionally, prioritising the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.



Multimedia

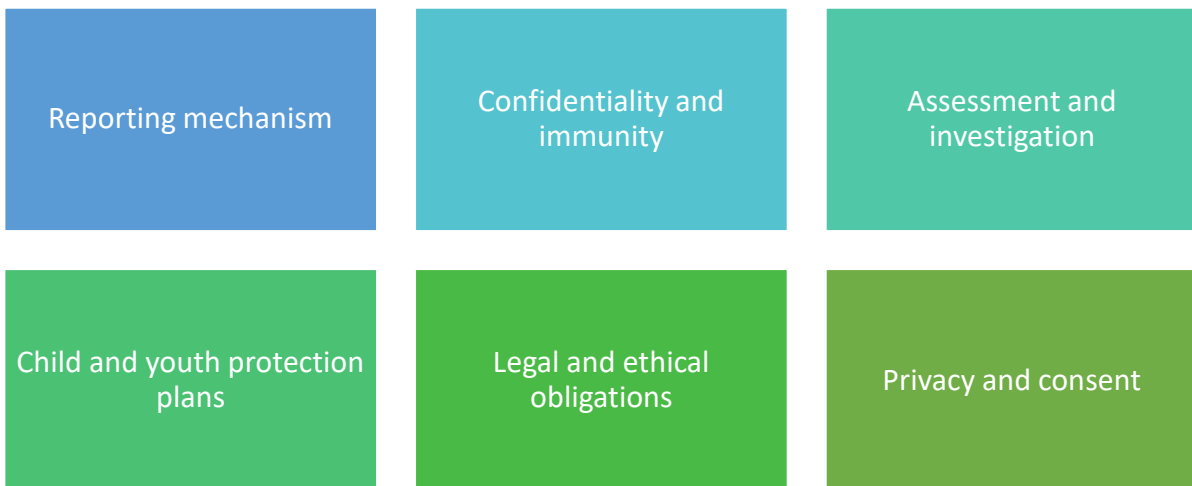
Watch the video below to learn more about mandatory reporting.

[Mandatory Reporting on child protection \(updated Dec 2017\)](#)



The Commonwealth, State and Territory requirements and processes for notifying risk, suspected harm and the reporting process concerning children and young people at risk of harm can vary across Australia. You can review the different child protection legislation in the relevant state or territory discussed in the Chapter Introduction.

The following are some common elements and principles that apply nationwide:



- **Reporting mechanism**

Each state and territory has its designated child protection authority or department responsible for receiving and assessing child abuse and neglect reports. Mandatory reporters are typically required to make reports through a specific reporting mechanism or hotline established by the relevant child and youth protection authority.

- **Confidentiality and immunity**

Reports are made strictly confidential, and reporters are generally protected from legal liability or reprisals when making a good-faith report.

- **Assessment and investigation**

Once a report is received, the child protection authority assesses the level of risk and may initiate an investigation to determine the child and young person's safety and wellbeing.

- **Child and youth protection plans**

Depending on the assessment, child and youth protection agencies may develop intervention plans to ensure the child's or young person's safety and protection. These plans may involve providing support services, removing the child or young person from a harmful environment or legal proceedings.

▪ Legal and ethical obligations

Professionals who fail to report concerns in accordance with their legislative requirements may face legal consequences, including fines or imprisonment.

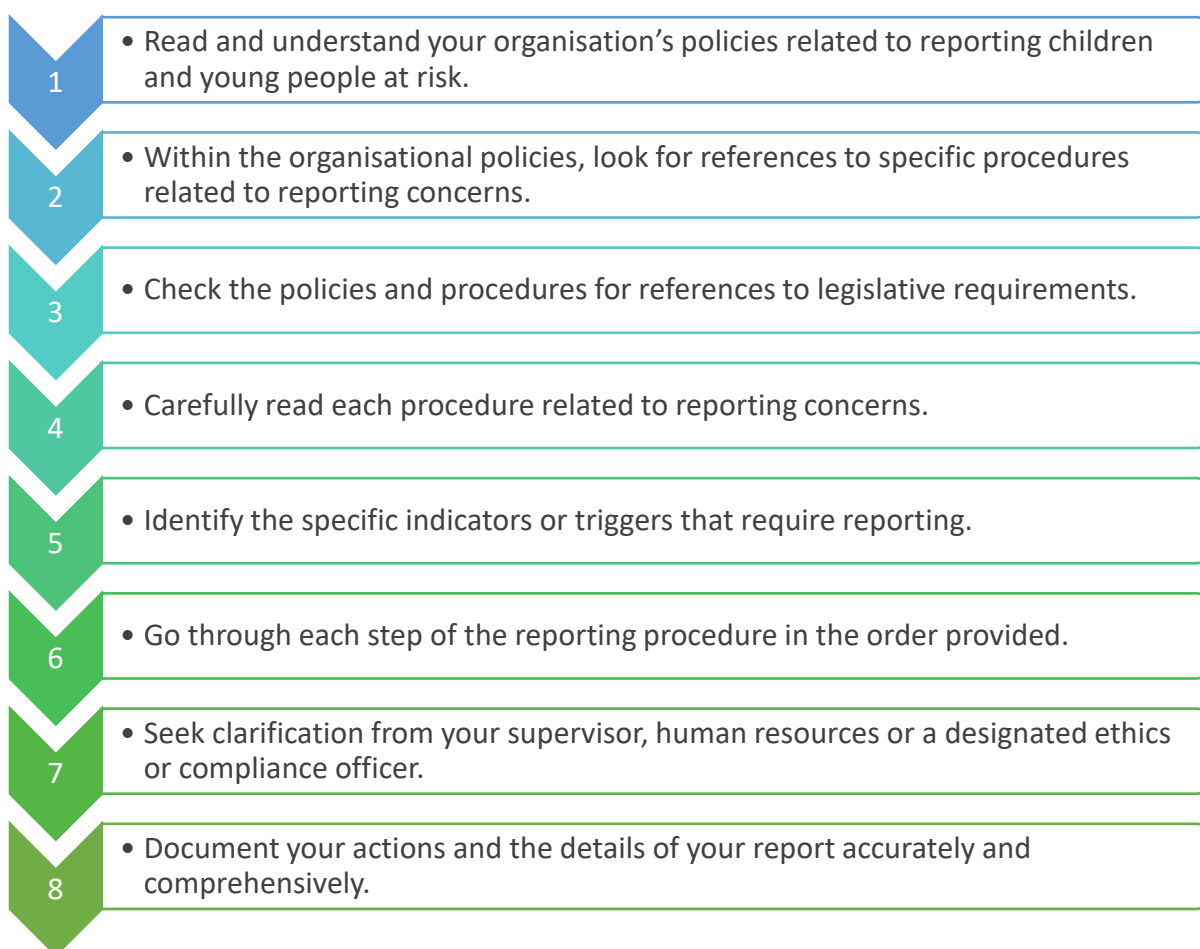
Reporting child and youth protection concerns is also considered an ethical obligation in child and youth protection and community services.

▪ Privacy and consent

When reporting concerns, professionals should be mindful of privacy and consent issues. In some situations, seeking consent from parents or guardians may be necessary before disclosing information. At the same time, in other cases, reporting may be required without consent if there are concerns about immediate risk.

It is vital for professionals working with children and young people to be aware of the specific legislative requirements and processes in their state or territory. These requirements can change over time, so staying updated and receiving training in child and youth protection and reporting procedures is essential to ensure compliance with the law and ethical obligations.

Remember to read and interpret the procedures for reporting children and young people at risk in line with organisational policies and procedures and legislative requirements.



The table below shows examples of organisational policy and procedures for reporting.

Organisational policy	Organisational procedures
<p>All support workers are responsible for promptly reporting any concerns related to the safety, wellbeing and rights of the children and young people they work with.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support workers should be vigilant in identifying any signs or indicators that suggest harm, abuse, neglect or exploitation of children and young people. 2. Document all relevant information regarding the concerns, including dates, times, locations, individuals involved and specific observations or evidence. 3. Immediately report the concerns to their supervisor or designated authority within the organisation. 4. If required, complete an internal reporting form detailing the concerns and observations. 5. Participate in any follow-up discussions or investigations the organisation conducts to address the concerns. 6. Support workers must adhere to mandatory reporting laws and report to the relevant child protection authorities or agencies if the concerns involve suspected child abuse, neglect, or other legal violations. 7. Maintain strict confidentiality throughout the reporting process, sharing information only with authorised individuals and entities.



Checkpoint! Let's Review

1. A *person's record* refers to a comprehensive collection of documentation and information concerning an individual.
2. Maintaining accurate, up-to-date and confidential personal records is essential for support workers since it aids in assessing risk, making informed decisions and coordinating services.
3. Reporting mechanisms specify how and where support workers should report risk of harm indicators.
4. Mandatory reporting is a legal requirement in many jurisdictions that mandates support workers to report child and youth protection concerns to the relevant child and youth protection authority or department.



Learning Activity for Chapter 2

Well done completing this chapter. You may now proceed to your **Learning Activity Booklet** (provided along with this Learner Guide) and complete the learning activities associated with this chapter.

Please coordinate with your trainer/training organisation for additional instructions and guidance in completing these practical activities.

Apply Ethical Practices in Work with Children and Young People

In the previous chapter, you learnt how to report indications of possible risk of harm. In this chapter, you will learn how to apply ethical practices in your work with children and young people. *Ethical practices* mean following a set of principles and standards that are morally right and just. It involves conducting your duties in a way that upholds their rights, safety and wellbeing while also adhering to legal and professional standards.

Applying ethical practices in your work with children and young people ensures that your professional conduct is honest, fair and respectful of their rights and wellbeing. It is essential to do the right thing, follow the rules and treat everyone with kindness and respect.

Doing so is vital because of the following reasons:



On the other hand, not applying ethical practices can lead to serious consequences. Specifically, it can lead to the following:

- Unintentionally harming the children and young people you work with
- Legal problems for you and your organisation
- Damage to your reputation and the reputation of the organisation you work for, making it hard to find work in the future

In this chapter, you will learn how to:

- Recognise and uphold the rights of children and young people in the provision of services
- Employ ethical practices and observe professional boundaries when working with children and young people
- Recognise and report indicators for ethical concerns when working with children and young people



1.6 Recognise and Uphold the Rights of Children and Young People in the Provision of Services

Recognising and upholding the rights of children and young people in providing services means understanding that children and young people have certain rights. These include the right to be safe, the right to be heard and the right to privacy. It also means ensuring these rights are respected and protected while delivering services to them.

Doing so is essential because:

Upholding their rights shows that you respect their worth and dignity as individuals

It helps create a safe environment to protect them from harm and exploitation

Recognising their rights means involving them in decisions that affect them, which can lead to better outcomes and more satisfied young people

1.6.1 Rights of Children and Young People

Rights are specific entitlements and protections recognised and guaranteed to children and young people. They are categorised into the following:



- **Provisional rights** – These encompass the entitlements related to providing basic needs and services necessary for the child and young person’s wellbeing. These rights ensure that children and young people have access to essential resources for their physical, emotional and cognitive development. Examples of these include the following:
 - **Right to access services** – Children and young people can access essential services like healthcare and support. Service providers should ensure that these services are available and accessible to all, regardless of their background or circumstances.
 - **Right to family life** – Children and young people have the right to live with their families whenever possible, and interventions should aim to support and strengthen family bonds whenever it is in the child's or young person’s best interest.
 - **Right to education** – Children and young people have the right to education. Service providers should promote learning opportunities that contribute to their development.
- **Protection rights** – These are rights aimed at protecting children from various forms of harm, abuse, exploitation and discrimination. These rights emphasise the importance of creating a protective environment where children can grow and thrive without facing threats to their safety or dignity. Examples of these include the following:
 - **Right to safety** – Children and young people have the right to be safe from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Service providers must ensure their physical and emotional safety at all times.
 - **Right to privacy** – Children and young people have the right to privacy, including the confidentiality of their personal information. Service providers should only share information when necessary and in accordance with privacy laws and policies.

- **Right to respect and dignity** – Children and young people should be treated with respect and dignity. Service providers should avoid any form of discrimination, bullying or disrespectful behaviour.
- **Right to protection** – Children and young people should be protected from violence, abuse and exploitation, including physical, emotional and sexual abuse.
- **Participation rights** – These are rights that emphasise the importance of involving children or young people in matters that affect their lives. These enable them to express their views, take their opinions seriously, and participate in decision-making processes.

Examples of these rights include the following:

- **Right to be heard** – Children and young people can express their opinions, thoughts and concerns. Service providers should actively listen to them and involve them in decisions that affect their lives to the extent appropriate to their age and maturity.



- **Right to information** – Children and young people can receive age-appropriate information about their rights, the services available, and any decisions affecting their lives.

1.6.2 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a foundational document that is crucial in recognising and upholding children's and young people's rights in providing services. The UDHR was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 and serves as a global standard for human rights. While it is a general document, many of its principles and articles directly impact how children and young people are treated.

The table below describes the articles relevant to recognising and upholding children's and young people's rights in providing services.

Article	Description
Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal	This fundamental principle underscores that every child and young person is entitled to equal treatment and protection regardless of background or circumstances.
Article 2: Right to non-discrimination	It emphasises that everyone is entitled to the rights and freedoms in the UDHR without distinction, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion or social origin. This includes children and young people.
Article 3: Right to life, liberty and security	It emphasises the importance of ensuring the safety and security of children and young people in all aspects of their lives, including when they receive services.
Article 12: Right to privacy	Children and young people have the right to privacy, meaning their personal information should be handled with care and confidentiality when receiving services.
Article 13: Right to freedom of movement	Children and young people should be free to move and play, and this right is particularly relevant in the context of recreational activities and access to services.
Article 16: Right to family	This article underscores the importance of preserving family bonds whenever possible, recognising the significance of a supportive family environment for a child or young person's wellbeing.
Article 19: Right to freedom of expression and information	It states that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including seeking, receiving and imparting information and ideas through any media.

Article	Description
Article 26: Right to education	Children and young people have the right to education, which is essential for their personal and intellectual development. Service providers should ensure access to education.
Article 27: Right to culture and recreation	This article explicitly acknowledges the right to participate in cultural and recreational activities, which are essential for children and young people's well-rounded development and happiness.



Further Reading

Learn more about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by clicking the link below.

[Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)



Multimedia

Watch the video through the link below to learn more about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

[Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

1.6.3 Conventions on the Rights of the Child

Incorporating the Conventions on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and human rights into your work with children and young people is essential. Here are some approaches to achieve this:

- **Rights-based approach (RBA)** – Adopt a rights-based approach in all aspects of your work. This approach places the CRC and other human rights instruments at the centre of your practice. It involves:

Identifying how your actions impact the rights of children and young people

Ensuring that decisions and interventions are guided by respect for their rights

Empowering children and young people to know and claim their rights

- **Child-centred approach** – Put the child or young person at the forefront of your service delivery. Listen to their needs, preferences and opinions and involve them in decisions that affect them. Recognise that they have agency and the capacity to participate in choices about their own lives.
- **Child impact assessment** – Conduct assessments and evaluations of your programs, policies and services to determine how they impact the rights and wellbeing of children and young people. Make necessary adjustments to align with CRC principles.
- **Education and training** – Ensure that all staff members, including social workers, educators and support workers, receive training on children's rights, the CRC and human rights principles. This education should guide their interactions and decision-making.
- **Child-friendly materials** – Develop materials and resources that are child-friendly and easy to understand. Ensure that information about their rights is accessible to children and young people, using language and formats suitable for their age and comprehension levels.
- **Promote participation** – Create opportunities for children and young people to participate in decision-making processes related to their own lives and the services they receive. This can include setting up youth advisory councils or forums where their voices are heard and respected.



- **Advocacy and awareness** – Advocate for children’s and human rights in your community. Raise awareness about the importance of these rights and their relevance to child and youth protection and community services.
- **Legal and policy compliance** – Ensure that your organisation’s policies and practices align with national and international laws and agreements, including the CRC. Regularly review and update your policies to remain in compliance.
- **Collaboration** – Collaborate with other organisations, government agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs) that share a commitment to children’s rights and human rights. Collective efforts can have a more significant impact on improving the wellbeing of children and young people.
- **Monitoring and reporting** – Establish mechanisms to monitor and report any violations of children’s rights or human rights within your service delivery. Be prepared to take corrective actions and seek redress when necessary.

Recognising and upholding children's and young people's rights in providing services involves several essential steps. Here is a general guide on how to do this effectively:

1. Educate yourself and your team.

Ensure you and your team are well-informed about the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other relevant human rights instruments. Understand how these rights apply in your work practice and the legal and ethical obligations they entail.

2. Assess your services and policies.

Conduct a thorough assessment of your organisation’s services, policies and practices to identify potential gaps or areas where children’s rights may not be fully recognised or upheld. Determine whether your policies align with children’s rights principles and the CRC.



3. Engage children and young people.

Create opportunities for children and young people to express their opinions and concerns. Ensure their voices are heard in matters that affect them. Involve them in the planning, design and evaluation of services and programs.

4. Develop child-centric policies.

Revise or develop policies and procedures that explicitly incorporate children’s rights. Ensure that they are clear, comprehensive and easy to understand. Establish mechanisms for reporting any violations of children's rights within your organisation.

5. Provide training and capacity building.

Offer training to your staff on children's rights, the CRC and human rights principles. Ensure that they understand their responsibilities in upholding these rights. Equip staff with the skills and knowledge to engage with children and young people respectfully and age-appropriately.

6. Conduct impact assessments.

Continually assess the impact of your services on children's rights. Identify any unintended consequences and take corrective actions. Evaluate how your services contribute to the wellbeing and development of children and young people.

7. Foster a child-friendly environment.

Create an environment that is welcoming, inclusive and supportive of children and young people. Ensure that they feel safe, respected and valued. Design physical spaces, materials and communications to be child-friendly.

8. Promote accountability.

Establish mechanisms for accountability within your organisation. This includes regularly monitoring and evaluating your services to ensure compliance with children's rights. Encourage open dialogue and feedback from children or young people, their families and your staff.

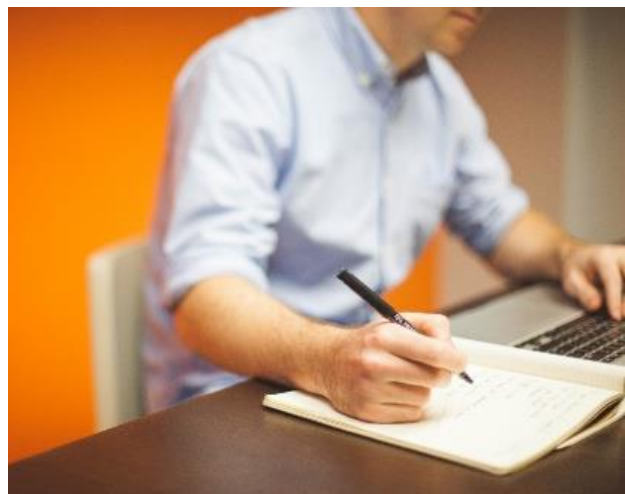
9. Advocate for children's rights.

Engage in advocacy efforts to promote children's rights within your community and at the policy level. Collaborate with other organisations and stakeholders to create a collective impact on children's rights.

10. Regularly review and improve.

Periodically review and update your policies and practices to reflect evolving understandings of children's rights and best practices. Stay informed about legal and policy changes related to children's rights.

By following these steps, you can ensure that your organisation recognises and upholds children's and young people's rights in providing services, creating a safe and nurturing environment where their wellbeing and development are prioritised.



1.7 Employ Ethical Practices and Observe Professional Boundaries When Working with Children and Young People

You learnt about children's and young people's rights in the previous subchapter. You also learnt how to recognise and uphold them when providing services. In this subchapter, you will learn how to employ ethical practices and observe professional boundaries when working with children and young people.

Ethical practices refer to the set of principles, values and standards that guide and inform your actions and decisions in a morally right, just and responsible manner. These involve conducting your duties and responsibilities while prioritising the child and young person's safety, wellbeing, rights and dignity.

Professional boundaries are the limits and guidelines that define the appropriate and ethical scope of interactions, relationships and behaviours between professionals and the individuals they serve, including children and young people. These boundaries are established to maintain a safe, respectful and ethical working environment. Professional boundaries ensure that relationships remain service and support-oriented when working with children and young people. This prevents potential harm or exploitation and avoids conflicts of interest. These boundaries also uphold the professional-client relationship's professionalism, integrity and trustworthiness.

Employing ethical practices and observing professional boundaries when working with children and young people means conducting your duties in a way that is guided by moral principles and adheres to professional standards while also maintaining appropriate limits in your interactions and relationships with them. Doing so is vital to:

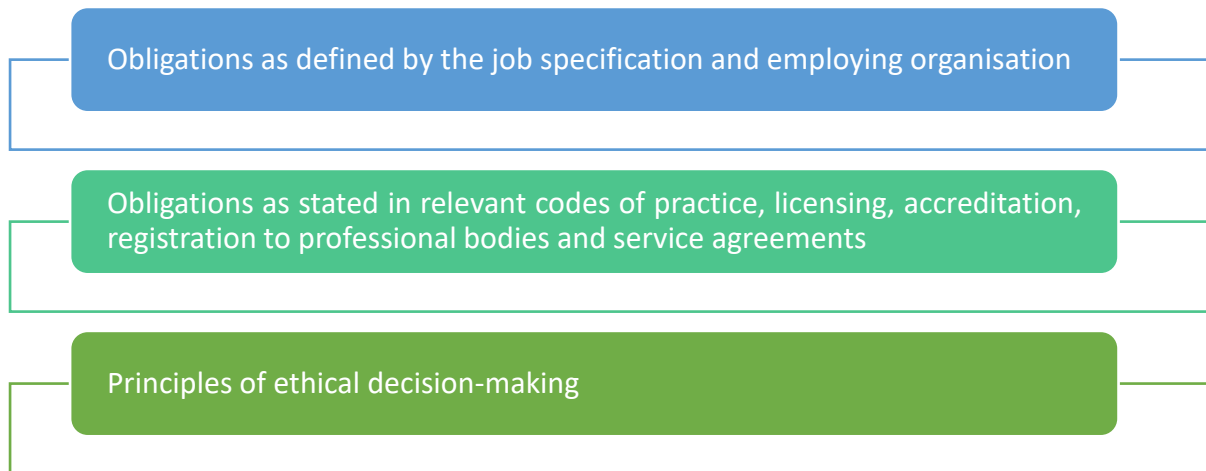
Ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and protect them from harm, exploitation and any inappropriate behaviour

Help establish and maintain trust and respect between you and the children and young people you work with, as well as their families

Ensure your interactions and relationships with children and young people remain focused on the intended purpose of providing support and services

Prevent conflicts of interest, ensuring that your decisions and actions are not influenced by personal or inappropriate motives

When employing ethical practices and observing professional boundaries when working with children and young people, it is crucial to consider the following:



- **Obligations as defined by the job specification and employing organisation**
 - Review your job description and any specific obligations outlined by your employing organisation. This may include expectations related to the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
 - Ensure that you fully understand and fulfil your role and responsibilities as defined by your employer. This could involve tasks like assessment, intervention, documentation and reporting.
 - Examples of these obligations relevant to providing services to children and young people are the following:
 - Protecting the privacy of young individuals and their personal information
 - Treating all children and young people fairly and respectfully, no matter their race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or other characteristics
 - Maintaining proper professional boundaries with children or young people to ensure respectful and safe relationships free from exploitation or abuse
 - Asking for consent from the child or young person and their legal guardians before offering any services or help
 - Being accountable for your actions, taking responsibility for professional behaviour and following organisational rules, procedures and laws

- Assisting the child or young person in a way that centres on their needs and empowers them while respecting their choices and cultural background
- Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person under your care by recognising and responding appropriately to signs of abuse, neglect or harm
- Making suitable referrals to other support services or professionals when necessary
- Adjusting your approaches and methods to meet the cultural and language needs of diverse child or youth populations
- Keeping accurate and up-to-date records and documentation of your interactions, interventions, assessments and the progress of the child or young person by following organisational policies and legal requirements



▪ **Obligations as stated in relevant codes of practice, licensing, accreditation, registration to professional bodies and service agreements**

- Familiarise yourself with professional codes of practice or ethics relevant to your role, such as those issued by professional bodies or government agencies.

An example is the *Australian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics 2020*. It is a comprehensive set of guidelines and principles that serve as a foundational framework for ethical social work practice in Australia. Social workers in Australia are expected to adhere to this code as they carry out their professional responsibilities, including when working with children and young people in community services, child protection and related fields.



Further Reading

Learn more about the Australian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics 2020 by clicking the link below.

[AASW Code of Ethics 2020](#)

- Ensure you adhere to the licensing, accreditation and registration requirements applicable to your profession and field of work.

The table below shows the regulatory body or department that oversees and regulates child support services in different states or territories.

State/territory	Regulatory body or department
Australian Capital Territory	Community Services Directorate
New South Wales	Department of Communities and Justice
Northern Territory	Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities
Queensland	Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services
South Australia	Department of Human Services (DHS)
Tasmania	Department for Education, Children and Young People
Victoria	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
Western Australia	Department of Communities

- Review service agreements or contracts between your organisation and external parties, ensuring that you comply with any stipulated terms and conditions related to child protection and ethical conduct.

Examples of obligations stated in service agreements or contracts are the following:

- Maintaining clear professional boundaries with children and young people, avoiding actions or relationships that could lead to conflicts
- Continuously learning, growing professionally and reflecting on work to improve your knowledge, skills and ethical standards in child or youth support work
- Treating young people kindly, respectfully and empathetically, appreciating their uniqueness and recognising their rights, opinions and independence

- Demonstrating expertise and professionalism when delivering support services and regularly updating knowledge and skills
- Engaging in regular self-reflection, seeking guidance and support when necessary and practising self-care to ensure personal wellbeing and effectiveness in the profession

■ Principles of ethical decision-making

When making decisions related to children and young people, apply ethical principles such as:

- **Autonomy** – Respect the autonomy and choices of children and young people to the extent appropriate for their age and maturity.
- **Beneficence** – Act in their best interests, prioritising their safety, wellbeing and development.
- **Nonmaleficence** – Avoid causing harm and prevent harm when possible.
- **Justice** – Treat all children and young people fairly and equitably, addressing their individual needs and circumstances.

As a support worker working with children and young people, here are the steps to employ ethical practices in your role:

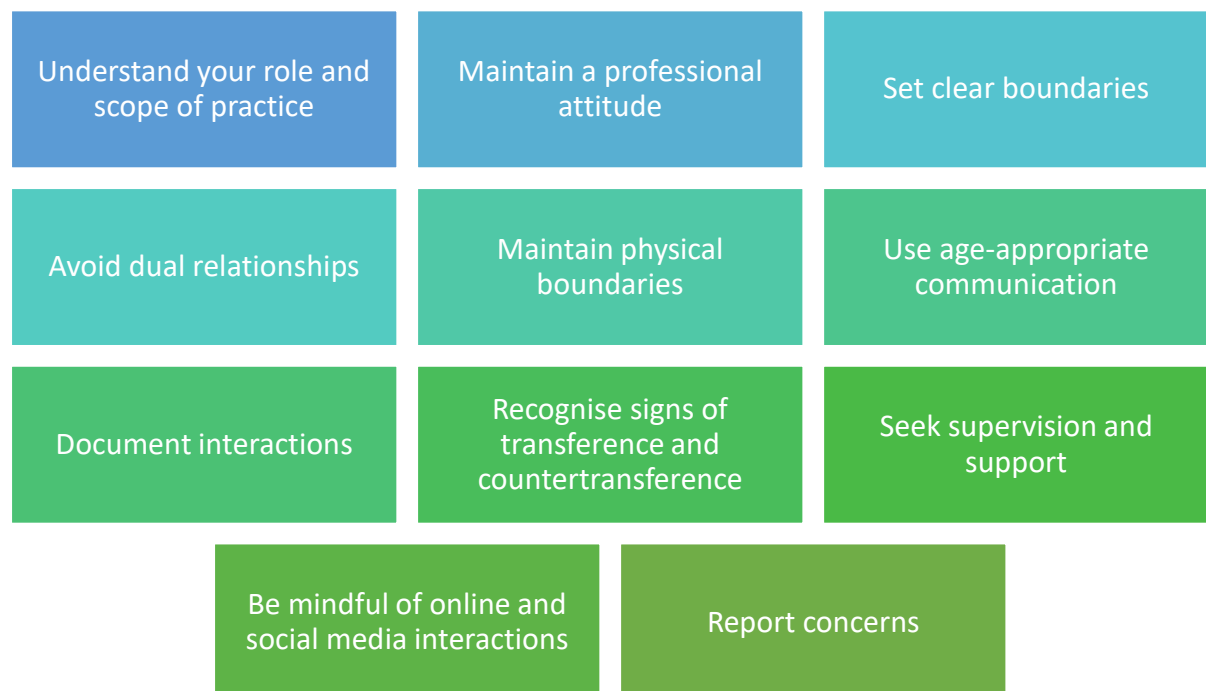
1. Ensure you know the ethical guidelines and principles relevant to your profession and organisation, such as the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) Code of Ethics.
2. Always prioritise the child's or young person's best interests. Consider what is best for their safety, health and overall wellbeing in every decision and action.
3. Respect the autonomy and choices of children and young people to the extent appropriate for their age and maturity. When appropriate, involve children and young people in decisions affecting their lives and seek informed consent.
4. Protect the privacy and confidentiality of children and young people. Share information only on a need-to-know basis and with appropriate consent, except when required by law to report concerns for their safety.
5. Create and maintain a safe and nurturing environment for children and young people. Be vigilant about identifying and reporting any signs of harm, abuse, neglect or exploitation.



6. Recognise and respect cultural diversity and the rights of children and young people from different cultural backgrounds. Work in ways that are culturally sensitive and promote cultural safety.
7. Stay updated with the latest practices, policies and legislation related to child protection and the specific needs of the children and young people you work with.
8. Seek supervision and guidance from experienced professionals or your organisation when faced with ethical dilemmas.
9. Use age-appropriate and respectful communication when interacting with children and young people. Listen actively and be responsive to their needs and concerns.
10. Keep accurate records of your interactions, observations and interventions with children and young people. Report any concerns or incidents following the appropriate reporting procedures and legal requirements.
11. Continually reflect on your own values, biases and potential ethical challenges. Self-awareness is essential for ethical practice.
12. Pursue opportunities for professional development and training to enhance your knowledge and skills in working with children and young people.

By consistently applying these ethical practices, you can create a safe, respectful and supportive environment for the children and young people you work with, ensuring their rights and wellbeing are protected.

As a support worker, observing professional boundaries when working with children and young people is crucial to maintaining a safe and ethical environment. Here are the practices to observe professional boundaries in your role effectively:



- **Understand your role and scope of practice**

Clarify your specific role and responsibilities within the organisation and with respect to the children and young people you work with. Recognise the limits of your professional competence and avoid engaging in activities outside your scope of practice.



- **Maintain a professional attitude**

Maintain a professional demeanour when interacting with children and young people. Avoid overly familiar or informal behaviour. Avoid sharing personal information or disclosing personal issues.

- **Set clear boundaries**

Establish and communicate clear boundaries with children and young people from the beginning of your working relationship. Explain your role and what they can expect from you.

- **Avoid dual relationships**

Avoid engaging in dual relationships, where you have multiple roles with the same child or young person (e.g. personal and professional). Keep your relationships solely within the professional context.

- **Maintain physical boundaries**

Maintain appropriate physical boundaries. Avoid unnecessary physical contact for the child or young person's care and comfort. Always obtain consent before physical contact, such as a handshake or a comforting gesture.

- **Use age-appropriate communication**

Communicate with children and young people using age-appropriate language and methods. Adapt your communication style to their developmental level.

- **Document interactions**

Keep accurate records of your interactions and interventions with children and young people. This documentation can serve as a record of your professional conduct.

- **Recognise signs of transference and countertransference**

Be aware of signs of transference (when a child or young person projects feelings onto you) and countertransference (when you project your feelings onto them). Seek supervision or consultation when these issues arise.

- **Seek supervision and support**

Regularly supervise or consult with a qualified professional or your organisation to discuss ethical dilemmas, challenges and concerns. Seek guidance from supervisors or colleagues when unsure about maintaining professional boundaries.

- **Be mindful of online and social media interactions**

Exercise caution when interacting with children and young people on social media or other online platforms. Maintain professionalism and avoid personal connections on these platforms.

- **Report concerns**

Report any concerns about potential boundary violations or unethical behaviour observed in your colleagues or superiors according to your organisation's reporting procedures.

Observing professional boundaries is essential to ensure children's and young people's safety, wellbeing and trust. By following these steps and clearly focusing on your professional role, you can contribute to a secure and ethical environment in your work with children and young people.



1.8 Recognise and Report Indicators for Ethical Concerns When Working with Children and Young People

Ethical concerns refer to situations or issues that involve moral principles, values or standards of conduct and may raise questions about what is right or wrong, just or unjust, fair or unfair. These concerns often involve ethical dilemmas with competing interests or conflicting values, requiring careful consideration and ethical decision-making to resolve. When working with children and young people, ethical concerns may pertain to issues related to their safety, wellbeing, rights and the ethical conduct of professionals.

Recognising and reporting indicators for ethical concerns when working with children and young people means identifying signs or situations that may suggest ethical violations, misconduct or breaches of professional conduct. When these indicators are observed, it is essential to take appropriate action, including reporting the concerns to the relevant authorities or supervisors.

Doing so is crucial for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. It helps identify situations where their rights may be at risk, or they may be subjected to harm, abuse or exploitation. Additionally, reporting ethical concerns ensures accountability within your organisation and among professionals. It helps maintain the integrity and reputation of your profession and organisation.

Indicators for ethical concerns when working with children and young people can vary depending on the circumstances. However, here are some common indicators that may raise ethical concerns in your role as a support worker or professional:

Indicators	Description
Abuse or neglect	Signs of physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect, such as unexplained injuries, behavioural changes, withdrawal or poor hygiene
Inappropriate behaviour	Witnessing or experiencing inappropriate or boundary-crossing behaviour by colleagues, supervisors or others in the workplace
Lack of informed consent	Failure to obtain proper informed consent from children, young people or their guardians for interventions or services
Confidentiality breaches	Unauthorised sharing of confidential information about children, young people, their families or colleagues

Indicators	Description
Discrimination	Discrimination, including racism, sexism or ageism, affects children and young people's access to services or their wellbeing
Dual relationships	Engaging in dual relationships with children and young people, where personal relationships interfere with professional boundaries
Inadequate supervision	Lack of supervision or oversight in situations where it is required to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
Misuse of authority	Misusing your professional authority or power to manipulate or control children and young people
Financial exploitation	Exploiting children and young people for financial gain or coercing them into financial transactions
Unprofessional conduct	Engaging in unprofessional conduct, such as exhibiting rudeness, disrespect, or using abusive language when interacting with children and young people
Failure to report	Not reporting suspected abuse, neglect or ethical violations as required by law or organisational policies
Inadequate service provision	Providing substandard or inadequate services that do not meet children's and young people's needs
Conflict of interest	Failing to disclose or address conflicts of interest that could compromise the best interests of children and young people
Failure to seek help	Not seeking supervision or guidance when faced with ethical dilemmas or challenging situations in your work
Lack of cultural sensitivity	Ignoring or disrespecting cultural differences and failing to provide culturally sensitive services

It is essential to be vigilant and responsive when you observe any of these indicators, as they may indicate ethical concerns that require action. When in doubt, consult with your organisation's policies and procedures and seek guidance from supervisors or ethical advisors to ensure that ethical issues are appropriately addressed and resolved.

Reporting indicators for ethical concerns is crucial in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and upholding ethical standards in your role. Here is a general guide on how to report such concerns:

1. Familiarise yourself with your organisation's policies and procedures related to reporting ethical concerns. These policies often outline the steps and channels for reporting.
2. Before reporting, document the indicators and concerns thoroughly. Include details such as dates, times, locations, people involved and any relevant information or evidence.
3. Identify the appropriate authority or individual to whom you should report the ethical concerns. This may vary depending on your organisation and the nature of the concerns.
4. Adhere to your organisation's reporting procedures. These may include filling out specific forms, contacting a designated supervisor or manager or reporting directly to an ethics committee or designated authority.
5. Ensure that you maintain confidentiality throughout the reporting process. Share information only with those who have a legitimate need to know and are involved in addressing the concerns.
6. When reporting, use formal and professional communication methods. Provide clear and concise information about the ethical concerns and the evidence you have gathered.
7. Report the concerns as soon as possible after identifying them. Timely reporting can prevent further harm and expedite the resolution process.
8. If you are uncertain how to report or handle the concerns, seek supervision or guidance from a senior colleague, supervisor or ethical advisor.
9. Be aware of whistleblower protections in place, which are legal safeguards that protect individuals reporting wrongdoing. In many cases, there are laws and regulations in place to protect whistleblowers from retaliation.
10. Record your reporting efforts, including dates, times, individuals contacted and any responses or actions taken.



11. If you do not receive a response or resolution within a reasonable timeframe, follow up on your report to ensure it is being addressed.
12. Cooperate with any investigations or inquiries related to ethical concerns. Provide any additional information or assistance as requested.

It is important to remember that reporting ethical concerns is a professional obligation and a critical step in protecting the rights and wellbeing of children and young people. When ethical concerns are promptly and appropriately reported, they can be addressed and resolved to ensure a safe and ethical environment for those you serve.



Checkpoint! Let's Review

1. Rights are specific entitlements and protections recognised and guaranteed to children and young people.
2. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a foundational document consisting of principles and articles that directly impact how children and young people are treated.
3. *Ethical practices* refer to the set of principles, values and standards that guide and inform your actions and decisions in a morally right, just and responsible manner.
4. *Ethical concerns* refer to situations or issues that involve moral principles, values or standards of conduct.



Learning Activity for Chapter 3

Well done completing this chapter. You may now proceed to your **Learning Activity Booklet** (provided along with this Learner Guide) and complete the learning activities associated with this chapter.

Please coordinate with your trainer/training organisation for additional instructions and guidance in completing these practical activities.

References

- Australian Association of Social Workers Ltd. (2020). *Code of ethics*. AASW.
<https://www.aasw.asn.au/about-aasw/ethics-standards/code-of-ethics/>
- Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia. (2022, August). *Australian child protection legislation*. AIFS.
<https://aifs.gov.au/resources/resource-sheets/australian-child-protection-legislation>
- Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia. (2023, August). *Mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect*. AIFS.
<https://aifs.gov.au/resources/resource-sheets/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2023, June 6). *Child protection*. AIHW.
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-system-in-australia>
- Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* (NT).
<https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Pages/Act%20History?itemId=5d61983c-2cd5-466c-965f-5072f23d3abc>
- Child Protection Act 1999 No. 10* (Qld).
<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1999-010/lh>
- Children and Community Services Act 2004* (WA).
https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/law_a9243_currencies.html
- Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* (SA).
[https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/lz?path=/c/a/children%20and%20young%20people%20\(safety\)%20act%202017](https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/lz?path=/c/a/children%20and%20young%20people%20(safety)%20act%202017)
- Children and Young People Act 2008* (ACT). <https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2008-19/>
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 No 157* (NSW).
<https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1998-157/lh>
- Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997* (Tas).
<https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1997-028/lh>
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic). <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/children-youth-and-families-act-2005>
- Civil Law (Wrongs) Act 2002* (ACT). <https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2002-40>

Civil Liability Act 1936 (SA).
<https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/lz?path=%2Fc%2Fa%2Fcivil%20liability%20act%201936>

Civil Liability Act 2002 (Tas).
<https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2002-054/lh>

Civil Liability Act 2002 (WA).
https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/law_a4345_currencies.html

Civil Liability Act 2002 No 22 (NSW).
<https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2002-022/lh>

Civil Liability Act 2003 No. 16 (Qld).
<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2003-016/lh>

Commonwealth of Australia. (2022, April 7). *CaFIS 1B - Child centred family focused support*. Department of Social Services. <https://www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children-programs-services-parenting-families-and-children-activity/cafis-1b-child-centred-family-focused-support>

Community Services Directorate. (2023, June 30). *Home - Community Services*. Community Services. <https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/>

Department of Human Services. (2019). *Department of Human Services SA*. human services. <https://dhs.sa.gov.au/>

Family Law Act 1975 (Cth). <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2004A00275>

Government of Tasmania, Department for Education, Children and Young People. (n.d.). *Department for Education, Children and Young People, Tasmania*. Retrieved September 26, 2023, from <https://www.decyp.tas.gov.au/>

Government of Western Australia. (2023, September 21). *Department of Communities*. WA.gov.au. <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-communities>

Northern Territory Government of Australia. (2021, April 13). *Homepage*. Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities. <https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/>

Personal Injuries (Liabilities and Damages) Act 2003 (NT).
<https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Pages/Act%20History?itemId=f16240db-4571-40c4-ace0-5c7e9d7ba849>

QCOSS. (2017, December 20). *Mandatory reporting on child protection (updated Dec 2017)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXqUpkEKqzs>

School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work at Queen's University Belfast. (2016, March 4). *United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFMqTDIYI2U>

State of New South Wales (Department of Communities and Justice). (n.d.). *Department of Communities and Justice*. Communities and Justice. Retrieved September 26, 2023, from <https://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/>

State of Queensland (Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs). (2023). *Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services*. <https://www.dcssds.qld.gov.au/>

State of Victoria. (2022, February 14). *Department of Families, Fairness and Housing*. Families, Fairness and Housing. <https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/>

UN Human Rights. (2017, May 15). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RR4VXNX3jA>

United Nations. (1948, December 10). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

United Nations. (1989, November 20). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic). <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/wrongs-act-1958>

End of Document