

Introduction

Safe, protective and healthy environments are fundamental to every child having the opportunity to learn and grow to their full potential. C&K is committed to protecting children's safety and wellbeing. C&K acknowledges that protecting children's safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility.

Educators are required by law to report child protection concerns to Child Safety when they have a **reasonable suspicion** that:

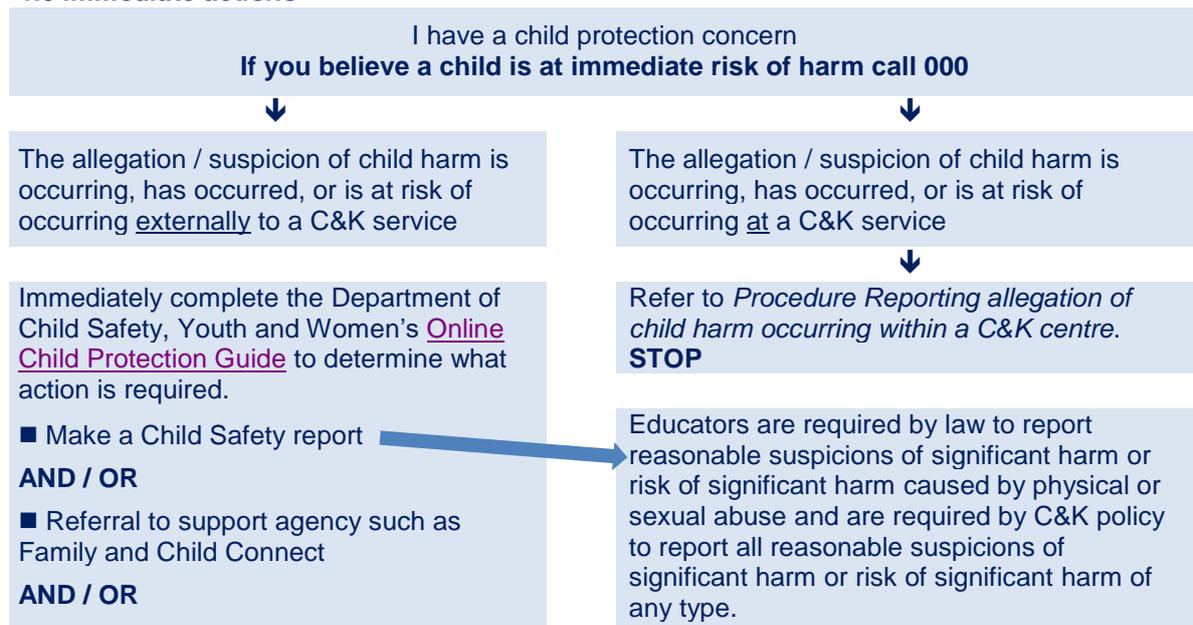
- a child has suffered, is suffering, or is at unacceptable risk of suffering, **significant harm** caused by physical or sexual abuse, and
- there is **not a parent / guardian willing and able to protect the child** from harm.

Although educators are mandated to report only physical or sexual abuse, the *Child Protection Act (1999)* enables and the *Policy Child Protection* requires C&K board members, employees, educators and visiting students, volunteers and external contractors to report all types of child harm including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, exposure to family / domestic violence and neglect.

The *Child Protection Act (1999)* makes provisions to protect notifiers from liability. A notifier shares information with colleagues and other relevant persons for the purpose of taking action to deal with suspected or risk of harm. A notifier is not liable for civil, criminal, or administrative actions and cannot be held to have breached ethical codes or codes of conduct by making a report, providing they acted honestly and in good faith, even if the information provided is later shown to be inaccurate.

Immediate actions

1.0 Immediate actions



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■ Ongoing monitoring and observation of child.

- Print the 'Online Child Protection Guide' decision.
- When possible, the 'Online Child Protection Guide' should be completed with a colleague e.g, Director, Early Childhood Education Manager or Wellbeing and Inclusion Advisor.



Document concerns

- Document concerns as soon as practical via a *Form Child Concern*.
- Be as objective and factual as possible. Avoid emotive comments. If applicable, document physical and behavioural observations and word-for-word disclosure details.
- Attach the 'Online Child Protection Guide' decision to the completed *Form Child Concern*.

■ The 'Online Child Protection Guide' determines a Child Safety report IS required.



An immediate Child Safety report **MUST** be made. Even if others do not support you or agree, educators are required by law and C&K policy to report as noted above.



Make a Child Safety Report

- Make a Child Safety report by phoning the Regional Intake Services (during normal business hours) or the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre (1800 177 135 or (07) 3235 9999) (after business hours and weekends) OR via an Online Child Safety Report Form.
- Refer to the completed **Form Child Concern** and the child's *Enrolment Booklet* when providing information.
- Making a report to Child Safety can be distressing. When possible, make the report with a supportive colleague.

■ The 'Online Child Protection Guide' determines a Child Safety report IS NOT required, however you still have concerns about **significant** harm to a child.



Informing parents / guardians

- C&K's commitment to children's safety and wellbeing is made clear in the *C&K Family and Employee Handbooks* and on the C&K website (including mandatory reporting requirements for early childhood educators). C&K also includes information at orientation and regularly reminds families in enrolment processes and via service newsletters and displays. Regular communication ensures transparency and may have a positive effect on a parent / guardian reaction if a report has been made regarding their child.
- There is no obligation to inform parents / guardians that a Child Safety report regarding their child has been made.
- When sharing any information with the child's parents / guardians, consider:
 - Contacting *Family and Child Connect* for advice.
 - Will the communication place the child, staff or others at risk of harm? If you feel your safety or the safety of others may be at risk, call 000.
 - Will the information sharing result in the child withdrawing from the service, jeopardising future opportunities for the child to be protected from harm?
 - Are the child's parent(s) / guardian(s) aware their child is being harmed?
 - Are the child's parent(s) / guardian(s) responsible for the alleged or suspected harm?

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- Will information sharing strengthen the relationship with the family and enable continued support for the child and family?

Follow-up

Children's services team

Children's services team

- The C&K Early Childhood Education Manager will inform their Regional Manager.
- The C&K Wellbeing and Inclusion Advisor will complete the internal *Online Child Protection Register* and attach the completed *Form Child Concern*.
- The C&K Wellbeing and Inclusion Advisor will provide educators with ongoing advice and support.

Centre educators

- Educators will maintain confidentiality by only discussing and sharing relevant information with others who are responsible for the support, care and protection of the child.
- Educators, when appropriate, will seek advice and information from [Family and Child Connect](#) to provide appropriate support for the child and family. Refer to *CP: 01.04 Procedure Family and Child Connect*.
- If educators have ongoing or new reasonable suspicions of significant child harm, they will make further reports to Child Safety.
- Reporting suspected harm may be distressing. Employees who are distressed as a result of reporting suspected harm can contact the confidential and free Employee Assistance Program or ICARE which provides counselling services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.
- When appropriate educators will seek further information and advice via:
 - Visiting the [Child Safety Website](#) and viewing online training available.
 - Contacting the C&K Wellbeing and Inclusion Advisor or [Family and Child Connect](#).

Acknowledgements and references

- *Child Protection Act 1999*
- *Child Safety Services Reporting Child Abuse. QLD Government*
- *The Department of Communities Queensland Child Protection Guide. QLD Government*

Appendix 1 – Definitions

Mandatory reporters	Mandatory reporters must report to <i>Child Safety</i> a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering or is at unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse and may not have a parent/guardian able and willing to protect them from the harm. Mandatory reporters should also report to <i>Child Safety</i> a reasonable suspicion a child may need protection where the harm or risk of harm relates to any other type of abuse or neglect.
Family and Child Connect	<p><i>Family and Child Connect</i> provides information and advice to people seeking assistance for children and families where there are concerns about their wellbeing.</p> <p>Families who find themselves in need of support can also contact <i>Family and Child Connect</i> services for advice and help. The service is designed to support vulnerable families by assessing their needs and referring them to the most appropriate support service.</p> <p>Where a family has multiple or complex needs and are willing to access support, <i>Family and Child Connect</i> services refer them to an intensive family support service.</p>
Harm	<p><i>Child Protection Act (1999)</i> s9 defines harm to a child as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional well-being. • It is immaterial how the harm is caused. • It can be caused by physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect, or sexual abuse or exploitation. <p>Harm can be caused by a single act, omission or circumstance, or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.</p>
Child in need of protection	<p><i>Child Protection Act (1999)</i> s10 defines a child in need of protection as a child who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has suffered significant harm, is suffering significant harm, or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm and • does not have a parent/guardian able and willing to protect the child from the harm.
Reasonable suspicion	<p>Anyone may report to <i>Child Safety</i> a reasonable suspicion that a child may need protection, or an unborn child may be in need of protection after they are born.</p> <p>A reasonable suspicion can be formed when there is information to suggest that a child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has suffered significant harm, is suffering significant harm, or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm <i>and</i> • may not have a parent/guardian able and willing to protect the child from the harm. <p>If this threshold is not reached, <i>Child Safety</i> has no authority to take further action.</p>

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<p>Significant harm</p>	<p>'Significant' means sufficiently serious to warrant response by a statutory agency, irrespective of a family's consent. Significant harm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may reasonably be expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on the child's safety, welfare, or well-being • is not minor or trivial, and • may be a single act or omission or an accumulation of these. <p>When determining harm as "significant" additional consideration should be given to younger children and those with disabilities as they have an increased vulnerability.</p>
<p>Physical abuse</p>	<p>Physical abuse occurs when a child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, non-accidental physical trauma or injury. It can include (but not limited to) hitting, pushing, dragging, shoving, dragging, throwing objects or making threats to physically harm a child. Physical abuse does not always leave a visible mark or injury.</p>
<p>Sexual abuse</p>	<p>Sexual abuse occurs when an adult, other child or adolescent uses their power or authority to involve a child in sexual activity. Sexual abuse includes but is not limited to touch and non-touch experiences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • kissing or holding a child in a sexual manner • exposing a sexual body part to a child • having sexual relations with a child under 16 years of age • talking in a sexually explicit way that is not age or developmentally appropriate • making obscene phone calls or remarks to a child • sending obscene mobile text messages or emails to a child • fondling a child in a sexual manner • persistently intruding on a child's privacy • penetrating the child's vagina or anus by penis, finger or any other object • oral sex • rape • incest • showing pornographic films, magazines or photographs to a child • having a child pose or perform in a sexual manner • forcing a child to watch a sexual act • child prostitution.
<p>Emotional abuse</p>	<p>Emotional abuse occurs when a child's social, emotional, cognitive or intellectual development is impaired or threatened. It can include emotional deprivation due to persistent rejection, hostility, teasing, bullying, yelling, criticism or exposure of a child to domestic and family violence.</p>
<p>Neglect</p>	<p>Neglect occurs when a child's necessities of life are not met, and their health and development are affected. Basic needs include food, housing, health care, adequate clothing, personal hygiene, hygienic living conditions, school attendance, timely provision of medical treatment, or adequate supervision.</p>