

SC023

Guideline 8

Reporting concerns of Children or Young People who may be at risk of harm

Reporting concerns ABOUT children OR YOUNG PEOPLE who may be at risk of harm &/or suspected abuse

*ACC constituent churches complaint-handling process shall follow State and Territory Legislation. Response processes **shall** be child focussed and uphold the rights of children and young people in line with Child Safe Standards."*

It is recommended that Constituent Churches appoint a Safer Churches Person/Team, whose roles includes: receiving reports, assisting in the process of reporting of Child Protection concerns and keeping accurate records permanently and securely in accordance with privacy legislation.

ACC People shall report risk of harm / suspected child abuse concerns when:

- a Child or Young Person discloses they have been/are being abused/or are at risk of being harmed/abused
- someone else (regardless of age) discloses that they know of a Child or Young Person who has been/are being abused/or at risk of being harmed/abused
- there are concerns that the Child or Young Person may have been or is at risk of being abused based on their physical appearance or behaviour.

ACC People are not required, as an initial response, to establish or investigate if abuse has occurred, but rather report reasonable suspicions or concerns of abuse, including the grounds for concerns, to Local Church Safer Churches Person/Team (or equivalent) (See note below relating to Mandatory reporting in South Australia).

If a Local Church Safer Churches Person is not available and the abuse is currently occurring, or there are reasons to believe that a Child or Young Person is at risk, a report should be made immediately to the police and appropriate authorities.

Process for Reporting:

- a) Report to Local Church Safer Churches Person/Team. Report concerns to one of the appointed Local Safer Churches People, except when a disclosure occurs at a program or event, or a Child's/Young Person's immediate safety is at risk (sexual and physical abuse). In this case, immediately phone the police and organise appropriate support for the child/ren. This can be done with the help of the most senior on-site Leader, who will also need to assist with managing the immediate situation.
- b) Complete applicable form/s and/or online reporting, e.g. Safer Churches anecdotal record and/or state government online reporting tool. The Local Church Safer Churches Person/Team will keep a local church log, upholding privacy principles.
- c) Take the appropriate action with your local church Safer Churches Person - including:

- Police/government Child Protection agency reporting (police, government agency).

NOTE: In South Australia, individuals who are classified as mandatory reporters, must report directly to CARL (Child Abuse Report Line).

- The department leader and/ or Safer Churches personnel will play a support role with the reporting, and be involved in the church's pastoral, denominational and risk management responses of the church.
- Contact the National Safer Churches Helpline for advice and assistance 1800 070 511
- Initiate the correct complaints handling processes if the allegations are about an ACC person holding an ACC credential

d) Provide ongoing support, pastoral care and risk management processes

It is the role of the Local Church Board to implement pastoral care and support for all parties involved, including the Child or Young Person and family, as much as is practical.

There may also be Local Church risk management action plans that need to be implemented, e.g. stepping aside a Leader/Certificate Holder who has been accused of harming a Child or Young Person whilst the investigation occurs.