GUIDE & CHECK LIST

Responding to a child or young person when they disclose abuse and neglect

When a child or young person discloses that he or she has been abused or neglected the child or young person may be feeling scared, guilty, ashamed, angry, and powerless. A child or young person's disclosure is a message that they want the abuse to stop.

You, in turn, may feel a sense of outrage, disgust, sadness, anger and sometimes, disbelief. It is important that you remain calm and in control of your feelings in order to reassure and support the child or young person.

If you suspect abuse, but the child or young person has not told anyone, be aware of the emotional distress that the child or young person may be experiencing. Approach the child or young person in a caring and sensitive manner and tell the child or young person that you want to listen and help. Do not make any promises you are unable to keep.

Possible ways you can show your care and concern

- listen carefully to what the child or young person is saying
- control expressions of panic or shock
- reassure the child or young person that you believe him or her
- reassure the child or young person that to disclose was the right thing to do
- reassure the child or young person that they are not to blame (only if the child indicates this is what they believe)
- acknowledge that it is hard to talk about such things
- indicate what you will do, i.e. that you will talk to someone who can give you some advice about what should happen next
- if you are not in a position to answer all the questions that a child or young person may have, explain that you don't know but will pass on their questions or concerns to the relevant person

You will <u>not</u> be helping the child if you:

- express anger or disgust about the alleged abuser;
- make promises you cannot keep, such as promising that you will not tell anyone or promising that certain action will be taken; or
- seek further details beyond those that the child or young person freely wants to discuss.

Remember that quizzing children about details may be interpreted as disbelief. Your role is to support and listen to the child or young person, not to conduct an investigation.

The following information is to be reported to MPIO:

Name and description of child: …….

Address or descriptions of his/her whereabouts: ……..

When child was last seen: …….

If known, approximate age, Centre details/school and if any siblings: ……....

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If known, whether a language or sign interpreter may be required or an Aboriginal agency should be involved: YES or NO

All available information relevant for safety and welfare of child: .....

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Details of events, conversations or observations, which led to the report:…….

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Your contact name and phone number: ……