



# Mandatory Reporting for Ministry Agents

## When to follow this process

This process must be followed each time a ministry agent receives information, has knowledge of, or reasonably suspects that a child under the age of 18 years has been abused, or is being groomed for abuse. This process assists ministry agents to identify their reporting obligations for concerns and matters relating to:

- Current neglect and/or abuse of children or vulnerable adults
- Previous abuse of children who are now adults
- Abuse committed by children

## R.E.S.P.O.N.D. process and checklist

*Note: the order of the steps may vary depending on the particular circumstances and situation.*

- **Reassure** – Reassure the person: “I’m glad you told me”; “It’s important for this to be addressed” or similar words that welcome the information with respect.
- **Ensure** – Ensure immediate danger has been addressed. If there is imminent danger call 000. You may need to ask a few questions to get enough information to be able to determine immediate safety concerns. However, do not investigate.
- **Statement** – The [Template for Complaints and Allegations](#) must be completed with detailed notes. Do not investigate. You may need to ask a few questions to get enough information to be able to determine immediate safety concerns. Record those to whom you have reported your concerns, both within and outside the church. Take notes as you go, keep a copy for yourself and provide a copy to the church. Ensure notes are secured and kept confidential. Keep a copy of your notes and who you’ve spoken with in a secure location and provide a copy of the report to the Synod Safe Church Admin Contact [safechurch@ns.uca.org.au](mailto:safechurch@ns.uca.org.au)
- **Plan** – plan your next actions. Complete the reporting threshold test (see below) to help plan the appropriate action.
- **Obligations** – Obligations to report to both statutory and church authorities must be met. Reporting is mandatory under church policy and under Territory and State laws. You **must** make a report to the police in all cases where:
  - Physical harm, sexual abuse or grooming has occurred,
  - You suspect sexual abuse, grooming or physical harm has occurred.
- **Needs** – Needs for practical assistance and referral should be attended to. The reporting and referral guide below will assist you to find the contact details.
- **Debrief** – Debrief appropriately.

**NOTE:** in the event of a reportable incident involving a child, follow the reporting process, and notify the parent or guardian, unless they are the alleged offender.



## Reporting threshold test

Obligations to report are determined by your answers to the reporting threshold test in Sections 1 through to 5 below.

### 1. Section 1: child sexual abuse, physical abuse, grooming

- 1.1. Are there marks on the child's body that are evident to you (e.g., bruising) that do not appear to result from normal childhood activity?
- 1.2. Has the child made a reasonably clear statement of sexual or physical abuse?
- 1.3. Has the child made an indirect statement or behaviour (e.g., play) that suggest sexual or physical abuse?
- 1.4. Are you concerned that an adult, another child or colleague is engaging in grooming behaviours and/or sexual or physical abuse?
- 1.5. Have you, or someone else, witnessed grooming, sexual or physical abuse of the child including via photos, videos or other technology?
- 1.6. Are you aware of someone with access to the child who is a known sex offender or who appears to be grooming the child?
- 1.7. Is the child displaying behaviours that suggest harm resulting from sexual or physical abuse e.g., is engaging in sexualised play?
- 1.8. Is the child engaged in a sexual relationship?
- 1.9. Is the child engaged in prostitution or pornography? Do you have information that the child has a sexually transmitted disease or is pregnant?

**If you answered "yes" to any questions in section 1 (above) or if you reasonably suspect** sexual abuse or grooming has/is occurring:

- Complete the template for complaints and allegations form and submit it your local police child protection unit AND to the Synod Safe Church Admin Contact [safechurch@ns.uca.org.au](mailto:safechurch@ns.uca.org.au) ph. 08 8982 3400.



## 2. Section 2: Neglect

- 2.1. Do you have information that the parent or care giver has failed to provide the child with the conditions that are culturally accepted in our society as being essential for their physical and emotional development and well-being?
- 2.2. Do you have information that the parent or care giver has failed to provide therapeutic intervention and/or medical assistance, etc.?

If you answered “no” to all questions in Section 1, and “yes” to any questions in Section 2 (above):

- Complete the template for complaints and allegations and submit to your local Department of Child Safety AND the Synod Safe Church Coordinator [safechurch@ns.uca.org.au](mailto:safechurch@ns.uca.org.au)

## 3. Section 3: Well-being concerns

- 3.1. After answering “no” to all previous questions, do you still hold concerns for the well-being of the child?

If you answered “no” to all questions in Sections 1 and 2, and “yes” to any questions in Section 3 (above):

- Report your concerns to Crime Stoppers, your state or territory child protection unit AND the Synod Safe Church Coordinator [safechurch@ns.uca.org.au](mailto:safechurch@ns.uca.org.au)

## 4. Section 4: Historical abuse

- 4.1. Has an adult made a reasonably clear statement of sexual abuse or grooming committed against them when they were a child AND has given you permission to share their statement OR you believe the alleged offender has access to children?
- 4.2. Has an adult made a reasonably clear statement that they witnessed sexual abuse or grooming committed against another adult who was a child at the time AND has given you permission to share their statement OR you believe the alleged offender has access to children?
- 4.3. Are you aware of someone who is alleged to be a child sex offender of a survivor who is now an adult, and the alleged offender has access to a child within the Church AND you do not know that the Church is aware of it?



4.4. Are you aware of someone who is a convicted child sex offender who has access to a child within the Church AND you do not know that the Church is aware of it?

**If you answered “no” to all questions in Sections 1, 2 and 3 and “yes” to any question in Section 4 (above):**

- Offer to refer the person for professional support, and
- Offer to assist the person to report their matter to the police
- If it is evident that risk to the well-being of children is present,
  - Inform the person that you are required to report the matter to the Synod and do so.
- If you are aware of any matters listed in items 4.1 to 4.4 which occurred within the church, or any historical abuse to a child which may lead to legal actions against a minister, a lay person in the church. Or against the church:
  - Inform the person that you are required to report the matter to the Synod and do so.
- For additional guidance, discuss the matter with the Synod Safe Church Admin Contact [safechurch@ns.uca.org.au](mailto:safechurch@ns.uca.org.au) ph. 08 8982 3400.

**5. Section 5: criminal misconduct, bullying, spiritual abuse, boundary violations, breaches of required behaviour**

- 5.1. Are you aware of spiritual abuse, boundary violations, bullying, breaches of behaviour identified in the code of conduct, or criminal misconduct committed by a ministry agent?
- 5.2. Are you aware of spiritual abuse, boundary violations, bullying, breaches of behaviour identified in the code of conduct, or criminal misconduct committed by a member of a church council?
- 5.3. Are you aware of spiritual abuse, boundary violations, bullying, breaches of behaviour identified in the code of conduct, or criminal misconduct committed by an appointed leader, helper volunteer or employee within the congregation?

If you answered “no” to all questions in Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4, and “yes” to any question in:

- Section 5.1 or 5.2 (above) report the matter to the presbytery chairperson;
- Section 5.3 (above) report the matter to the church council chairperson.



## Reporting and referral guide

### 6. Reporting

Reporting to the Synod	Contact details
Safe Church Admin Contact	<a href="mailto:safechurch@ns.uca.org.au">safechurch@ns.uca.org.au</a> 08 8982 3400
Health and Safety Officer	08 8982 3400

Reporting to Police	Contact details
Emergency	000
Police (NT, WA and SA)	131 444
Crime Stoppers (NT, WA and SA) Make an online report	1800 333 000 Online: <a href="https://www.crimestoppers.com.au">https://www.crimestoppers.com.au</a>
NT Police Child Protection Reporting Line	1800 700 250
WA Police – local police will advise Child Abuse Unit	Your local police station
SA Police Child Abuse Report Line	131 478

Reporting to a Department of Child Safety	Contact details
NT – Child Protection Reporting Line	1800 700 250
WA – Central Intake Team	1800 273 889
SA – Department for Child Protection	131 478

### 7. Referring

Support for families	Contact details
Family and Community Support Services	Online: <a href="https://www.1800RESPECT.org.au">https://www.1800RESPECT.org.au</a> 1800 737 732
Elder Abuse Prevention Unit	Online: <a href="https://www.eapu.com.au">https://www.eapu.com.au</a> 1300 651 192
Domestic and Family Violence (1800RESPECT)	1800 737 732
National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline	1800 880 052
National Relay Service (hearing impaired)	1800 555 677
Translating and Interpreting Service (non-English speaking background)	13 14 50

Support for survivors of abuse	Contact details
National Redress Scheme	<a href="#">Home   National Redress Scheme</a>
Uniting Church National Redress Scheme	1800 737 377
Lifeline	13 11 44