

Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum

Child Protection Information for Parents/Carers

It is a fundamental principle in Australian society that parents have the responsibility to protect their children and keep them safe.

Australia supports a United Nations agreement that children are to be protected from all forms of abuse, exploitation and violence. Abuse may be sexual, physical, neglect and emotional. Australia has laws to prevent and respond to the abuse or neglect of children.

In South Australia this law is called the *Children's Protection Act (1993)*. Under this Act people who work and volunteer in schools and care settings are called mandated notifiers. This means that they must report child abuse or neglect if they have reasonable belief that a child is being harmed. All people employed in the Department for Education and Child Development receives regular training in this responsibility. When people report child abuse it is a confidential exchange of information with the Families SA.

Schools and Child-Care Centres have the responsibility to protect children and keep them safe when they are under their care. Schools and Centres work with parents/carers and other agencies to keep children safe. Some of the ways they contribute to children's safety are through:

- screening staff and volunteers before they work with children and young people
- providing staff and volunteers with expected standards of behaviour towards children and young people
- providing supervision of children in the class, in the yard, and on school excursions and camps
- implementing the school policies to ensure that children are treated in a just way and to respond appropriately to racial, sexual, verbal and physical harassment
- educating about living safely and being healthy in Australia. This includes road safety, water safety, sun protection, hygiene and healthy eating
- providing education about the dangers of drugs and alcohol
- involving students in making decisions about their school and class
- teaching children how to develop positive relationships and providing opportunities to build self esteem
- teaching the Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum

The Child Protection Curriculum teaches all children from a young age, in an age appropriate way,

- to recognise abuse and tell a trusted adult about it,
- to understand what is appropriate and inappropriate touching, and
- to understand ways of keeping themselves safe.

A range of books, videos and classroom strategies are used in the curriculum.

Some strategies used with students are:

- *networks*: a list of 4 or 5 trusted adults that the student can seek help from
- *one-step removed*: students are given 'What if...' scenarios eg 'What if someone went home after school and found that he or she had lost their key and nobody was home?' These situations are discussed and a number of strategies that might help to keep the children safe are developed
- *persistence expectation*: students are taught to continue to tell people or take action until they are safe
- *protective interrupting*: teachers interrupt a student to prevent a disclosure in a group that may lead to further feelings of being unsafe - discussion time with these students is arranged in privacy after the lesson.

Sites should keep parents/carers informed when the Child Protection Curriculum is to be taught and what will be taught. Parents/carers are encouraged to talk to their children and the teachers about the Child Protection program.

Educators have training to teach the Child Protection Curriculum.

Parents/carers also have the responsibility to protect children and ensure their safety and are supported by society to do this. Parents do this through:

- providing adequate supervision at all times to minimise the risk of physical, sexual and emotional harm.
- ensuring that young children are not left alone at home or in a public place especially at night.
- understanding the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touching of children, protecting them from being touched inappropriately and ensuring that children report inappropriate touching.
- disciplining their children without causing harm. Some forms of punishment are illegal in Australia. Alternative effective parenting strategies can be discussed with community leaders and parenting agencies.
- ensuring that children are protected from harmful cultural practices such as under-age marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM).

Other responsibilities for parents/carers include:

- providing healthy food for breakfast, lunch and dinner - healthy food such as fresh fruit and vegetables is low in fat and sugar
- providing appropriate clothing for different weather
- ensuring children learn good hygiene practices such as washing their hands before handling food, cleaning teeth and showering regularly
- ensuring children have enough sleep at night
- ensuring regular attendance at school
- giving appropriate care when children are sick - generally sick children should stay at home and if necessary receive medical attention
- encouraging children to participate cooperatively in school subjects and activities including school excursions and camps. Excursion and camps are an important part of education.
- payment of school fees

Be involved in your child's education

Talk to your children about school. Contact the school if you would like more information about your children's education. An appointment needs to be made with the school principal or a teacher. The school can organise an interpreter to be present or you may arrange for your own interpreter who may be a trusted friend or relative.

Parents/carers are encouraged to become informed about the Child Protection curriculum and reinforce safe practices at home.

Parents/carers can:

- attend an information session organised by the school
- contact their children's teachers or principal if they have any questions or concerns about the Child Protection curriculum.
- be involved in school decision making by being members of the school's Governing Council and other groups such as Parents and Friends.

Community Liaison Officers

DECD Community Liaison Officers are available to support parents and families of various cultural backgrounds by

- providing information to develop their understanding of Child Protection
- working with individual students, parents and schools at critical times
- providing professional learning for staff and students to develop their knowledge and understanding of diverse cultural practices.

This document was prepared collaboratively by the ESL Program and Child Protection Curriculum Team, Curriculum Services, February 2007, and updated in September 2014.