

## Educators

*Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect*

**Looking at the element in detail** - A service reviewed what the NQF Guide said about element 2.2.3 and understood all employees must be aware of:

- their legal responsibilities, roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.
- the current child protection policy and procedures

**As an educator your legal obligations include:**

- understanding and responding to indicators of abuse and neglect
- never discounting what a child says – ie believe the child
- understanding what you must do if you're a mandatory reporter (see Child Protection Policy)
- making a report to Child Protection when suspecting or knowing a child is being abused or neglected (you do not need to prove/investigate the abuse or neglect)
- making sure the Regulatory Authority (Department) is notified of complaints of, or cases of physical or sexual abuse of a child at the Service (Reg 175)
- following the reporting procedure in relation to any 'Reportable Conduct Scheme' (ACT, NSW, VIC)

**The Definitions and Indicators of Abuse or Neglect**

**Indicators of Abuse**

There are many indicators of child abuse and neglect. The following is a guide only. One indicator on its own may not imply abuse or neglect. Each indicator needs to be considered in the context of other indicators

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and the child's circumstances. Check your Policy to ensure they include these types of indicators.

**General indicators of abuse and neglect**

- marked delay between injury and seeking medical assistance
- history of injury
- the child gives some indication that the injury did not occur as stated
- the child tells you someone has hurt them
- the child tells you about someone they know who has been hurt
- someone (relative, friend, acquaintance, sibling) tells you that the child may have been abused

**Indicators of Neglect in children**

- poor standard of hygiene leading to social isolation
- scavenging or stealing food
- extreme longing for adult affection
- lacking a sense of genuine interaction with others
- acute separation anxiety
- self comforting behaviours e.g. rocking, sucking
- delay in development milestones
- untreated physical problems

**Indicators of Neglect in parents and caregivers**

- failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical attention, hygiene or leaving the child inappropriately without supervision
- inability to respond emotionally to the child
- child abandonment
- depriving or withholding physical contact
- failure to provide psychological nurturing
- treating one child differently to the others

**Indicators of Physical Abuse in children**

- facial, head and neck bruising
- lacerations and welts
- explanations inconsistent with injury

- bruising or marks that may show the shape of an object
- bite marks or scratches
- multiple injuries or bruises
- ingestion of poisonous substances, alcohol or drugs
- sprains, twists, dislocations
- bone fractures
- burns and scalds

**Indicators of Physical Abuse in parents and caregivers**

- direct admissions from parents about fear of hurting their children
- family history of violence
- history of their own maltreatment as a child
- repeated visits for medical assistance

**Indicators of Emotional Abuse in children**

- feeling of worthlessness about them
- inability to value others
- lack of trust in people and expectations
- extreme attention seeking behaviours
- other behavioural disorders (disruptiveness, aggressiveness, bullying)

**Indicators of Emotional Abuse in parents and caregivers**

- constant criticism, belittling, teasing of a child or ignoring or withholding praise and affection
- excessive or unreasonable demands
- persistent hostility, severe verbal abuse, rejection and scape-goating
- belief that a particular child is bad or “evil”
- using inappropriate physical or social isolation as punishment
- exposure to domestic violence

**Indicators of Sexual Abuse in children**

- they describe sexual acts
- direct or indirect disclosures
- age inappropriate behaviour and/or persistent sexual behaviour
- self-destructive behaviour
- regression in development achievements
- child being in contact with a suspected or known perpetrator of sexual assault
- bleeding from the vagina or anus

- injuries such as tears to the genitalia

**Indicators of Sexual Abuse in parents, caregivers of anyone else associated with the child**

- exposing the child to sexual behaviours of others
- suspected of or charged with child sexual abuse
- inappropriate jealousy regarding age appropriate development or independence from the family
- coercing the child to engage in sexual behaviour with other children
- verbal threats of sexual abuse
- exposing the child to pornography

**Indicators of Domestic Violence in children**

- show aggressive behaviour
- develop phobias & insomnia
- experience anxiety
- show systems of depression
- have diminished self esteem
- demonstrate poor academic performance and problem solving skills
- have reduced social competence skills including low levels of empathy
- show emotional distress
- have physical complaints

**Organisations that can assist**



There are community organisations that promote child protection matters and the safety and wellbeing of children. Foremost among these is NAPCAN (the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect). NAPCAN co-ordinates the National Child Protection Week and has resources and posters which services can share with families.

See [www.napcan.org.au](http://www.napcan.org.au)

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This year Child Protection Week starts on Father's Day on the first Sunday of September (5-11 September 2021).

## Every child, in every community, needs a fair go.

To treat all of Australia's children fairly, we need to make sure every family and community has what kids need to thrive and be healthy.

The **2021 theme for National Child Protection Week** is all about the importance of the **'bigger picture'** in addressing child abuse and neglect.

Children can thrive and be healthy when they have what they need to develop well, but not every family has these resources. This is why we need to support every child, family and community according to their needs.

As educators you have a very important role in helping create safe communities for children, and giving 'every child, in every neighbourhood, a fair go'. Part of this role is being aware of local community organisations that can support families in their parenting, family relationships, finances etc.

### Why environment matters ... toxic stress

Minor, everyday stresses are a healthy part of child development, but major stressors can have a long-term effect on children's brain development and even on their physical health. Severe adversity that lasts over long periods of time can send the body's stress systems into permanent high alert, flooding the body's vital organs and the brain with stress hormones. This 'toxic stress' response can derail healthy development and has even been linked to adult health problems like heart disease and diabetes.

The environment in which a child lives can be the source of significant stress or support for children. For instance, living in a community with not enough jobs, with poverty, or with high rates of abuse and violence creates stress that can stop children from getting a strong foundation for life.

When we address these root causes of stress, we create healthier communities for everyone, particularly children.

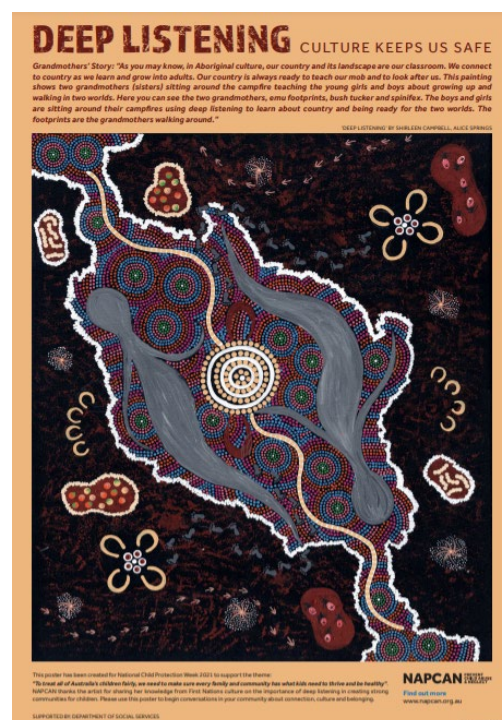
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Research tells us that stable, supportive relationships with caring adult is a powerful source of protection against the long-term negative effects of adversity. These relationships buffer children from toxic stress, softening and moderating the biological stress response.

Providing every family and community with the robust system of supports they need has tremendous power to build these critical relationships between children and caring adults.

This is one of the most important investments we can make. For posters and tip sheets click on the link below.  
<https://www.napcan.org.au/posters-and-tip-sheets/>





The EYLF and MTOP says “Critical reflection involves closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives.” Pick one of the following reflection points to complete the table below:

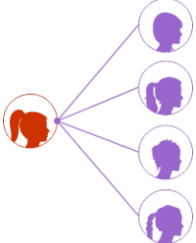
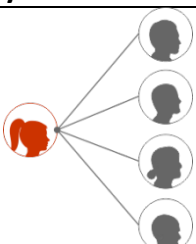
- Should all staff review their child protection obligations and Child Protection Policy more often?
- How do you/your Service ensure volunteers and relief staff have the necessary knowledge about child protection? Could this be improved?
- Do your supervision practices ensure children are safe from abuse and neglect at the Service **(included in QIP improvement plan)?**

Critically reflect through the eyes of:	Write your critical reflection below	What changes did you or will you make because of the reflection?
<p><b>a child</b></p>	I don't like being alone with Miss Audrey. (Sean)	<p>It is hard for educators to see into the bathroom which is in the corner of an 'L' shaped room, and it's not practical to have two educators in the bathroom as the other children would not be adequately supervised.</p> <p>We decided to instal a mirror up on the wall so we could see into the bathroom from our locations in the room.</p>
<p><b>an educator</b></p>	I'm a bit worried that Miss Audrey seems to like being alone with some children.	
<p><b>your families</b></p>	I don't like how some educators take children into areas where they can't be seen by other staff. You can't be too careful nowadays.	
<p><b>theorist and current research</b></p>	Best practice is to ensure children in educational settings are supervised by more than one staff member - and that children are never taken into spaces that can't be seen by other adults eg doors are never closed/locked, other staff can see space from their location.	



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- Do your supervision practices ensure children are safe from abuse and neglect at the Service?

Critically reflect through the eyes of:	Write your critical reflection below	What changes did you or will you make because of the reflection?
 <p><b>a child</b></p>		
 <p><b>an educator</b></p>		
 <p><b>your families</b></p>		
 <p><b>theorist and current research</b></p>		



## Complete your QIP

The information you write below can go directly into your QIP or Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) (NSW ONLY)  
Instructions

For a <b>MEETING</b> QIP and Self-Assessment Tool (SAT)	For <b>Exceeding</b> the QIP and Self-Assessment Tool (SAT)
<i>Please discuss how you make sure your understanding of your child protection responsibilities is current and accurate.</i>	<i>Please give an example where you or other educators have raised concerns from a child protection perspective, discussed your responsibilities, and taken appropriate action.</i>
<i>Please discuss what you'd do if you're not sure what you see or hear is abuse and needs to be reported.</i>	<i>Please reflect on the following indicator from a child protection perspective. "All educators consider and discuss social justice and equity implications of their practice decisions to support and promote each child's safety and ensure that practice takes into account the needs and rights of every child at the service."</i>
<i>Please give an example where you've communicated service practices supporting child protection to families.</i>	<i>Please give an example of the way you or other educators have or would respond respectfully to differing cultural or community perspectives (give example of difference where possible) about child safety and protection, while always ensuring your actions reflect a best practice approach (included in QIP strength).</i>
If you cannot answer these questions above the you are not meeting. This means you need to create an improvement plan and make changes to your practice	If you cannot answer these questions above the you are not exceeding. This means you need to create an improvement plan and make changes to your practice

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Checklist

### Why are you doing the checklist?

The practices identified in the checklist are what the assessor needs to see you do so they can check you're 'meeting the NQS.' If you embed all the things in the checklist, then you are meeting the Element 2.2.3. If there's something on the checklist that you're not doing, then you need to either adjust your practice to do it, or ask for help and training to do what's on the checklist ie work with your educational leader or room leader who should teach/coach you how to do it.

### The checklist keys to use.

**E = Embedded** I do that **ALL** the time

**K = I know** I need to do that, but I don't do it all the time

**T = Please teach** me how to do it or improve my understanding of why I need to do it.

Name Educator 1	
Name Educator 2	
Name Educator 3	
Name Educator 4	
Name Educator 5	

Ensuring Understanding	ED1	ED2	ED3	ED4	ED5
Are you confident you know:					
• the indicators of abuse/neglect?					
• the procedure for making a report of (suspected )abuse/neglect?					
• mandatory reporting requirements?					
• your Child Protection Policy?					
Do you know there's no need to prove that reportable conduct is occurring before reporting it?					
Do you know you don't need evidence of who's abusing/neglecting a child before making a report?					
Do you refer to the Child Protection Policy if unsure about a protection issue?					
If the Nominated Supervisor says they'll make a report, do you follow up with them to ensure the report has been made?					
Do you know child protection allegations or incidents involving educators must also be reported?					
Do you tell your Room Leader/Nominated Supervisor if you think you need training in child protection?					
<b>Interactions and best practice</b>					
Do you talk to team members and the Nominated Supervisor about any child protection concerns you have?					
Do you refer families to local support services (with their consent) when there are 'lower level' issues that are not reportable?					
Do you always supervise visitors and students?					
Do you ensure a child is never taken into areas which can be locked or aren't visible to others?					

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