

Because you cannot be with them all the time

You have a right to know your children are safe. Ask organisations about their policies, activities and who is looking after your children.

Remember:

- People who work with children have an obligation to keep them safe.
- Adults who work with children must have a blue card from the Public Safety Business Agency.
- Organisations should have written policies available to read showing how they respond to child sexual abuse allegations.
- Organisations must provide activities that are suited to the developmental stage of the children involved.
- Organisations must supervise all children in their care.

Where to get help

If you would like further information on child sexual abuse, an information booklet is available from Child Safety. If you suspect a child has experienced harm, or is at risk of experiencing harm, there are a number of agencies that can provide support and advice.

Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

- Contact **Child Safety** on **13 QGOV (13 74 68)**.
- After business hours, call the Child Safety After-Hours Service Centre on **3235 9999** or freecall **1800 177 135**.
- Visit **www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety**

If your concerns are about an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, the local Recognised Entity will be involved. A Recognised Entity is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander individual or organisation who is recognised in their community to provide cultural and family advice for Indigenous child protection matters.

Queensland Police Service

The Queensland Police Service has a number of dedicated Child Protection and Investigation Units across the state to investigate criminal matters relating to child abuse. If you have concerns about criminal behaviour, contact your local police station.

In an emergency, call **000**.

Parentline

Parentline is a free, confidential telephone service that provides counselling and referrals. Counsellors are available from 8 am to 10 pm, seven days a week. Call **1300 30 1300** to speak with a Parentline counsellor.

Child sexual abuse

Things you need to know



What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse occurs when an adult, stronger child or adolescent uses their power or authority to involve a child in sexual activity. Child sexual abuse can cause physical and emotional harm to a child.

Sexual abuse can be physical, verbal or emotional and can include:

- kissing or holding a child in a sexual manner
- exposing a sexual body part to a child
- having sexual relations with a child
- talking in a sexually explicit way that is not age or developmentally appropriate
- making obscene phone calls or remarks to a child
- sending obscene mobile text messages or emails to a child
- fondling a child in a sexual manner
- persistently intruding on a child's privacy
- penetrating the child's vagina or anus by either the penis, finger or any other object
- oral sex
- rape
- incest
- showing pornographic films, magazines or photographs to a child
- having a child pose or perform in a sexual manner
- forcing a child to watch a sexual act
- child prostitution.

Indicators of sexual abuse

A child may say things, do things or exhibit physical signs that are clues to sexual abuse, even if they do not disclose clear information.

Some indicators of child sexual abuse may include:

- displaying greater sexual knowledge than normally expected for their age or developmental level
- inappropriate sexual play and behaviour with themselves, other children or dolls and toys
- hints about sexual activity through actions or comments that are inappropriate to the child's age or developmental level
- excessive masturbation or masturbation in public after kindergarten age
- persistent bedwetting, urinating or soiling in clothes
- persistent sexual themes in their drawings or play time
- running away
- destroying property
- hurting or mutilating animals
- creating stories, poems or artwork about abuse
- difficulty concentrating or being withdrawn or overly obedient
- having unexpected redness, soreness or injury around the penis, vagina, mouth or anus
- having torn, stained or bloody clothing, especially underwear
- recurring themes of power or control in play.

Should any of the above be present, a child may need parents or other adults to take action to keep them safe from any further harm.

Protecting children from sexual abuse

To help protect children from sexual abuse:

- teach children about being safe in a way that does not frighten them — this may include talking to them about recognising their feelings and building their self-esteem
- teach children that the parts of their bodies covered by underwear are private
- teach children anatomical names for body parts, such as penis or vagina
- encourage children to tell someone they trust if anyone tries to touch their private parts
- carefully consider who else you might want your children to tell if you are not available — let your children know these contact options
- speak to children who are under school age about personal safety in simple language and repeat the same rules often — play 'what if' games to reinforce the message
- teach children of primary school age basic family safety rules and how to apply them
- assist adolescents to think independently, and to develop decision-making and assertiveness skills
- know who is supervising your children when they are away from home
- listen to your children and trust what they say, even if it shocks you — children rarely make up stories about sexual abuse.