



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF DARWIN

Mandatory Reporting of Harm and/or Abuse Fact Sheet

In the Northern Territory, all adults must report reasonable beliefs of harm, exploitation and neglect of a child aged less than 18 years.

Abuse or harm may be:

- what is done to a child, or
- what is failed to be provided for a child

A report must be made as soon as possible after forming the belief of harm. Telephone the 24 hour toll free number **1800 700 250** or contact the police on **131 444**.

It is an offence if a reasonable belief is held about harm and/or serious or imminent threat of harm and this is not reported. It may result in a fine or prosecution.

Under the *Care and Protection of Children Act*, the requirements of confidentiality or professional ethics is not breached by making a report.

Definition of Abuse:

Abuse: occurs when an adult harms or exploits a child. Harm is any significant detrimental effect caused by any act, omission or circumstance that affects the well-being or development of a child.

- **Physical harm** may result in bruising, swellings, welts, broken bones as a result of any action like punching, hitting, beating, shaking, biting or burning.
- **Sexual harm** refers to a person who uses power, force or authority to involve a child or young person under 18 years of age in any form of unwanted or illegal sexual activity. This can involve touching or no contact at all. This may take the form of taking sexually explicit photographs or videos of children, forcing children to watch or take part in sexual acts and forcing or coercing children to have sex or engage in sexual acts with other children or adults.
- **Grooming** refers to a pattern of behaviour aimed at engaging a child as a precursor to sexual abuse. It includes establishing a 'special' friendship/ relationship with the child. Grooming can include the conditioning of parents and other adults to think that the relationship with the child is 'normal' and positive. The process can take as little as a few days or as long as months or even years.
- **Exploitation** of a child includes sexual or any other forms of exploitation. For example, enticing a child to be involved in a sexual activity or be photographed for money or other reward.
- **Emotional harm** causes the child to feel frightened, ashamed, upset, alone and have low self-worth. It may result from repeated criticising, teasing, belittling or 'putting down' a child constantly shouting and screaming at a child ignoring and refusing to help or accept a child, calling a child by degrading names, shaming the child in front of others, threatening to physically punish a child or abandon them, exposing a child to domestic violence, encouraging a child to engage in criminal activities, constantly ignoring a child and refusing to show affection and withdrawing love or threatening to do so.
- **Neglect** refers to a failure by a caregiver to provide the basic requirements for meeting the physical and emotional developmental needs of a child. Physically neglectful behaviours include a failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, supervision, hygiene or medical attention.
- **Exposure to family violence** is generally considered to be a form of psychologically abusive behaviour, where a child is present (hearing or seeing) while a parent or sibling is subjected to physical abuse, sexual abuse or psychological maltreatment, or is visually exposed to the damage caused to persons or property by a family member's violent behaviour.