

Child Protection and Reporting Obligations: a guide for employees and volunteers

This guide provides a brief overview of the Woden Community Service (WCS) commitment to child protection and the key responsibilities for employees and volunteers consistent with this.

If employees or volunteers have any concerns or questions about these issues, they must consult the full policy document. The ***Child Protection and Reporting Policy*** (see Organisation Hub under Service Delivery) provides detailed guidance for identifying and responding to possible child abuse or neglect or misconduct towards a child or young person.

1. WCS is committed to the safety, care and wellbeing of all people who access our services

All WCS employees and volunteers have responsibilities for providing a safe environment for children, young people and their families and for reporting information about harm or abuse identified or suspected to management.

WCS management will take action to minimise the risk of harm or abuse, ensuring allegations or suspicions are appropriately addressed. WCS recognises it has a duty to facilitate the prompt reporting of all matters to police or other government agencies and, if requested, will assist with all proper information sharing requests for police and other statutory authorities including CYPS, ACT Ombudsman and Access Canberra.

WCS employees and volunteers will maintain confidentiality in all matters in accordance with legal obligations and ensure all disclosures and reports of abuse or harm are treated seriously and with respect.

2. WCS endeavours to create a safe environment for service delivery

This includes taking the following steps:

- Recruiting and screening to identify suitably qualified and experienced employees and volunteers (refer to Recruitment Policy and Procedures).
- Complying with ACT legislation for Working With Vulnerable People (WWVP) checks and maintaining records of all WWVP and Police Checks for employees where required for their position. Employees must produce evidence of their current ACT WWVP registration prior to commencing work or volunteering with WCS.
- Ensuring that other persons (e.g. contractors) do not have unsupervised access to children or young people in the workplace.
- Requiring all employees to commit to the WCS Code of Conduct. In addition, employees who are required to be mandatory reporters (see below for definition) sign the *Declaration of being a fit and proper person to provide an appropriate environment for the care and protection of children*.
- Maintaining awareness for employees through training and ongoing support.
- Maintaining current policies, procedures and resources that are accessible to all employees.
- Providing regular close supervision of employees, including case reviews, spot checks on the care environment and regular contact with carers for feedback.
- Keeping records related to service delivery to children and young people securely and indefinitely.

3. WCS investigates all instances of possible child abuse or neglect or misconduct towards a child or young person, related to WCS service delivery or employees/volunteers

WCS has legislative reporting obligations around child protection as set out in the table below. However, WCS will investigate all allegations or concerns, even if not strictly within scope of these obligations, to ensure the integrity and safety of all WCS services.

Please talk to your team leader, supervisor or manager if you have any concerns about possible child abuse or neglect, or misconduct towards a child or young person.

WCS has reporting requirements under the *Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT)*, *Family Law Act 1975 (Cth)*, requirements for all adults to report child sexual abuse under the *Crimes Act 1900 (ACT)*¹ and reportable conduct in the *Ombudsman Act 1989 (ACT)*. The different levels of reporting are:

	Concern	Reporting requirement
Possible child abuse or neglect or misconduct towards a child or young person	All concerns	Discuss with WCS management
	Imminent risk	ACT Police – 000
	Serious and justified concerns – mandated reporters	Child and Youth Protection Services – 1300 556 728
	Serious and justified concerns – non-mandated reporters	Child and Youth Protection Services – 1300 556 729
	Sexual abuse (including historic)	ACT Police – 131 444
	By a WCS employee (all concerns, including historic or crossing professional boundaries)	Reportable conduct with ACT Ombudsman

Mandated reporters: Mandated reporters are groups of professionals who, because of their work, have unique access to and expertise to identify abuse more readily than the general community. These groups are mandated under law to report to Child and Youth Protection Service (CYPS) their concerns regarding potential physical or sexual abuse when they come across it in their day-to-day business.

As set out in *Keeping Children and Young People Safe*, mandated reporters include a:

- 'childcare centre worker that cares for a child (including a paid childcare assistant or aide)'
- 'person coordinating or monitoring home-based care for a family day care scheme provider'.

Thus, within WCS, Children Services educators are considered mandated reporters, while other employees are not. Note that *anyone can make a voluntary report to CYPS* regarding concerns of child abuse or neglect.

Ref: *Keeping Children and Young People Safe – a guide to reporting child abuse and neglect in the ACT*
<https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/keeping-children-and-young-people-safe>

4. WCS will use the investigation and reporting processes to continually improve service

WCS will collate information from all investigations and reports to ensure that issues are identified and addressed to continually improve service.

As at 22 August 2019

¹ From 1 September 2019