



Defence Youth Safety Framework

Youth Safety Incident Management Guide

Defence and the Australian Defence Force Cadets (ADF Cadets) need robust and transparent incident management and reporting practices to:

- ensure timely and effective action is taken to address young people's safety and wellbeing
- demonstrate accountability for the care and protection of young people
- ensure the Defence/ADF Cadets line management/chain of command is informed of incidents in a timely and accurate manner
- fulfil the Defence commitment to being a youth safe organisation

Additional benefits of robust and transparent incident management and reporting practices include the ability to:

- deliver a consistent approach across Defence and the ADF Cadets
- identify and address deficits in youth safety

Adults in Defence, and particularly in the ADF Cadets, who interact with young people play a crucial role in ensuring they are safe and protected from harm or abuse.

This Guide steps you through what you need to do in the event that you:

- receive a disclosure
- observe a youth safety incident
- have a feeling that something is not quite right



I have received a disclosure of abuse.

What do I do?



I have observed an incident where a young person has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed.

What should I do?



I have a feeling that a young person may be at risk of harm or abuse.

What can I do?

The common actions regardless of the nature of the incident are to:

- ✓ take it seriously
- ✓ ensure the young person's safety
- ✓ consider seeking advice from the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (SeMPRO)





- ✓ document the incident
- ✓ report the incident
- ✓ do not contact the parents unless you have received guidance from the police or the child and youth protection authority or Defence/ADF Cadets regional incident officer.

Some things you can do if you have concerns about a young person:

- ✓ stay alert to any warning signs that a young person is experiencing abuse or neglect
- ✓ start keeping written notes as soon as you have concerns – note events, physical marks/injuries you see, changes to the young person's behaviour, feelings or the words they use
- ✓ don't pressure them to respond and don't ask leading questions or 'put words in their mouth'
- ✓ reassure them that they can talk to you if they need to, pay attention to them when they do
- ✓ contact your local child and youth protection authority for advice if you are concerned
- ✓ look after yourself – it can be overwhelming and upsetting to think that a young person you know is being harmed; contact a local support agency or a helpline if you need to talk to someone.

This guide has seven sections. Each section includes information on what to do, tips and additional guidance for:

- responding to a disclosure
- observing a youth safety incident
- forming a suspicion
- the role of the 'manager'
- the next steps after reporting
- note-taking
- providing support

The guide is supplemented by the *Incident Management - State and Territory Contact Information Guide* and 'Recognising Abuse' information sheet. The policy regarding Defence Youth safety Incident Management available on [YOUTH HQ](#)

Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (SeMPRO)

SeMPRO offers advice, guidance and support to current and former Defence personnel who have been affected by sexual misconduct, whether the incident is current or historical.

In October 2016 SeMPRO services - advice, information and support – were extended and made available to members of the ADF Cadets, Officers and Instructors of Cadets, volunteers, and the families of eligible personnel as well as ADF personnel.

SeMPRO support coordinators are professional service providers available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. SeMPRO support coordinators have experience responding to adults and young people who have been affected by sexual misconduct, and the people who support them. They can provide you with advice on supporting your child, reporting incidents, and information about support services in your local area for you and your child.





Disclosure



If a young person discloses to you that they have been, are being, or are in danger of being harmed or abused

What do I do?

- ✓ **Ensure** the young person is safe
- ✓ **Consider** the involvement of SeMPRO
- ✓ **Report the disclosure** to the police and/or the state or territory child and youth protection authority in accordance with the relevant state/territory guidance. Refer to the *State and Territory Contact Information Guide* available on [YOUTH HQ](#)
- ✓ **Follow** all direction provided to you by the police and/or the relevant state or territory child and youth protection authority
- ✓ **Report to Defence/ADF Cadets** in accordance with the Defence Incident Reporting and Management Manual, ADF Cadets Incident management policy and the individual cadet organisation procedures.
- ✓ **Write down** as much as possible as soon as possible

Special Note:

- ✓ failure to report abuse may be a criminal offence
- ✓ your role as a first responder explicitly excludes any form of incident investigation
- ✓ do not contact the person responsible for the alleged abuse, regardless of who that person is — leave this to the police or the child and youth protection authority
- ✓ if another young person or adult discloses that they believe another young person has been, is being, or is at risk of being harmed or abused, the same actions apply
- ✓ do not contact the parent until you have received guidance from either the police or the child and youth protection authority, Defence or the relevant cadet organisation regional incident officer

You might know the person who is responsible for the harm and do not want to make it worse for their family. This places you in a difficult situation, but think about what is more important — protecting a young person or protecting the person responsible? The child's right to be safe and protected is always the most important.





Tips for an effective response:

- ✓ listen to the young person
- ✓ reassure them that what has happened to them is not their fault
- ✓ reassure them that you believe them and that disclosing the matter was the right thing to do
- ✓ be patient and allow the young person to talk at their own pace and in their own words
- ✓ stay calm and avoid expressions of panic or shock and remain non-judgmental throughout
- ✓ use a neutral tone of voice with no urgency and where possible use the young person's language and vocabulary
- ✓ avoid leading questions, by asking questions such as, 'what happened next?'
- ✓ be patient and allow the young person to talk at their own pace and in their own words
- ✓ do not pressure the young person into telling you more than they want to
- ✓ use verbal facilitators such as, 'okay, I see', restate the young person's previous statement, and use non-suggestive words of encouragement, designed to keep the young person talking in an open-ended way
- ✓ do not confront the alleged offender
- ✓ tell the young person you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop the abuse, and explain the role of these authorities if appropriate. For example:
 - **To a younger person:** 'I am not going to be able to keep your story a secret. I really have to tell someone who is going to be able to help you'
 - **To an older youth:** 'The information you have given me has made me very concerned for your welfare and I need to tell you that it is my responsibility to report this information'





Observed or witnessed a Youth Safety incident?



If you witness an incident where a young person has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed

What should you do?

- ✓ **Ensure** the young person's safety
- ✓ **Separate** the parties involved, if the person who is alleged to have perpetrated the abuse poses an immediate risk to the health and safety of any other person call 000 for urgent assistance
- ✓ **Consider** the involvement of SeMPRO
- ✓ **Report the incident** to the police and/or the state or territory child and youth protection authority in accordance with the relevant state/ territory authority reporting guidance
- ✓ **Follow** all directions provided to you by the police and/or the relevant state or territory child protection authority
- ✓ **Report to Defence/ADF Cadets** in accordance with the Defence Incident Reporting and Management Manual, ADF Cadets Incident management policy and the individual cadet organisation procedures.
- ✓ **Write down** as much as possible as soon as possible

Special Note:

- failure to report abuse may be a criminal offence
- your role as a first responder explicitly excludes any form of incident investigation
- do not contact the parent until you have received guidance from either the police or the child and youth protection authority, Defence or the relevant cadet organisation regional incident officer
- do not contact the person responsible for the alleged abuse, regardless of who that person is — leave this to the police or the child and youth protection authority





Tips for an effective response:

- ✓ stay calm
- ✓ ensure as far as is reasonably practicable that all parties involved in the incident are separated and each individual is supervised by a different person
- ✓ reassure the young person that what has happened to them is not their fault
- ✓ take as many reasonably practicable steps as you can to preserve the environment, the clothing, other items, and potential witnesses until the police or other relevant authorities arrive
- ✓ consider carefully what others are told about the situation. People should **not** speak about or post any information on social media and the alleged offender should not be named – doing so may be a breach of law and the relevant code of conduct
- ✓ When describing the incident to the authorities:
 - ✓ use plain English and focus on the facts, avoiding assumptions or opinions
 - ✓ include date, time, location
 - ✓ provide details of the alleged offender and any witnesses
 - ✓ detail any injury or medical attention provided to the alleged victim

Additional suggestion

- Seek advice from SeMPRO
- SeMPRO Internet
- sempro@defence.gov.au
- 1800 736 776 (1800SeMPRO) 24/7





The incident relates to a suspicion or reasonable belief



You notice a physical and/or behavioural indicator which raises a 'red flag' in your mind of possible abuse or neglect

What can you do?

- ✓ **Ensure** the young person's safety
- ✓ **Consider** the involvement of SeMPRO – If you feel concerned or worried about the young person and need information about what to do
- ✓ **Speak up** – If you have formed a reasonable suspicion that the indicator is the result of abuse or neglect you **must** report it
- ✓ **Follow** the directions provided to you by the police and/or the child and youth protection authority
- ✓ **Write down** as much as possible
- ✓ **Report to Defence/ADF Cadets** in accordance with the Defence Incident Reporting and Management Manual, ADF Cadets Incident management policy and the individual cadet organisation procedures.

Special Note:

- failure to report physical and sexual abuse may be a criminal offence
- **do not** contact the parent(s)/family until you have received guidance from either the police or the child and youth protection authority, Defence or the relevant cadet organisation regional incident officer
- **do not** contact the person responsible for the alleged abuse, regardless of who that person is — leave this to the police or the child and youth protection authority
- **do not** investigate the incident or commence inquiry into the incident

What if another person has already made a report?

- It is important to consider that other people may not have access to the specific detail you have. The information you provide through your report may assist the relevant authority to take further action to protect the young person
- There may be times when two or more people have formed a belief about the same young person on the same occasion and based on the same information. In this situation it is sufficient that only one of the people





make a report. The other is obliged to ensure that the report has been made and that all the grounds for their own belief were included in the report made by the other person

- In instances where two people form different views about whether or not to make a report, if one person continues to hold a reasonable belief that a young person is in need of protection, then they are legally obliged to make a report.

Tips for an effective reporting and response:

- ✓ The first step in helping abused or neglected young people is learning to recognise the signs of abuse and neglect. If you are unsure about what you have noticed or observed, the Youth Safety Recognising Abuse resource sheet provides information on recognising warning signs and forming a reasonable suspicion/belief.
- ✓ Once you form a reasonable belief that a young person has been, or is at risk of being abused, your obligation to report is separate from the obligations or actions of other people.
- ✓ **Do not investigate** - It is not your role or responsibility to investigate the incident or commence inquiry into the incident

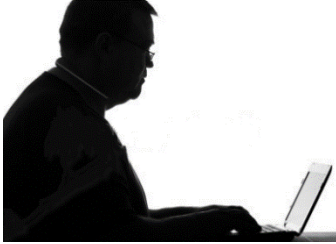
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Youth Safety Incident Reporting



A person involved in a Defence youth program has reported a youth safety incident to me. In my role as a Defence Commander/Manager/ADF Cadets Regional Incident Officer I am required to

- ✓ **Report** as soon as practicable but within 24 hours of commencement of duty, all required information about the youth safety incident to the relevant Defence Investigative Authority in accordance with the Defence Incident Reporting and Management Manual, ADF Cadets Incident management policy and the individual cadet organisation procedures.
- ✓ **Record** details of the report and management of the youth safety incident in accordance with the Defence Incident Reporting and Management Manual
- ✓ **Consider** the involvement of SeMPRO – *The SeMPRO Commanders and Managers Guide* provides detailed advice regarding the practical aspects of responding to all persons, adult and young people alike, who are victims of sexual misconduct

Special Note:

- Defence requires that all personnel (ADF and APS), contractors, volunteers, visitors and ADF Cadets members report any event or occurrence involving a disclosure, allegation, observation or suspicion of abuse or neglect of a young person or group of young people to the police and/or the relevant state or territory child and youth protection authority as soon as practicable
- failure to report physical and sexual abuse may be a criminal offence
- under Defence policy, Defence investigative authorities conduct independent investigations into suspected notifiable incidents, or other matters as directed by the head Defence investigative authority. A Defence investigative authority investigation may, depending on the circumstances, amount to a breach of the criminal code and/or Defence policy or applicable code of conduct
- Managers and commanders are expected to take all reasonable steps to protect the integrity and confidentiality of an investigative and/or inquiry process whether it is external or internal to Defence *The SeMPRO Commanders and Managers Guide* provides detailed advice regarding the practical aspects of responding to all persons, adult and young people alike, who are victims of sexual misconduct

Additional suggestion:

- **Seek** advice from SeMPRO if needed about the management of incidents of sexual misconduct and offences and assistance with appropriate referrals for support for all people involved in, or witness to an incident; and support to, and the debriefing of commanders, managers and supervisors including the ADF Cadets





What happens next?



What happens once I have made the report to the police or child and youth protection authority, my Defence line management/chain of command or ADF Cadets Regional Incident Officer?

The state and territory authority to which the incident is reported, assesses the report where a young person is or may be at risk of significant harm or neglect and they may undertake an investigation.

- ✓ **Follow** the directions provided to you by the police and/or the child protection authority
- ✓ **Do not** talk to the alleged victim, their family or the alleged offender about the incident. It is not your role or responsibility to investigate the incident or commence inquiry into the incident
- ✓ **Cooperate** with the Defence/ADF Cadets organisation internal inquiry

Special Note:

- if the police or child and youth protection authority investigation does not result in formal action, Defence and/or the relevant cadet organisation will conduct its own independent inquiry into allegations of misconduct relating to possible breaches of Defence and ADF Cadets policies and/or applicable codes of conduct. The inquiry will be conducted by an independent person with appropriate expertise and training
- the inquiry is separate to any criminal investigation conducted by the police and/or child and youth protection authority
- the principles of procedural fairness will be adhered to throughout the Defence/ADF Cadets inquiry and decision making process
- the inquiry process may result in the recommendation of disciplinary/administrative action for Defence personnel or the member of the ADF Cadets. The parties involved will be advised in writing of the outcome of the Defence inquiry

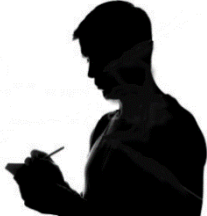
Tips for effective reporting:

- if you are asked for information by the victim, their family, the alleged offender or others your response should be confined to the process and timeline
- have notes ready with your observation(s) – this information may be sought at a later date if the matter is the subject of legal proceedings
- in all cases people should be asked not to speak about or post any information on social media. Naming the alleged offender, the alleged victim or the detailing circumstances of the incident may constitute a breach of Defence and ADF Cadets policies and/or applicable codes of conduct





Note taking and record keeping



How do I know what documentation is need?

What do you do?

As a member of Defence and/or the ADF Cadets you are expected to keep a record of the incident and the immediate and precautionary actions taken to ensure the young person's safety (e.g. moved the alleged offender to a non-youth related position, supervised the alleged offender or removed/suspended them from their duties while the matter is being investigated).

The extent and the nature of the documentation will vary according to the specific requirements outlined in Defence policy and procedures or the ADF Cadets Incident management policy.

- ✓ your aim should be to provide as much information as possible. these records will be helpful in making a report of the abuse to the relevant authorities such as the police or child protection authority
- ✓ have notes ready with your observation(s) and the young person and family details
- ✓ this information may be sought at a later date if the matter is the subject of legal proceedings. These notes may also later assist you if you are required to provide evidence

Special Note:

- you will be asked to provide information to help out the best way to respond to the situation. It is important to provide as much detail as possible. Even if you do not have all the details, your information may be critical in helping to keep a young person safe
- all records/notes must be provided to the Defence line management/chain of command and/or the relevant cadet organisation regional incident officer **and** stored in a completely confidential and secure Defence document management system.

Tips for effective documentation:

- use plain English and focus on the facts, avoid assumptions or opinions
- include date, time, location
- describe the incident for example:
 - 'I have concerns that abuse or neglect may be occurring'
 - 'a young person has told me that abuse is happening to them'
 - 'I have received a complaint of abuse or sexual assault'





- 'I witnessed an incident of abuse'
- describe what actions were proposed and what actions were taken
- provide detail of the alleged offender and any witnesses
- detail any injury or medical attention provided to the alleged victim
- it is important that you **do not**:
 - ask anyone else to type notes for you
 - keep notes in a diary or place where others can read them
 - enter notes on local/home computers





Providing Support



When a young person discloses or alleges abuse priority must be given to supporting the young person and their parents and other family members so that they are able to provide for the wellbeing of the young person. The young person's age, maturity, developmental capacity, gender, background and other relevant characteristics should be considered.

Special Note:

You will not be helping the young person if you:

- express anger or disgust about the alleged abuse
- make promises you cannot keep, such as promising that you won't tell anyone
- seek further detail beyond what the young person freely wants to discuss
- quiz a young person about details as this may be interpreted as disbelief
- your role is to support and listen to the young person, not conduct an investigation

Support is to be provided to all parties involved but not by the same individual, types of support may include:

- ✓ Employee Assistance Program (EAP) comprising confidential and professional counselling for all eligible:
 - Defence Australian Public Services (APS) employees, their immediate family members and their supervisors/managers
 - Australian Defence Force (ADF) Reserves and their immediate family members
 - Officers or Instructors of ADF Cadets and Cadets and their immediate families.
 -
- ✓ SeMPRO can provide information and advice on support services in your state and territory.
 - sempro@defence.gov.au
 - 1800 736 776 (1800SeMPRO) 24/7
- ✓ The State and Territory Contact Information Guide available on [YOUTH HQ](#) provides the contact details for external organisations that provide assistant and support.
- if an alleged offender has been removed from their position Defence or the relevant cadet organisation may provide those affected with appropriate information. This is important to minimise harm caused by gossip and concern. This may also be important if there is a risk that other young people may have been harmed.
- if the alleged offender has been charged by the police, advice provided to those affected may include information regarding the charge and the contact details of the police officer dealing with the case, who can be contacted if they have further information.

