

Receiving and Recording Disclosures

It is important to have an awareness of steps to take and things to do when you receive a disclosure relating to inappropriate or criminal behaviour towards either children or adults.

When to follow this process

This process applies to appointed volunteers, leaders and staff who participate in activities conducted by the congregations within Churches of Christ in Queensland. This process must be followed each time a volunteer, leader or staff:

- Receives information, has knowledge of, or reasonably suspects that a child under the age of 18 years:
 - Has been sexually abused, or is being groomed for sexual abuse by any adult or child; and/or
 - Has been subject to, or is at risk of any other abuse or neglect.
 - Becomes aware of bullying or criminal misconduct
 - Holds serious concerns and/or information about the behaviour of an appointed leader, ministering person or church elder.
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What to do

What do if an adult is telling you that a child has been neglected or abused in any way, disclosing their experience of historical abuse, or if there is a concern or allegation regarding bullying, criminal or other inappropriate behaviour. This includes if a child is disclosing abuse they have experienced.

B.C.A.L.M Process and checklist

(note: the order of the steps may vary depending on the particular situation)

Breathe

Using a quick calming technique can help you engage your thinking brain. Suggest the person 'take a deep breath' and count for them as they breathe in and out a few times.

Move to a suitable environment, free of distractions.

Calm

It is hard for anyone to disclose harm or assault. For children who do not yet have the language or vocabulary, it can be even more difficult. Offenders usually put a great deal of effort into ensuring people remain silent.

Some reasons adults and children do not disclose are:

- They feel responsible in some way
- They feel guilty
- They feel that no one will believe them

- They may have been told by the offender that their disclosure will cause problems, such as family breakdowns or the offender going to jail
- The offender may be someone they heavily relied on or made them feel 'special'
- They do not want anyone to be angry or upset with them or the offender

Calm the person. This is most easily done by listening supportively:

- Be calm and patient – allow for the person to be heard
- Let the person use their own words – avoid asking leading questions
- Avoid 'quizzing' the person about details of the abuse

Affirm the person in their choice to tell you what has happened. The words you use will have a profound and lasting impact on the person. Use statements like:

- You've done the right thing telling me
- I'm glad you told me
- I believe you
- It wasn't your fault

Assess

Assess whether there is any immediate or imminent danger. If there is, or if in doubt, call 000 and ask for Police to attend.

Let

Let the person know what your obligations are. Especially for child abuse concerns and allegations, explain you have a responsibility to report. You could use statements like:

- I will need to tell someone about this so that we can get some help for you (or the person who is at risk/being harmed).
- I'm going to have to make a report.

Make a report

As soon as the conversation is finished and the person is safe, make a detailed note of the conversation using the **Complaints and Allegations Form**. Report your concerns and the conversation to your Senior Pastor or Safe Church Contacts straight away, respecting the privacy and dignity of all parties.

If the concern is about your Pastor, report your concern to the Churches of Christ in Queensland Ministry Ethics Unit governance@cofcqld.com.au.

You may be required to make a report to the statutory authorities in some cases.

Keep a copy of your notes and who you've spoken with in a secure location.

Ensure that your notes follow these guidelines:

- Context: what was the conversation about or what happened exactly?
- Clarity: Stick to the facts as presented or events as they occurred. Don't confuse with extra information. When stating words or sentences, used inverted commas i.e. Peter said "I am angry all the time". Do not change words or terms used but include them exactly as stated.
- Conciseness: Only note what needs to be noted to achieve the first two points.
- **Do Not**: Offer opinions, judgements, diagnoses or filter what you hear through your own life experience, theology or interests. Be factual and fair.