

The background is a solid red color. Overlaid on this are several large, stylized, abstract shapes in orange and light green. One large orange shape is in the upper right, another in the lower left, and a horizontal green brushstroke-like shape is in the center. The text 'Responding to Child Abuse' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font across the green shape.

Responding to Child Abuse

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Introduction

Children have the right to be physically and emotionally safe at all times.

Children are the most vulnerable members of our community. They do not have the power to stop abuse. They rely on others to help them. The responsibility for making sure that children are safe and that their needs are met is shared between the family, the general community, community agencies, professionals working with children, police and government. Each has a significant role to play to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and to help prevent harm from occurring.

Child abuse harms children physically and emotionally. The initial effects and the long-term consequences of child abuse affect the individual, their family and the community at large.

Early identification and effective intervention can lessen the initial and long-term effects of child abuse and promote recovery of the children and families concerned.

The information in this booklet is for all professionals working with children—whether they are mandated or not.

What this Booklet is About

This booklet has been developed to assist those professionals whose work brings them into contact with children and young people, and who are required by law to report child sexual and child physical abuse. It contains information about sharing responsibility for child protection, the role of the Child Protection Service, the legal definition of when a child is in need of protection, definitions and indicators of types of harm, and how to respond to child abuse in order to help and protect children.

It also provides information about mandatory reporting legislation, how to make a notification to Child Protection and what happens once a notification has been made. Finally, it outlines the ongoing responsibilities of the mandated notifier.

While the reporting of *emotional* abuse and neglect is not mandatory, it is important that children are also protected from these forms of abuse. For this reason, this booklet includes some information about emotional abuse and neglect, as well as physical and sexual abuse (which do require mandatory reporting).

Sharing Responsibility for Child Protection

Current Victorian Government policy promotes and supports early intervention with families, and acknowledges that the broader service system contributes to the protection of children from abuse. This has led to the strengthening of the secondary service sector, and means that the role of the Child Protection Service has been delegated to a service of last resort.

Responsibility for ensuring that the needs of children are met, and that they are safe within their families, is shared between the family, the community and the government. When adults who care for children do not meet their responsibilities, are abusive or exploit their positions of power, then the wider Child Protection system becomes responsible for taking action. The type of service that is provided by the Child Protection Service will be determined by the seriousness of the risk of harm to the child's safety and wellbeing. The broad system of Child Protection can be seen as a continuum of service delivery that reflects a continuum of needs. It is divided into three tiers:

1. Universal (or primary) services
2. Secondary services
3. Tertiary (statutory) services.

1. Universal (or Primary) Services

Primary prevention services are universal services. They are offered to everyone. Primary services include antenatal services, maternal child health services, and preschool education. The goal of primary services is to provide support and education for children and families before problems arise. In many cases, primary services help to prevent abuse and neglect occurring.

2. Secondary Services

Secondary services offer programs that identify and reduce the personal and social stresses on parents that lead to family breakdown and/or child abuse. There are many community-based agencies and organisations that support families and help them overcome significant problems. Services include in-home family support, financial or family counselling, respite care and various parenting and self help groups.

3. Tertiary (Statutory) Services

Tertiary, or statutory, services include services for children who have been at risk of significant harm where intervention is needed to ensure the ongoing safety of the child. These services include the statutory Child Protection Services and Placement Services for children who are unable to live at home.

Children who are at significant risk and their families are now presenting with much more complex needs than they were even ten years ago. Responding to concerns about children and families is not easy. Sharing the responsibility is much more effective and less stressful than acting individually.

Therefore, in recognition of this shared responsibility, it is important to look at the availability of other services (primary and secondary) when making a decision to notify Child Protection, as, in general, this course of action should be considered only as a last resort.

The Role of the Child Protection Service

Within the service continuum, the Child Protection Service has a particular role prescribed by the *Children and Young Persons Act 1989*. It has responsibility for those children who are at risk of significant harm and their families. This service only comes into play when services in the primary and secondary system are unable to ensure the safety and welfare of the child in collaboration with the family.

The Child Protection Service provides child-centred, family-focused services to protect children and young people from significant harm resulting from abuse or neglect within the family unit. It also ensures that children and young people receive services to deal with the impact of abuse and neglect on their wellbeing and development. The Child Protection Service is based on the principle that the best protection for children is usually within the family, however, the child's safety and wellbeing is of paramount importance.

The function of the Child Protection Service is to:

- Receive notifications from people who believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection.
- Provide advice to people who report such concerns.
- Investigate matters where it is believed that a child is at risk of significant harm.
- Refer children and families to services that assist in providing the ongoing safety and wellbeing of the children.
- Take matters before the Children's Court if the child's safety cannot be assured within the family.
- Supervise children on legal orders granted by the Children's Court.

What is Child Abuse?

Children can be harmed both physically and emotionally. The immediate and long-term effects can be disastrous for the individual child, their family and the community. Early intervention can have a dramatic effect on lessening the harm, and promoting recovery of the child and the family.

Abuse, neglect and maltreatment are generic terms used to describe situations where a child may need protection. Child abuse is an act or omission by an adult that endangers or impairs a child's physical or emotional health and development. Child abuse is not usually a single incident, but takes place over time.

From a Child Protection perspective, using the term 'harm' instead of 'abuse' helps to focus on the *effects* on the child rather than the *actions* of the adult. This distinction becomes important when undertaking an assessment of the child's ongoing safety and wellbeing, as well as the parents' capacity to protect the child.

Legal Definition of a Child in Need of Protection

The legal definition of a child in need of protection is provided by the Children and Young Person's Act 1989, Section 63.

For the purpose of this Act a child is in need of protection if any of the following grounds exist:

- (a) The child has been abandoned by his or her parent and after reasonable inquiries:
 - i) the parents cannot be found; and
 - ii) no other suitable person can be found who is willing and able to care for the child;
- (b) The child's parents are dead or incapacitated and there is no other suitable person willing or able to care for the child;

- (c) The child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type;
- (d) The child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of sexual abuse and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type;
- (e) The child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological harm of such a kind that the child's emotional and intellectual development is, or is likely to be, significantly damaged and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type;
- (f) The child's physical development or health has been, or is likely to be, significantly harmed and the child's parents have not provided, arranged or allowed the provision of, or are unlikely to provide, arrange or allow the provision of, basic care or effective medical, surgical or other remedial care.

It is important to note that it is the dual focus on harm, and the inability or unwillingness to protect, which enables the Child Protection Service to be involved. Interpretation of the parent's capacity and willingness to protect is made with regard to the degree of community support and services available to assist the parent in this responsibility.

Types of Harm

Physical Harm

Physical harm refers to a situation in which a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from an injury inflicted by a child's parent or caregiver. The injury may be inflicted intentionally or may be the inadvertent consequence of physical punishment, or physically aggressive treatment of a child.

Physical injury and significant harm to a child may also result from neglect by a parent or caregiver. The failure of a parent or caregiver to adequately ensure the safety of a child may expose the child to extremely dangerous or life-threatening situations that result in physical injury and significant harm to the child.

Sexual Harm

Sexual harm refers to a situation in which a person uses power or authority over a child to involve the child in sexual activity, and the child's parent or caregiver has not protected the child. Physical force is sometimes involved. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity. It includes fondling of the child's genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or other object, or exposure of the child to pornography.

Emotional Harm

Emotional harm refers to a situation in which a child's parent or caregiver repeatedly rejects the child or uses threats to frighten the child. This may involve name calling, put-downs or continual coldness from the parent or caregiver, to the extent that it significantly damages the child's physical, social, intellectual or emotional development.

Neglect

Neglect refers to a situation in which a child's parent or caregiver fails to provide the child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed.

Indicators of Harm

Behavioural or physical signs that assist in the recognition of a child being at significant risk are known as indicators. A professional working with children may observe a whole range of indicators, or a single indicator that leads them to believe that harm is occurring. One single indicator can be as significant as the presence of a number of indicators.

Note: the *presence* of an indicator listed below does not always indicate that a child *is* being abused; and the *absence* of the signs listed below does not indicate that the child is *not* being abused.

Physical Harm

Physical indicators include:

- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts, welts.
- Fractured bones, especially in an infant where a fracture is unlikely to occur accidentally.
- Poisoning.
- Internal injuries.
- Shaking injuries.
- Strangulation.

Possible behavioural indicators include where the child or young person:

- Expresses little or no emotion when hurt.
- Offers unlikely explanations for injuries.
- Wears long-sleeved clothes on hot days (possibly to hide bruising or other injuries).
- Demonstrates a fear of parents, or a fear of going home.
- Is fearful when other children cry or shout.
- Is excessively friendly to strangers.
- Is passive and compliant.
- Is nervous, hyperactive, aggressive, disruptive.
- Tells someone that physical harm has occurred.

Sexual Harm

Sexual harm is not usually identified through physical indicators unless the professional works in a medical setting. Often the first sign is when a child tells a trusted person that they have been sexually abused. However, the presence of sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, vaginal or anal bleeding or discharge may indicate sexual abuse. Some of the indicators listed below are only identifiable through medical examinations.

Physical indicators include:

- Injury to the genital or rectal area, such as bruising or bleeding.
- Vaginal or anal bleeding or discharge.
- Discomfort in urinating or defecating.
- Inflammation and infection of genital area.
- Sexually transmitted diseases.

- Frequent urinary tract infections.
- Pregnancy, especially in very young adolescents.
- Bruising and other injuries to breasts, buttocks and thighs.
- Anxiety related illnesses, such as anorexia or bulimia.

Possible behavioural indicators include where the child or young person:

- Exhibits persistent and age-inappropriate sexual activity.
- Exhibits regressive behaviour, such as bedwetting and speech loss.
- Exhibits delinquent and aggressive behaviour.
- Participates in self-injurious behaviour, such as drug or alcohol abuse, prostitution, self-mutilation.
- Exhibits behaviour such as frequent rocking, sucking and biting.
- Exhibits signs of depression.
- Complains of headaches or stomach pains.
- Experiences difficulties in sleeping.
- Produces drawings or descriptions in stories that are sexually explicit and age-inappropriate.
- Experiences problems with school work.
- Runs away from home.
- Has difficulty relating to adults and peers.
- Tells someone that abuse has occurred.

Emotional Harm

There are few physical indicators of emotional harm, but it may cause delays in physical, emotional or mental development. Some of these include:

- Speech disorders.
- Delays in physical development.
- Failure to thrive.

Possible behavioural indicators include where the child or young person:

- Has low self-esteem.
- Exhibits unexplained mood swings.
- Exhibits age-inappropriate behaviours, for instance, overly adult (parenting other children) or overly infantile (thumb sucking, rocking, wetting or soiling).
- Is withdrawn, passive, tearful.

- Exhibits aggressive or demanding behaviour.
- Is highly anxious.
- Has difficulty relating to adults and peers.

Neglect

Physical indicators include:

- Frequent hunger.
- Malnutrition.
- Poor hygiene.
- Inappropriate clothing, for example, summer clothes in winter.
- Unsupervised for long periods.
- Medical needs not attended to.
- Abandonment by parents or guardians.
- Failure to thrive.

Possible behavioural indicators include where the child or young person:

- Steals food.
- Stays at school outside school hours.
- Is often tired, falls asleep in class.
- Abuses alcohol or drugs.
- Displays aggressive behaviour.
- Is not relating well to peers.
- Is indiscriminate with affection.

Significant Harm

It is useful for professionals to have some understanding of how significant harm is defined in the context of Child Protection, which may help to make a judgment on when to notify Child Protection. A useful definition is:

Significant harm is a compilation of events, both acute and long standing, which interact with the child's ongoing development and interrupt, alter or impair physical and psychological development (Bentovim, A (1999), cited in Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan).

Ultimately it is the role of the Child Protection worker to undertake the risk assessment based on the information gathered from a notifier, and to determine whether significant harm exists.

How to Respond to Child Abuse

When a Child Discloses

When a child or young person tells you that they have been abused, they may be feeling scared, guilty, ashamed, angry and powerless. You, in turn, may feel a sense of outrage, disgust, sadness, anger and sometimes disbelief.

However, it is important for you to remain calm and in control of your feelings in order to reassure the child that something will be done to keep them safe.

You can show your care and concern for the child by:

- Listening carefully to what they are saying.
- Telling them you believe them.
- Telling them it is not their fault and that they are not responsible for the abuse.
- Letting the child know that you will make a report to the appropriate authorities so that they can help stop the abuse.
- Telling the child you are pleased they told you.

If you suspect abuse, but the child has not told anyone, be aware of the emotional distress that the child may be experiencing. Approach the child in a caring and sensitive manner, and assure them that you are willing to listen and to help if there is a problem.

You will *not* be helping the child if you:

- Make promises you cannot keep, such as promising that you will not tell anyone.
- Push the child into giving details of the abuse. Your role is to listen to what the child wants to tell you, but not to conduct an investigation. (Beware of asking any direct questions of the child, as this may prejudice any subsequent investigation.)
- Indiscriminately discuss the circumstances of the child with others not directly involved with helping the child.

Your Response

Responding to your belief that child abuse has occurred, or is occurring, can be the first important step in stopping the abuse and protecting the child from further harm. The first step in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children is to put the child's needs first.

This response can take the form of a range of measures, which include implementing preventative programs, engaging relevant services or making a report to the Child Protection Service.

The range of measures employed will depend on:

- The degree of severity of the situation.
- The risk of harm to the child.
- The capability and willingness of the parent to protect the child from harm.

Children are vulnerable and dependent on adult care. They are usually powerless to stop abuse and require adult assistance to intervene. It is important to remember that abusive and neglectful behaviour on the part of the parents is not irreversible. Any person has the capacity to harm and neglect a child if the circumstances are adverse and stressful, especially if there are no models of positive, non-violent parenting available. There is substantial evidence that early intervention to improve parenting skills does work—especially if the underlying causes can be addressed.

Making a Professional Judgment

There are many different ways to respond actively to concerns. It is necessary to make a professional judgment of the available information to ensure that the response is appropriate to the situation.

There are no clear-cut, black-and-white rules about how to respond to children who may need protection, as every situation is different.

The professional involved needs to understand that observations can be influenced by beliefs and emotions. Making objective observations and forming a professional judgment will be based on:

- Warning signs (or indicators) of harm or potential harm that have been observed or inferred from information.
- Knowledge of the child and of adolescent development.
- Knowledge of any support currently being received by the family.
- Consultation with colleagues and other professionals.
- Professional obligations and duty-of-care responsibilities.
- Established protocols.
- Individual school (or employer) processes.
- Legal requirements, such as mandatory reporting.

Making a decision regarding action may not be a one-off event. It may be necessary to make a series of decisions, based on the continuous monitoring of a situation that causes concern. For example, a person may observe certain warning signs in a child's behaviour, but decide that there is no need to make a report to Child Protection. Later, there might be more information, such as a crisis event, which confirms the need to make a notification to Child Protection.

Gathering Information

People working with children and young people can help to prevent harm to a child by being open to noticing the signs or indicators of harm, and then taking appropriate action early. People who work with children and young people should pay attention to:

- **Physical signs** of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect.
- **Behavioural signs** of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect.
- **Disclosures** by the child or young person.

Each situation will be different, requiring different responses. Some situations will require several types of responses at once. In considering the most effective response to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing, it may be necessary to gather information and facts. The following table shows some of the ways in which this can be done.

Table 1: Gathering Information

Action	Detail
Make notes	Record what you observe; date and sign the entry.
Continue to observe	Record what you observe; date and sign the entry.
Consult colleagues	Get support and advice from your colleagues and supervisors, compare notes, brainstorm possible strategies.
Develop action plans based on procedures	Know your employer's procedures and processes about what to do.
Talk to other agencies about helping the family	Collaborate with or engage community health services, local government services, regional Department of Human Services/Child Protection contacts, disability services. You may want to call a case meeting.
Talk to the child	Do this with respect for the child or young person's need for privacy and confidentiality.
Talk to the parent/s	Only do this when it will not jeopardise the safety of child or young person.

Mandatory Reporting Legislation

Notifications of a child in need of protection are made under Section 64 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1989. Under Victorian law, a child is regarded as being under 17 years of age.

Voluntary (non-Mandated) Notification

Section 64 (1) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1989 allows that any person who believes, on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection may notify a protective intervener of that belief and of the reasonable grounds for it. This means that any person is voluntarily able to make a notification to the Child Protection Service when they believe a child is in need of protection and the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child. Under this part of the Act, notifications are made out of moral reasons, rather than because the law has compelled someone to do so.

Legally Mandated Notification

The Children and Young Persons Act 1989 Section 64 (1C) states that certain professionals must report to Child Protection Services, when, in the course of their professional duty:

[they] form the belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection[because] the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury and the child's parents have not protected or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type; or

the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of sexual abuse and the child's parents have not or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

Specifically, these professions include:

- Primary and secondary school principals and teachers
- Nurses
- Doctors
- Police.

Reasonable Grounds

The Children and Young Persons Act 1989 Section 64 (1B) describes reasonable grounds as:

- matters of which a person becomes aware;
- any opinions based on those matters.

There may be reasonable grounds when:

- A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused.
- A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves).
- A relative, friend, acquaintance or sibling of the child, states that the child has been physically or sexually abused.
- Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development lead the mandated professional to form a belief that the child has been abused.
- Signs of physical or sexual abuse leads to a belief the child has been abused.

Forming A Belief

The concept of forming a belief is a thinking process, where a person is more likely to **accept** rather than **reject** the notion that there is significant harm for the child or young person.

You may ask yourself, 'Am I **more likely to believe** there is significant harm for the child, or **less likely to believe** there is significant harm for the child?' If you are more likely to believe then you have formed a belief.

It is the Child Protection worker's job to investigate and prove significant harm, so other professionals need only have reasonable grounds for belief.

Responsibilities of a Mandated Notifier

The responsibilities of the mandated notifier include the following:

- Mandated professionals are only required to make a notification to the Child Protection Service when they form a belief that a child is in need of protection from physical or sexual abuse *in the course of practising their profession*. In other words, if you are a mandated notifier you will not be legally obliged to report if you encounter abuse in your private life, or when working in a capacity that is not directly related to the professional affiliation under which you are mandated. However, in such situations you have a moral or ethical obligation to report your concerns if you have reasonable grounds to believe that a child is at risk of harm.
- You must make a report without delay.
- You are required to make a report *each time* you become aware of any further grounds for your belief.
- You do not have to prove that the abuse has occurred.
- It is your principal responsibility to report your belief. It is not the responsibility of your supervisor, principal, senior or boss. If you are one of a group of mandated notifiers who share the belief, based on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is in need of protection from physical or sexual abuse, then only one mandated notifier needs to make the report. However, you must be satisfied that the report was made promptly and that all of the reasonable grounds were included in the notification.
- In instances where a mandated professional (supervisor, principal, boss) directs another mandated professional *not* to make a report, and that professional continues to hold the belief that child is in need of protection, then that person is legally required to make a report to the Child Protection Service.
- Mandatory reporting requirements take precedence over professional codes of practice where confidentiality or client privilege is claimed.

Important Points

Other points to remember are:

- You do not have to prove that abuse has taken place. You only need reasonable grounds for your belief.
- You do not need permission from parents or caregivers to make a notification; nor do they need to be informed that a notification is being made.
- If you make a notification in good faith, you cannot be held legally liable—regardless of the outcome of the notification.

Confidentiality

Your identity as a notifier will remain confidential under the Children and Young Persons Act, unless:

- You choose to inform the child and/or family of the notification yourself.
- You consent in writing to your identity as the notifier being disclosed.
- The court decides it needs this information in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child.
- The court decides in the interests of justice, it requires that the evidence be given.

It is not general practice for the Children’s Court to seek information regarding the identity of the notifier.

How to Make a Notification to Child Protection

To make a notification of child abuse, contact your regional Child Protection office as soon as possible. You will find a list of these offices at the back of this booklet. See Table 2 for details to supply when making a notification.

There is an outreach crisis response Child Protection Service that operates 24 hours, and is toll-free (131 278) if there is an emergency after hours or at the weekend. However, this service is only a *crisis* service, and if the matter is assessed as not warranting immediate action, it will be referred to the region in which the child lives.

Table 2: Details to Supply when Making a Notification

The Child Protection intake worker at the regional office will ask the notifier for certain information, including:

Details	The child or young person's name, age and address
Indicators of harm	The reason for believing that the injury or behaviour is the result of abuse or neglect
Reason for reporting	The reason the call is being made at this point in time
Safety assessment	Assessment of immediate danger to the child or children (information may be sought on the whereabouts of the alleged abuser/s)
Description	Description of the injury or behaviour observed
Child's whereabouts	The current whereabouts of the child or young person
Other services	Knowledge of other services involved with the family
Family information	Any other information about the family
Cultural characteristics	Any specific cultural or other details, which will help the child, for example, Aboriginality, interpreter or disability needs

A notification should still be made, *even if the notifier does not have all the necessary information.*

What Happens Next?

Upon receipt of a notification, a Child Protection worker will determine whether the child or young person's described circumstances fall within the legal definition of 'a child in need of protection'. They will then make a decision as to the urgency or immediacy of the notification. If the notification is not accepted, the Child Protection worker will need to give reasons, and provide advice to the notifier in relation to other services available to the child and family. Following the acceptance of a notification for further investigation, the Child Protection Service will inform the notifier of the progress of the investigation as soon as is practical.

Where a case is deemed urgent, investigations will occur within 48 hours. However, if a case is deemed non-urgent, the investigative process can take up to 14 days.

The prioritising of cases for investigation is constantly changing. This is because new notifications are reported all the time, and the planning and intervention process usually involves discussions with, and coordination of, a number of people. If this happens, the notifier should contact the Child Protection intake manager in that region to seek information regarding the progress of the investigation.

In cases where sexual or physical abuse has been alleged, the police will need to be involved in the investigation, and this requires planning and timing.

The role of the police is to:

- Deal with criminal matters that arise in child abuse and neglect investigations.
- Investigate and enforce Intervention Orders under the *Crimes (Family Violence) Act 1987*. Intervention Orders may remove abusers from the home, which allows children to remain safely at home.

- Assist Child Protection workers where there are concerns about the safety of workers and family members.
- Activate a criminal investigation whenever reasonable grounds exist for believing that a child has been physically or sexually abused.

Ongoing Formal Responsibilities

When Child Protection becomes involved, a family is usually thrown into crisis, and it will be some time before this abates. The notifier will often feel guilty about making matters worse. Helping professionals to focus on the child's situation often assists them in understanding that they have acted correctly and helps allay their anxiety.

After making a notification, the professional's ongoing roles and responsibilities may include:

- Acting as a support person in interviews with the child or young person.
- Attending a case conference that could assist in determining the most appropriate investigation outcome.
- Participating in case planning meetings in relation to a child or young person.
- Continuing to monitor a child or young person's behaviour in relation to ongoing harm.
- Observing/monitoring the conditions on a protective court order that may relate to access or contact with a parent.
- Liaising with other professionals and Child Protection workers in relation to a child or young person's wellbeing.
- Providing written reports for case planning meetings or court proceedings in relation to a child or young person's wellbeing or progress.

Pastoral/Caring Responsibilities

After intervention has been initiated, it is likely that the child or young person will be distressed. They may feel guilty, ashamed, confused and frightened, and will therefore need support throughout the protective intervention. Professionals involved with the family may be in a position to offer ongoing support, by:

- Liaising with Child Protection workers to ensure they are giving appropriate support to the child or young person.
- Providing support to the family where appropriate.
- Dealing sympathetically and effectively with changes to the child's behaviour that may occur in response to intervention, and may mean making allowances and concessions.

Making a notification is often stressful for notifiers, as they have a genuine concern for the child and worry if they are doing the right thing. They will be concerned about how the immediate and future events will unfold.

Professionals need to understand that their involvement does not end with a call to Child Protection. They may be called on to play a significant role in the ongoing protection of the child, or in providing support to the family. There may be formal duties, such as participation in case conferences or providing a written report, or a less formal but equally important pastoral and caring role. Ongoing responsibilities may also involve looking after themselves, or providing support to other colleagues at such a stressful time.

Child Protection Services Contacts

Regional Offices

If you are making a notification to Child Protection, please use the **Intake Unit** numbers.

For all other enquires please contact the appropriate **regional office**.

Metropolitan Regions

Eastern

Intake Unit 1300 360 391

Box Hill (03) 9843 6000

Northern

Intake Unit (03) 9471 1644

Fitzroy (03) 9412 5333

Glenroy (03) 9304 0799

Preston (03) 9479 6222

Southern

Intake Unit 1300 655 795

Cheltenham (03) 9581 2222

Dandenong (03) 9213 2111

Frankston (03) 9784 3100

Western

Intake Unit 1300 369 536

Footscray (03) 9275 7000

Rural Regions

Gippsland

Intake Unit 1800 020 202

Bairnsdale (03) 5152 6244 or (03) 5150 4500

Leongatha (03) 5662 4311

Morwell (03) 5128 9400

Sale (03) 5144 4166

Warragul (03) 5624 0600

Grampians

Intake Unit 1800 000 551

Ballarat (03) 5333 6669

Horsham (03) 5381 9777

Stawell (03) 5358 4374

Hume

Intake Unit 1800 650 227

Benalla (03) 5761 1222

Seymour (03) 5793 6400

Shepparton (03) 5832 1500

Wangaratta (03) 5722 0555

Wodonga (02) 6055 7777

Loddon Mallee

Intake Unit 1800 675 598

Bendigo (03) 5430 2333

Mildura (03) 5022 3111

Swan Hill (03) 5032 0100

Barwon-South West

Intake Unit 1800 075 599

Geelong (03) 5226 4540

Portland (03) 5523 1600

Warrnambool (03) 5561 9444

Child Protection Crisis Line

Phone 131 278 for emergency child protection matters outside of normal business hours.

