

Child sexual abuse, your reporting obligations and the law

The information provided in this sheet is not legal advice and is designed to provide general information on child sexual abuse and Queensland adults' reporting obligations under the criminal offence of Failure to report belief of child sexual offence committed in relation to a child. Should you require information about specific circumstances or factual scenarios, legal advice should be sought.

Since 5 July 2021, it has been an offence for any adult to fail to report sexual offending against a child by another adult to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse not to.

What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse can be physical, or involve exposing children to sexual material or acts. It can be committed by adults or by other children.

Child sexual offences can include:

- touching a child under the age of 16 in a sexual way
- taking a sexual photograph of a child under the age of 16
- performing overtly sexual acts in the presence of a child under 16
- wilfully exposing a child under 16 to pornography
- grooming a child.

Any child under the age of 16 in Queensland cannot consent to sexual activity.

What are the signs of child sexual abuse?

Spotting signs of child sexual abuse can be difficult and not all the signs provided below directly suggest abuse is occurring. However, the more signs present, the more likely it is that the child may have been or is being sexually abused.

Children who have been sexually abused may show changes in emotions or behaviour, or show physical signs of sexual abuse.

This can include:

- knowing more about sexual activities than other children their age
- creating stories, poems or artwork about abuse
- being afraid of being alone with a particular person or going to a particular place
- becoming withdrawn, unusually reactive or beginning to display high risk behaviours
- playing in a sexual way
- refusing to undress for activities or wearing additional layers of clothing
- showing physical signs of sexual abuse, such as bruising on their body or having a sore vagina, penis or anus.



Get help and advice for reporting child sexual abuse

If you notice a child showing any of these signs, you might need to act to keep them safe. It's important to remember that all adults must make a report to the police, if they believe or should reasonably believe a child sexual offence is being or has been committed against a child by another adult, unless they have a reasonable excuse. For example, you believe the information has already been given to a police officer.

If you believe a child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation, call Triple Zero (000) and ask for police.

To make a report directly to the police you can do one of the following:

- call Policelink **131 444**
- make a report in person, find your local station via www.police.qld.gov.au/stations

Report child sexual abuse. Not only is it the right thing to do, it's the law.

Find more information and support at www.qld.gov.au/protectchildren.