



## Definition of terms used in the Mandatory Reporter Guide

The Mandatory Reporter Guide focuses on whether a concern is significant or not, and not whether abuse or neglect is present according to a specific definition.

**Physical abuse** is where a child/young person has a suspicious current injury, suspected to be caused by the parent / carer AND where it has not occurred accidentally OR the child or young person is being treated in a way that may have or is likely to cause injury.

**Neglect – lack of supervision** is where a child/young person is alone and based on their age /development / circumstances this is unsafe.

It may also be where a child/young person is currently not under the care and supervision of an appropriate carer and due to age /development / disability this is unsafe.

**Neglect – lack of physical shelter/environment** is where a child/young person or family has no safe place to stay or there is imminent danger of serious harm in the current residence

- dependant on their age /development / disability and
- where the parent/carer is not ensuring the child's safety

(Note: Reporting the homelessness of young people aged 16 to 17 years is not mandatory and can only be done with the consent of the young person.)

**Neglect – food – medical professionals** is where a child/young person has a condition caused or exacerbated by inadequate or poor diet or where the child is aged under 5 and is failing to keep pace with expected growth and there is no known organic cause.

**Neglect – food – non-medical professionals** is where a child or young person is:

- reporting persistent hunger
- reporting persistent withholding of food as punishment
- thin, frail, listless
- frequently begging/stealing/hoarding food
- mentioning going without eating
- frequently arriving at school without breakfast/ lunch
- having difficulty concentrating and you suspect poor nutrition.

**Neglect –medical care – medical professionals** is where:

- a child/young person requires medical care for an acute condition for which parents/carers are not providing the recommended medical treatment
- there is a chronic condition which is not being treated or a treatment plan is not being followed and this is likely to result in significant harm.

**Neglect –medical care –non-medical professionals** is where:

- a child/young person has a physical health condition that appears to need immediate care which is not being provided
- parent/carer is refusing or unable to seek recommended medical care
- there is a medical condition that requires an ongoing treatment plan that is not being followed.

**Neglect –mental health care** is where:

- a child/young person is suicidal/ has committed or is threatening serious violence or is causing significant self-harm
- parent/carer is refusing to provide or access mental health care that the child/young person requires.

**Neglect – education – not enrolled** is where a child/young person is of compulsory school age and is not enrolled.

**Neglect – education – habitually absent** is where a child/young person is of compulsory school age and is enrolled and is habitually absent.

**Sexual abuse – child** is where a child has made a clear, unambiguous statement of sexual assault or is:

- pregnant
- diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease
- displaying trauma to genital area

or where you are aware by other means that a child has been sexually abused.

It will also be a cause for reporting if:

- there is a concern a child will have significant contact with an alleged or known sex offender or
- the child is exposed to sexually explicit material or acts including pornography and communication of sexual matters and the child expresses fear, discomfort or shows symptoms of significant harm.

**Sexual abuse – young person** is where a young person has made a clear, unambiguous statement of sexual abuse, or you are aware by other means the young person has been sexually abused.

It may also be a cause for reporting if:

- the young person is engaged in prostitution or pornography and
- the young person appears subject to coercion or intimidation.

**Child/Young Person Problematic Sexual Behaviour** is where a child/young person is engaged or may be engaged in sexually abusive behaviour, indicated by:

- a victim who is substantially younger, smaller, weaker, less mature or cognitively/physically less capable
- pressure, coercion, aggression, bribery, secrecy or other grooming behaviours have been used.

It may also be a cause for reporting:

- when the victim is a relative of the initiating child/young person
- when the victim lives in the same household or
- where the action was significantly outside normal sexual behaviour.

It may also be a cause for reporting where the child/young person has continuing or imminent contact with the victim.

**Psychological harm** is where a child/young person is exposed to:

- chronic or severe domestic violence
- severe parental/carer mental health or substance abuse concerns
- parental/carer behaviours that are persistent, repetitive and have a negative impact on a child/young person's development, social needs, self worth or self-esteem
- parental/carer criminal and/or corrupting behaviour
- parental/carer behaviours that deliberately expose a child/young person to traumatic events.

**Relinquishing care** is where the parent/carer is no longer willing to provide shelter/food/supervision for the child/young person or child/young person has been in voluntary care for longer than the legislation allows.

It is also a cause for reporting if there are no alternative care arrangements in place for the next 72 hours.

**Parent/carer substance abuse** is where the substance abuse impacts on the parent/carer's ability to meet the child/young person's needs; causes significant harm

and/or where the child/young person's behaviour indicates the impact of substance abuse.

**Parent/carer mental health** is where the mental health concern impacts on the parent/carer's ability to meet the child/young person's needs; causes significant harm and/or where the child or young person's behaviour indicates the impact of the parent/carer's mental health concern.

**Parent/carer domestic violence** is where there has been an incident of domestic violence, there is a child or young person in the home and where one or more of the following occurred, whether the child was present or not:

- use of weapon
- strangulation/suffocation attempt
- serious injury to adult
- physical injury to child/young person
- serious threat to harm child/young person/adult/self
- a significant increase in the pattern of violence.

**Unborn child** is where there is a history of abuse or neglect of siblings of the unborn child, siblings have been removed, or died in circumstances that have been reviewed by the Ombudsman.

It may also be where you are aware of circumstances that suggest either parent/carer will be unable to care for baby upon birth due to:

- suicidal tendencies
- substance abuse
- mental illness
- domestic violence
- cognitive disability
- medical condition
- homelessness
- inadequate preparations for birth.

### **Other reasons to notify the Child Protection Helpline**

The Child Protection Helpline should be notified if a child/young person is under the parental responsibility of the Minister, there is no concern that reaches the threshold of risk of significant harm **but** the child/young person is:

- pregnant
- runaway
- missing
- homeless (in the case of homelessness review the *Neglect: Physical*)

*Shelter/Environment* tree first. If that leads to a report to Community Services, report as neglect. If it does not lead to a report to Community Services, advise the Child Protection Helpline that the report is being made solely because the child or young person is in care, and is not due to neglect.)

TOP 