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Important note for trainers and assessors

Aspire has developed this resource for *CHCPRT003 Work collaboratively to maintain an environment safe for children and young people* to suit learners undertaking this unit as an elective in Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care.

This resource has been written with an education and care service environment in mind, rather than addressing work placement in a child protection service, as stipulated by the assessment requirements for the unit of competency.

Trainers and assessors are advised they should systematically validate their assessment strategies to ensure the assessment:

- ▶ meets the requirements of the relevant training package or accredited course
- ▶ is conducted in accordance with the principles of assessment and the rules of evidence
- ▶ meets workplace and, where relevant, regulatory requirements.

Please contact Skills IQ (<https://www.skillsiq.com.au/>) to further discuss the training and assessment requirements for this unit.

1A Understanding and meeting child protection requirements

Each state and territory in Australia takes responsibility for child protection and family support. While each system has its own focus, there are guiding principles that are familiar to all. These principles are founded on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and have evolved to demonstrate the importance our community has placed on reducing child abuse and neglect, and supporting parents to provide healthy and safe environments for children.



Current statistics show that child abuse and neglect continue to be a problem. Children under one year are most likely to experience it and emotional abuse is the most widely reported type of abuse. Significantly, Indigenous children are almost eight times more likely to be abused, 10 times more likely to be on a care and protection order and 10 times more likely to be in out-of-home care.

Identifying child protection principles

Guiding principles motivate the child protection system in Australia. The following table outlines the principles evident in all states and territories, a description of what each principle means and an example of how it is applied. Your state/territory will include all these principles, but may apply them in a different way and/or determine its own additional principles.

Principle	Description	Application
Best interest	<p>All actions must be taken with the best interests of the child as the foremost consideration. Policies are provided to guide how to make decisions in a way that ensures best interest is followed.</p> <p>Decisions about outcomes for children are based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ protection from harm ▶ protection of the child's rights ▶ promotion of the child's development ▶ the family relationship and how it might be strengthened and assisted to promote and protect the child, and their cultural and spiritual connection with their identity and community. 	<p>Children will not be removed from their families or cultural community unless it is deemed to be the only option available to support the child's best interest.</p>

The following education and care services regulations and standards relate directly to child protection legislation.

Name of regulation/standard	Regulation/element	Description
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011	Regulation 84: Awareness of child protection law	All staff members who work with children must be advised about the existence and application of current child protection laws and any obligations they may have under that law.
National Quality Standard	Element 2.2.3 Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse and neglect	Educators must attend training or professional development on child protection.

Key agencies

Be familiar with the relevant child protection agencies in your state/territory. While each state and territory has individual names for its agencies and departments, the roles and responsibilities are very similar. Most have a child protection agency and a family support agency complemented by a range of support and referral services. Each government department oversees district offices or centres, which are the contact points for any notifications or investigations of suspected abuse or neglect, and any decisions made about the future of the child and family based on child protection principles.

Child protection websites in each state/territory provide similar information, such as:

- ▶ definitions of child abuse and neglect
- ▶ what child protection means
- ▶ key contacts in child protection
- ▶ who can report suspected abuse or neglect
- ▶ how to report suspected abuse or neglect
- ▶ how the risk of abuse or neglect is assessed
- ▶ information sheets for families.

The following table shows the agencies that handle reports of abuse and neglect in each state/territory, and contact lists for accessing district offices/centres. Access the website for the agencies in your state/territory and be familiar with what they offer. Ask your supervisor for assistance if there is anything you do not understand.

Notifying authorities about child abuse or neglect

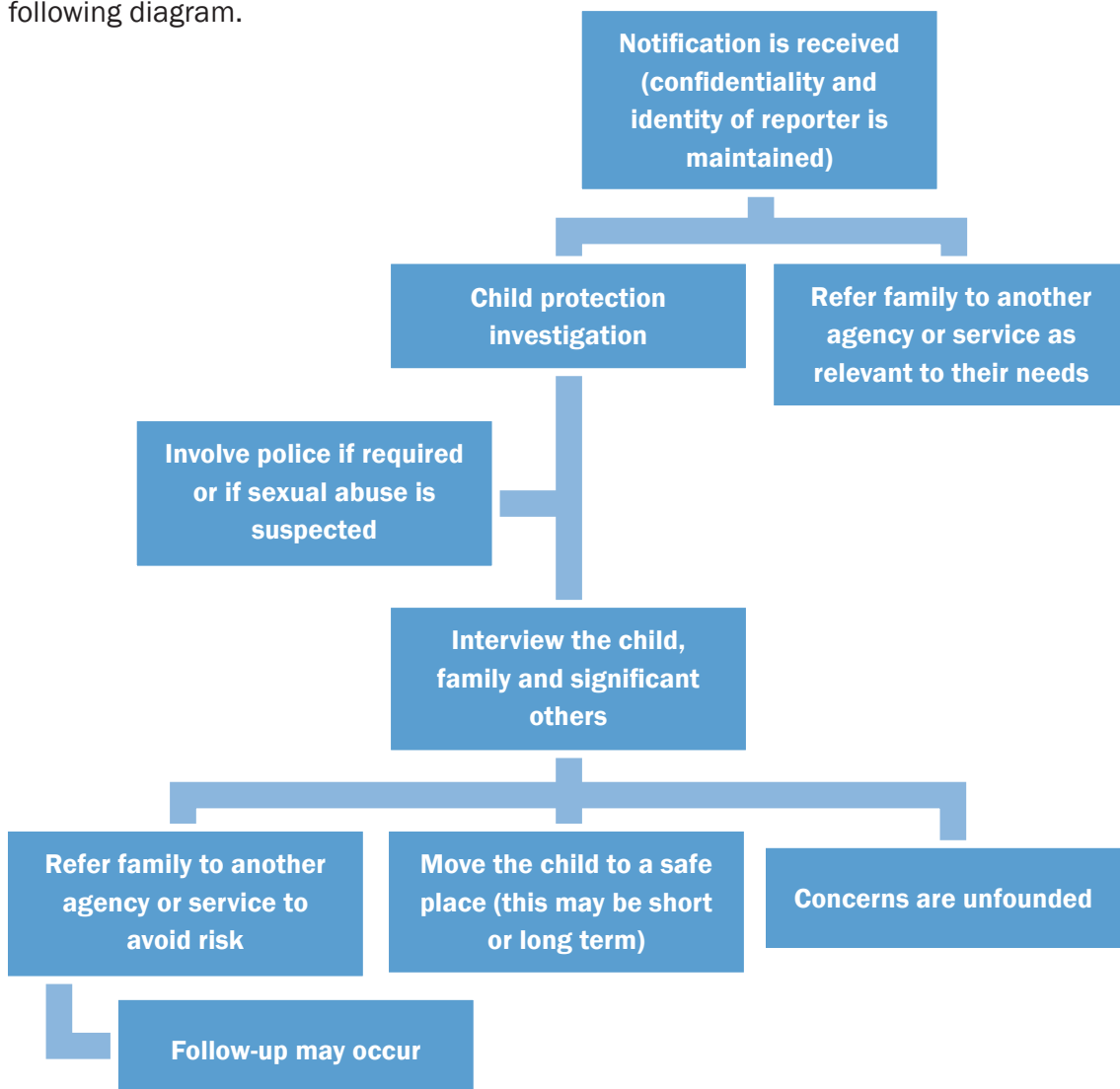
Each child's situation is unique and must be managed independently. However, there are some basic guidelines to follow that are effective and suitable when you suspect abuse.

If you suspect abuse has occurred, record your observations in a clear and objective manner. Follow your organisation's procedures for the preferred method of recording information. Remember that any person can make a report, regardless of their role or responsibilities. You are legally able to share information about suspected abuse with your supervisor and the child protection agency you are reporting to. You cannot be sued for reporting information in an effort to protect a child.

State/territory reporting processes vary slightly. Some require phone contact; for others, online or email notification is acceptable. There may also be a difference depending on the severity of the report. Your service procedures and the contact pages for each agency assist you to identify the correct contact person or agency. Once a notification has been made, the appropriate agency will guide your actions and investigate the claim.

Investigating and assessing child abuse and neglect

Australian states and territories have similar processes once they have been notified of a suspected abuse situation. An investigation, in general, will operate as shown in the following diagram.



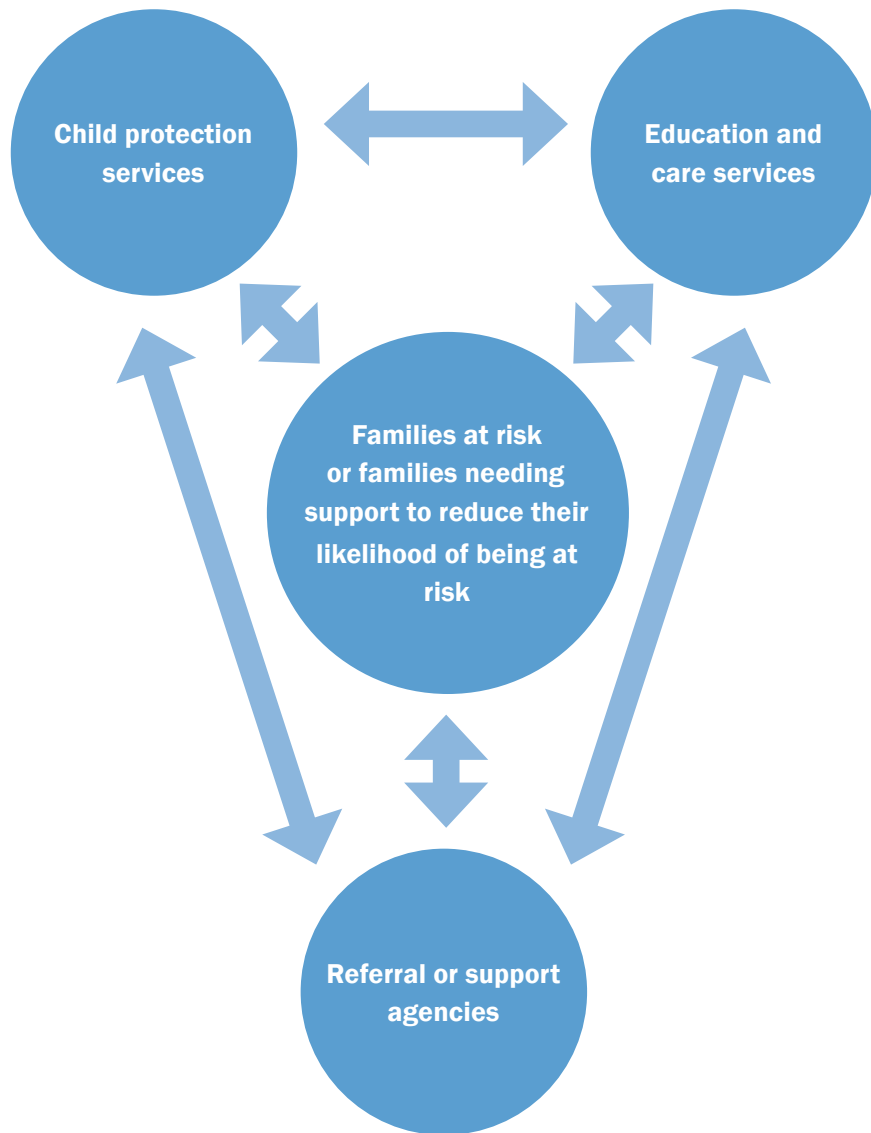
1. List **two** signs that Jenny identified that could indicate that Sandra is at risk of child abuse.

2. Identify and briefly describe the type of abuse that could be occurring in this situation.

3. List **two** effects that this type of abuse may have on Sandra's development.

Summary

- ▶ Each state and territory in Australia takes responsibility for child protection and family support, although each service differs slightly.
- ▶ Guiding principles motivate the child protection system in Australia.
- ▶ The *National framework for protecting Australia's children 2009–2020* has been developed with the goal of substantially reducing abuse and neglect.
- ▶ It is important for you to know your obligations under child protection legislation. As an educator, you have an ethical and moral duty to protect children. You are also mandated to report child abuse or neglect in some states and territories.
- ▶ Your service's child protection policy should reflect the legislation of your state/territory and outline processes in your service that match the legislative requirements you must adhere to.
- ▶ Abuse, neglect and maltreatment describe situations in which a child may need protection. Child abuse is defined as something done or not done by an adult that endangers or impairs the child's emotional or physical health or development.
- ▶ The impact of child abuse and neglect on children is individual. Not all children are affected the same way. Positive or negative life experiences can impact a child's vulnerability or resilience.
- ▶ If you suspect abuse, record your observations in a clear and objective manner. Follow your organisation's procedures, which may involve notifying the relevant agency.



A collaborative practice framework in the child protection industry means that a less reactive approach to child abuse and neglect can be applied.

Collaboration ensures that protection services and professionals are focused on developing consistent outcomes that respond appropriately to individual child and family circumstances; that is, they are dedicated to provide immediate action to:

- ▶ ensure children's safety
- ▶ prevent recurrence of harm
- ▶ strengthen family functions
- ▶ facilitate and monitor a network of support for families.



2B Supporting the needs, rights and interests of the child

When you work collaboratively with other services, your knowledge of children's needs and interests and respect for their rights helps you to ensure the support they receive is positive and relevant. You may be contacted by a support service that you collaborate with and asked to provide information about a child to help them provide appropriate support. For example, knowing that a child may at first be teary and upset but becomes calmer when given drawing materials, assists other agencies to plan activities and support to meet the child's interests.



Be prepared to document and pass on information that summarises a child's needs, rights and interests.

Supporting a child's needs

Psychology theorist Abraham Maslow identified a hierarchy of needs, indicating basic needs that form a foundation for success before progressing to satisfying other needs. Once basic physical needs are met (food, rest, sleep and body functions), emotional needs are tied in with all other levels. These include safety, security, love, self-esteem, respect, attention and appreciation. An emotionally cared for and confident child can attempt to be all they can be.

Maslow's theory can help you to recognise priorities in caring for children by demonstrating expectations that match the child's immediate needs, especially if the child has experienced abuse or neglect. For example, if a child feels insecure and unsafe (Maslow's second-level needs), they will not feel loved and cared for (third-level needs). They also may not participate fully in the experiences you plan and may not develop secure relationships with those in the service. In addition, the child's developmental progress may be affected as they are focused on being safe and secure, rather than being involved and challenged.

Children may not understand their feelings; they may not know that feelings are normal or may deal with their feelings in inappropriate ways. A child who is experiencing abuse or neglect may exhibit emotional outbursts. Remain calm and respond promptly and honestly when children tell you about their feelings so they feel respected and safe expressing their feelings and emotions in appropriate ways. In this way you start building positive relationships with children, showing them that you care and will listen to their communications.



Child-focused practice means that educators and carers always keep the needs of the child as the focus of their service delivery. Actions should be designed to meet the child's needs as a first priority, as outlined in the following table.

Children and family rights	Example
Privacy	Children’s contact details must remain private. If the child is at risk or under a court order, this information must also remain private.
Confidentiality	Children’s medical records must be kept in a locked cabinet, with access limited to only authorised personnel.
Dignity	A child who has a welt or burn should not be displayed to a number of adults to gain their opinion on reporting options.
Informed choice	<p>Parents must be fully informed about an issue and be given the opportunity to resolve it. If a child is vulnerable or at risk, the parent should be supported.</p> <p>Children must be given information and be part of the decision-making process.</p>
Notification of abuse or neglect	Parents must be informed about the reporting process and referred to the right people for resolution.
Expressing ideas and opinions	Children should be given adequate opportunities to express their ideas and opinions.
Agreed standard of care	Children should receive services to meet the standards described when enrolling and have these backed up by continued high-quality responses from educators.
Access to services	All children should be provided with access to a service regardless of their race, culture or religion. This includes support services as well as education and care services.

Supporting a child’s interests

By carefully observing, listening to, talking with and paying close attention to what children are saying and doing, you learn about their interests, emerging interests and preferences. By collecting and using information about the children based on your observations and interactions, you are showing that you acknowledge, respect and value the child and their family.

If the child has emotional or psychological issues relating to abuse or neglect, it is crucial that you provide positive activities that focus on their interests, natural abilities, strengths, skills and knowledge. You need to provide an environment that demonstrates acceptance of these areas of focus. As with all children, this acceptance allows the child to feel a sense of achievement, acceptance and belonging, and that the environment is safe. This will help to reduce stress and create a sense of trust that enables the child to develop relationships that are supportive and productive.

Learning checkpoint 2

Applying protocols and guidelines for collaborative practice

Part A

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Cindy, five years, sometimes cries with pain while holding her ear and the side of her face. The pain has been occurring on and off for around a month now. You have spoken to Cindy's mother about the problem and she has told you she has taken Cindy to the doctor, but that it wasn't an ear infection. You think that Cindy's pain might be related to a dental issue as sometimes she has difficulty eating and you can see one of her teeth seems to be a little decayed.

You mention this to Cindy's mum, but she says that she is a single mother who qualifies for parenting payment, but cannot afford a dentist because of her low income. She tells you that dental care is not covered by Medicare and that Cindy has never been to a dentist.

1. Research information about the Australian Government Department of Human Services Child Dental Benefits Schedule and answer the following questions. Information can be found at: <http://aspirelr.link/child-dental-benefits>
 - a. Why does Cindy qualify for dental benefits?

- b. What benefits are available under the scheme for Cindy?

- c. What would Cindy's mother have to do to claim the scheme benefits?



Topic 3

In this topic you will learn about:

3A Supporting families to address identified risks

3B Developing effective relationships with agencies

Working collaboratively with children and families

There are often particular circumstances that make a family vulnerable to harm. These risk factors increase a family's need for support. Some of these vulnerabilities may arise due to a family's cultural and linguistic background, while others may arise due to difficulties they experience as part of their everyday stress.

To provide adequate support for a family, you need to collaborate with support services and agencies, and work closely with them to form a strong bond with the family.

Children at risk due to cultural and linguistic issues

Your work as an educator brings you into contact with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who have their own values and beliefs about child rearing. Some people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may choose to use methods or make decisions that are considered abusive to children under Australian legislation, such as smacking as basic punishment, being punished for not showing signs of learning, or withholding affectionate physical contact. They may also have different standards when it comes to health, hygiene and nutrition, such as implementing toilet learning practices from birth.

Some people you come into contact with may demonstrate the following practices or family norms:

- ▶ large numbers of people living in one household, and families sleeping in one bed
- ▶ elders or particular relatives having control over all family decisions
- ▶ particular gender expectations
- ▶ discouragement of independence
- ▶ use of alternative medical practices, such as homeopathy
- ▶ rules for language use; for example, the children may not be allowed to speak their home language in public or they may not be allowed to speak English at home
- ▶ punished for saying words incorrectly; this might also include stuttering.

Many of these practices and norms will not affect you or the children you care for and educate. However, if you have concerns about a practice or a child's wellbeing, talk to your supervisor and gain their opinion. You or your supervisor may contact your child protection agency/department and ask them to clarify the issue rather than leaving it until you gather more information. The agency/department will advise you of what process to follow.

It is always useful to research the particular cultures of the children attending your service so you can better understand their families' traditions and beliefs.

Supporting parents to address risks

It is part of an educator's role to support families to address any identified or potential risks. You need to be familiar with the support services available and how they can help parents in situations that may pose a risk to their children. The best outcomes occur when services intervene early, and when services collaborate to provide a shared, holistic approach.

Refer to the table in section 2A that lists a range of support services provided by government agencies and community services. These include drug and alcohol services, family counselling, mental health services, counselling for gambling addiction, and housing support. Be aware of the level of your authority and know whether you can make contact with a support agency on behalf of a family or if you must advise your supervisor first. Many of these services may assist you and the family by preparing a service support plan. If this is the case, you need to make sure all educators are aware of the plan and that everyone understands the support framework being provided and their role in the support.



Providing referrals

When you identify that a family may benefit from support provided by an agency or if they ask you specifically for help, be prepared and know the protocols you must follow. Some services can only be accessed through a referral made by a child support agency/department or another service. Others are accessible through your service. Always follow appropriate practice, such as gaining the parent's permission and then contacting the service to make arrangements. This permission may be through a signed document, a discussion on the phone or by meeting face to face.

Ensure you are aware of your service's policies and procedures for referral.

Practice task 6

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Jaylee is an Indigenous parent of three children. She is currently an inmate at a correctional centre where she is serving a one-year sentence for drug-related crimes. Jaylee's children are being cared for by their grandparents while Jaylee completes her sentence. Jaylee has been diagnosed with depression and has used drugs in the past to deal with her problems.

Magda, an educator working with Jaylee's children, is aware of Jaylee's situation and suggests that the grandparents organise for the children to be involved in a child/parent activity day within the correctional centre. The child/parent activity day is organised by a program called SHINE for Kids.

Magda accesses the referral form from: <http://aspirelr.link/shine-referral-form>

She helps the grandparents fill out the referral form, which asks for details about:

- ▶ the child and their relationship with the inmate
- ▶ the reason for the referral
- ▶ the current carer's details
- ▶ the name of the service and person making the referral.

Jaylee is later released from the correctional centre and takes custody of her children. She is living near the service.

1. The family might be classed as vulnerable to abuse. What are the risk factors?

Part B

The Australian Government’s Child Care Safety Net assists childcare service providers to better cater for and include children with additional needs. This program includes the Inclusion Support Programme (ISP) and administers Inclusion Agencies (IAs) in each state and territory (NSW and ACT combined). It employs a number of inclusion professionals who assist eligible organisations to build their capacity and capability to provide and embed inclusive practice in their delivery of early learning and care programs.

Find out the following information through research. You may refer to the following site: <http://aspirelr.link/inclusion-support-programme>

1. What services do IAs provide and who is eligible to access their services?

2. How do IAs support children in families that are vulnerable to risk of harm, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?

3. What actions need to be taken to refer a family to these services?

4. List **five** skills and pieces of knowledge you would need when contacting a support service such as this.
