

new south wales

**interagency
guidelines**

for

**child
protection
intervention**

2006

Acknowledgements

The NSW Government's Child Protection Senior Officers Group (CPSOG) is comprised of representatives from a wide range of government human service and justice agencies. In consultation with stakeholders, the CPSOG undertook a major review of the Guidelines to reflect the current child protection environment in a 2006 edition.

Based on:

The 1997 *Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention* reviewed and updated in 2000 and 2005.

With contributions from:

Family Services Inc; Association of Children's Welfare Agencies; NSW Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat; NSW Ombudsman; NSW Office for Children- Children's Guardian and NSW Commission for Children and Young People; Community Relations Commission; Association of Independent Schools; Catholic Education Commission; CREATE Foundation; non-government agencies in the child welfare, education, legal, disability and children's services sectors; parents of children and young people, other individuals, government departments and local government.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Premier's Foreword

Contact numbers

Using the Guidelines

CHAPTER 1 BUILDING INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

- 1.1 The importance of interagency collaboration**
- 1.2 Interagency practice in child protection**
- 1.3 Strategies for improving interagency collaboration**
- 1.4 Roles and responsibilities of key agencies in child protection**
- 1.5 The responsibility to raise and address differences between agencies**

CHAPTER 2 MAKING A CHILD PROTECTION REPORT

- 2.1 Who should report?**
- 2.2 When should a report about a child or young person be made?**
- 2.3 Recognising child abuse and neglect**
- 2.4 Seeking advice prior to reporting**
- 2.5 How to make a report**
- 2.6 What information is required in a report?**
- 2.7 Responding to a child or young person who discloses information**
- 2.8 Taking into account the child's or young person's views**
- 2.9 Responding to disclosures by a parent or caregiver**
- 2.10 Should I inform the family of a report?**
- 2.11 Safeguards for reporters**
- 2.12 Feedback to reporters**
- 2.13 Where allegations involve agency employees**

CHAPTER 3 PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES FOLLOWING A CHILD PROTECTION REPORT

- 3.1 After reporting – an agency's initial responsibilities**
- 3.2 The assessment and intervention roles of agencies**
- 3.3 The Department of Community Services risk assessment functions**
- 3.4 Taking immediate action to ensure safety**
- 3.5 Physical, psychological, psychiatric and other medical assessments**
- 3.6 Working with families to reduce harm and increase resilience**
- 3.7 Management of child protection cases**
- 3.8 Care plans**
- 3.9 Case review and service supports**
- 3.10 Care applications**
- 3.11 Permanency planning**

CHAPTER 4 EXCHANGING INFORMATION IN A CHILD PROTECTION CONTEXT

- 4.1 The legal framework for exchanging information**
- 4.2 Information sharing in service delivery**
- 4.3 Information seeking powers of the Department of Community Services**
- 4.4 Provision of information by the Department of Community Services**
- 4.5 How the Department of Community Services will exchange information**
- 4.6 Other agencies responding to an information request**
- 4.7 Information for court proceedings**
- 4.8 Other information exchange arrangements**

CHAPTER 5 CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS

- 5.1 Issues to consider**
- 5.2 Coordinating criminal proceedings**
- 5.3 Communicating throughout criminal proceedings**
- 5.4 Victims' Services – counselling, support and compensation**
- 5.5 Court preparation of child or young victim**
- 5.6 Court determinations**

CHAPTER 6 BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES IN WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- 6.1 Intervening early with children, young people and families**
- 6.2 Engaging families**
- 6.3 Engaging children and young people**
- 6.4 Engaging Aboriginal people**
- 6.5 Engaging people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds**
- 6.6 Engaging people who have a disability**
- 6.7 Facilitating referrals**

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 Principles when working with children and families
- Appendix 2 Roles, responsibilities, services and programs in NSW relevant to child protection
- Appendix 3 Legislative grounds to report
- Appendix 4 A guide to developing a protocol with local Aboriginal organisations and government/non-government partners
- Appendix 5 Aboriginal tribal/language groups in NSW
- Appendix 6 The placement principles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families
- Appendix 7 Prevention and early intervention strategies and programs in NSW

Glossary

Index

2006 NSW Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention

Foreword by Premier Morris Iemma



Too many children in our community grow up in homes marred by family breakdown, social isolation, poverty, domestic violence, and chronic alcohol or drug misuse.

Protecting these children is the shared responsibility of families, communities, government and non-government agencies. And we protect these children best when we intervene early.

The latest social research reinforces the critical importance of early intervention to ensure children receive the best possible start in life at a time when brain development is at its most critical stage.

And successful early intervention strategies like *Families First* have shown that effective child protection involves professionals from many different fields.

A wide range of agencies provide intervention services for children and families under stress. It is vital that these agencies work together so that the needs of individual children are fully addressed and the best range of skills is brought to bear in each case.

In fact, collaboration between agencies must be regarded as a cornerstone of good professional practice in child protection intervention, not an optional extra.

This new edition of the NSW Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention sets out processes for agencies to effectively work together to help children, young people and their families.

These Guidelines recognise the fact that no single agency or individual can make a difference in isolation. But by sharing information, resources and expertise, agencies can make a powerful impact.

I look forward to seeing continuing improvements from all agencies working to make a difference to the lives of children, young people and their families.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Morris Iemma'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue background.

Morris Iemma
Premier

DoCS Helpline

To report suspected abuse or neglect of children or young people call

13 3627 (or for ease of reference 13 DoCS) for **mandatory** reporters
(e.g. Police, doctors, teachers)

132 111 for **non-mandatory** reporters
(e.g. the general community)

TTY 9633 7698

DoCS Domestic Violence Line

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, you can call DoCS Domestic Violence Line for help on

1800 656 463

TTY 1800 671 442

DoCS Domestic Violence Line is a statewide free-call number and is available 24 hours, seven days a week.

The Domestic Violence Line provides telephone counselling, information and referrals for people who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence.

NSW Attorney General's Department Victims Support Line

The Victims Support Line provides 24 hour information, referral and support to victims of crime.

1800 633 063 (toll free)

9374 3000 (Sydney)

Community Relations Commission

The Language Services Division of the Commission provides a comprehensive interpreter and translation service throughout the State. These services may be obtained from anywhere in the State by telephoning

1300 651 500 (for interpreters onsite)

Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS)

24 hour a day, seven days a week, telephone interpreting service to all state and territories in Australia. To access a telephone interpreter call

131 450 (for telephone interpreting)

Using the Guidelines

The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist professionals and agencies in their work with children and families where there are child protection concerns.

The Guidelines are a resource to promote effective collaboration, cooperation and co-ordinated effort across all responsible service providers under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*, and ultimately to improve the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children in NSW.

Individual agencies have different responsibilities relating to strengthening families and preventing child abuse, but the best results will occur where agencies are working together and in a complementary way, to deliver the often complex range of responses and supports that are required by children, young people and families.

Practitioners from government and non-government agencies should:

- familiarise themselves with the child protection policies and procedures of their own agency
- understand that the Guidelines convey good practice for participating agencies, and recognise that they do not replace agency-specific policies or procedures or replace professional judgment, but rather that they build on these
- refer to legislation and other relevant instructions or information, such as in website references.

The Guidelines are in six chapters:

Chapter 1 Building interagency collaboration

Outlines the important principles and benefits of effective interagency work, and provides strategies for working together. It also outlines mechanisms for resolving unavoidable differences between agencies in order to secure the best outcomes for children and families.

Chapter 2 Making a child protection report

Provides guidance on the circumstances in which a child protection report may be required, and the steps that should be followed by a person wishing to make a report. This chapter includes advice on indicators of abuse and neglect .

Chapter 3 Practices and procedures following a child protection report

Outlines the processes and actions that will flow from a report, including the assessment functions of the Department of Community Services and aspects of case planning and management.

Chapter 4 Exchanging information in a child protection context

Deals with the mechanisms for and limitations on information exchange in child protection cases.

Chapter 5 Criminal Proceedings

Provides an overview of the criminal prosecution process.

Chapter 6 Best practice principles in working with children and families

Highlights important practice considerations for effective intervention, such as engaging with children, young people and families, and facilitating referrals.

Appendices

Practitioners are referred to the appendices for specific information such as a combined risk indicator list, services and programs in all agencies, an overview of early intervention initiatives, and a protocol that may assist in working with Aboriginal communities.

Glossary

A shared understanding of terms and definitions is essential for an effective interagency approach – the glossary provides the agreed definitions for use in day-to-day practice.

There are a number of conventions in the document to assist in the use of the Guidelines.

- Practice Points identify useful tips or practice directions. (These are currently inserted as End Notes and will be positioned through the text when final design of the document is completed.
- Flow charts are included to provide an overview of complex processes.
- Important information is tagged by a **note** .
- The use of **refer** flags provides a direction to specific references elsewhere in the Guidelines or to external documents such as agency websites.