



NSW Department of  
Community Services

# Risk of significant harm

## *A policy definition*

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### **Preamble to policy definition of significant harm**

Members of the community and mandatory reporters who suspect that a child or young person is at “risk of significant harm” (the statutory threshold) should report their concerns to the Department of Community Services. This new statutory threshold has replaced “risk of harm” in the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*.

A child or young person is at risk of significant harm if the circumstances that are causing concern for the safety, welfare or well being of the child or young person are present to a significant extent.

### **Policy definition**

What is meant by ‘significant’ in the phrase ‘to a significant extent’ is that which is sufficiently serious to warrant a response by a statutory authority irrespective of a family’s consent.

What is significant is not minor or trivial and may reasonably be expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on the child or young person’s safety, welfare or well being.

In the case of an unborn child, what is significant is not minor or trivial and may reasonably be expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on the child after the child’s birth.

Significance can result from a single act or omission or an accumulation of these.