

What is the role of NSW Health workers in the NSW child protection system?

The role of all NSW Health workers is to promote the health, safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people in collaboration with interagency partners in a shared system of child wellbeing and child protection in NSW. This role applies when providing health care to children and young people and to parents / carers or pregnant women.

The continuum of NSW Health services across primary, secondary and tertiary care offers many opportunities to identify children and young people at risk and assist vulnerable parents / carers to access appropriate support to provide safe and nurturing environments for their children.

Working at the frontline of the public health system, health workers are uniquely placed to identify and respond to family risk factors for child abuse and neglect early in a child's early life and as a young person in order to reduce these risks and improve health outcomes. Health workers also have a key role to identify and report children and young people at risk of significant harm and in ameliorating the effects of child abuse and neglect when it does occur. The many resources to assist health workers in meeting their responsibilities are outlined in this Fact Sheet.

What are the legal responsibilities of NSW Health services and workers?

Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998

- Collaborate with interagency partners and comply with information exchange provisions to promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people, including taking reasonable steps to coordinate the provision of services with other agencies;
- Meet requirements for mandatory reporting of children and reporting of young people (or classes/groups of children or young people) at suspected risk of significant harm (ROSH);
- Report unborn children where it is suspected they may be at ROSH after their birth;
- Respond to the needs of children and young people after making a report to Community Services or to the NSW Health Child Wellbeing Unit;
- Respond to Community Services' and Children's Court requests to provide health services and or Community Services and Police Force requests to provide medical examinations and treatment;
- Assist in Children's Court proceedings when required.

Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998 / Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012

- Meet requirements for *Working with Children Checks*

Ombudsman Act 1974

Maintain systems to prevent 'reportable conduct' by health workers and for reporting and responding to alleged reportable conduct involving NSW Health employees

What are the professional responsibilities of NSW Health workers?

- Recognise and respond appropriately to the vulnerabilities, risks and needs of families, children and young people when providing any health service;
- Collaborate across NSW Health services and with interagency partners to support and strengthen families and promote child health, safety, welfare and wellbeing;
- Use the [Mandatory Reporter Guide](#) and seek assistance from the [NSW Health Child Wellbeing Unit](#) to help identify children or young people at suspected risk of significant harm (ROSH);
- seek assistance from the [NSW Health Child Wellbeing Unit](#) and the [Family Referral Services](#) to help respond to vulnerable families, children and young people below the ROSH threshold;

- Actively seek feedback from Community Services after making a child protection report and continue to support the child, young person or family consistent with the health worker's roles and responsibilities;
- Follow the [Child Wellbeing and Child Protection - NSW Interagency Guidelines](#) and other agreed interagency procedures when working with children, young people and families, including in relation to information exchange, High Risk Birth Alerts, Prenatal Reporting, escalation of child protection concerns, assumption of care by Community Services and out of home care health assessments;
- Collaborate in joint investigation and response to matters involving alleged child sexual assault or serious child abuse or neglect leading to criminal proceedings; and
- Participate in mandatory and / or other child protection training for NSW Health workers.

Child wellbeing and child protection resources

Child Wellbeing and Child Protection Policies and Procedures for NSW Health

Child Wellbeing and Child Protection - NSW Interagency Guidelines

Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) guides decision-making about the level of risk to a child young person or unborn child and what initial action to take. This includes whether or not a child protection report is required.

Community Services Child Protection Helpline call **133 627** (24 hours/7 days) to report a child or young person suspected to be at Risk of Significant Harm.

NSW Health Child Wellbeing Unit call **1300 480 420** for support and assistance in determining the level of risk of harm and responding to the needs of vulnerable children, young people, pregnant women and families. After hours leave a message or use [After Hours Contact Form](#)

Tertiary Child Protection Service in your Child Health Network – call for clinical advice (24 hours/7 days), if not available locally, for responding to any form of child maltreatment:

- *Greater Eastern and Southern Child Health Network* - call the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network Randwick Campus Child Protection Unit on 02 9382 1412 or after hours on 02 9382 1111;
- *Western Child Health Network* – call the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network Children's Westmead Campus Child Protection Unit on 02 9845 0000 and ask for the Intake Worker for Child Protection;
- *Northern Child Health Network* – call the John Hunter Children's Hospital, Newcastle on 02 4921 3000 and ask for the paediatrician on call for child protection.

Local Health District (LHD) Child Wellbeing and Child Protection Staff - [Child Wellbeing Coordinators](#), child protection and or violence prevention coordinators , child protection trainers, information exchange central contact points /consultants, out of home care health co-ordinators, Child Protection Counselling Services, Sexual Assault Services, New Street Services and Under 10s Sexualised Behaviour Program (See the LHD intranet site or call the NSW Health Child Wellbeing Unit).

Family Referral Services (FRS). To contact a FRS to refer vulnerable children, young people and families see the [Family Referral Services](#) website or ask the NSW Health CWU. FRS provide information, assessment and referral to a range of support services in their local area.

Education Centre Against Violence for state-wide mainstream and specialist training, consultation and resource development for NSW Health and interagency workers.

Keep Them Safe a whole of government website with resources to inform mandatory reporters and the general public about the system of child protection in NSW

More Information

Contact: [NSW Kids and Families](#), NSW Health, 73 Miller Street North Sydney 2060