



We Are Survivors!

Support for parents and carers of children from culturally & linguistically diverse, refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds who have been sexually abused



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FOREWORD

ARRIVING IN AUSTRALIA

Welcome to Australia! First of all, congratulations on making it to Australia as that is an amazing achievement. While everybody's journey is different, there are some challenges that you may have faced, and may still be facing, when coming here.

If you are an asylum seeker and arrived here by boat, you may have been subject to mandatory detention while your refugee claim was processed. The experience of detention may have been a stressful, difficult, even traumatising one for you. The prolonged processing times may have added to the stress and uncertainty. Navigating the complex legal processes for seeking asylum or refugee status can be extremely daunting. Understanding and completing the required paperwork, showing up to the necessary hearings and ensuring you don't miss essential deadlines can be overwhelming for those new to this country and unfamiliar with the Australian legal system (navigating the court and legal system can be difficult even for some Australians).

Other challenges you may have faced include trying to gain access to essential services, particularly healthcare, education and gaining employment. If you don't speak English or find understanding and speaking English challenging, it is easy to become frustrated and despondent. Difficulties understanding the culture and being unfamiliar with the local systems can exacerbate what is already a challenging time. It can be difficult for anybody to establish connections and find new friends let alone finding yourself in a new country and trying to establish a community and social network. If you are struggling with any trauma you experienced in your home country, settling into Australia can almost seem impossible. This may be especially true if you have been separated from your family, either through the journey to get here or by all the government processes. Sadly, you may have also had to face discrimination, racism, and xenophobia from some segments of the population. However, please be aware that this is not representative of the true spirit of this nation.

In addition to all of this, you may be dealing with the trauma of your child or children having been subjected to sexual abuse. There are certainly a lot of issues you are contending with, but this resource has been produced to help in your first steps towards healing from childhood sexual abuse. Overcoming the trauma of sexual violence, as well as recovery and healing, *are* possible. It is hoped that this resource will help you take the first steps in this, another, life-changing journey of hope for your child, your family and you.

We commend you for your bravery, strength and resilience!

CONTENT WARNING

The content addressed in this Guide and the other Guides in the *We Are Survivors!* set of resources addresses the topic of sexual violence and may be emotionally distressing and/or triggering to readers. It is recommended that all readers prepare emotionally beforehand.

If you are a survivor of sexual violence you may choose to read this Guide with the support of a trusted support person and/or professional.

If you have been a victim of sexual assault or rape, please allow this Guide to speak directly to you. If you need to take a break from reading this Guide, please feel free to put it down and pick it up at a later time when you are ready again to start reading.

If you would like additional support, a list of support services is provided at the end of this Guide.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The terms “sexual assault”, “sexual abuse”, “sexual violence”, “sexual exploitation” and “sexual crime” all refer to criminal behaviour that is sexual in nature and the terms are used interchangeably through this series of Guides. Similarly, the terms “victim” and “survivor” are used interchangeably in this Guide (and all Guides in this series) in recognition that sexual assault including sexual exploitation is a victimising crime (i.e., there is a “victim” of the crime) and that those who survive the crime are indeed “survivors” just to have survived. The term victim is also used to honour those who unfortunately did not survive the crime and are no longer with us as a result.

The *We Are Survivors!* Guides have been developed to help and support everyone from all backgrounds and circumstances in their survivor journey.

OTHER GUIDES IN THE WE ARE SURVIVORS! SERIES

Other Guides in the We Are Survivors! Series include

We Are Survivors: Support for Young People Who Have Experienced Sexual Violence from CALD, Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds

We Are Survivors: Support for Female Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse from CALD, Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds

We Are Survivors: Support for Male Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse from CALD, Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds

We Are Survivors: Support for Adult Survivors of Sexual Violence from CALD, Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds

We Are Survivors: Support for LGBTIQ+ Survivors of Sexual Violence from CALD, Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds

We Are Survivors: Support for Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation from CALD, Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds

We Are Survivors: Support for Survivors of Sexual Violence in Conflict

We Are Survivors: A Guide for Professionals Supporting Survivors of Sexual Violence from CALD, Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds

Go to www.wearesurvivors.online for more information and resources.

A MESSAGE OF HOPE TO PARENTS AND CARERS FROM A FELLOW PARENT

Dear Fellow Parent and Carer,

Having grown up in an era where child sexual abuse was never talked about and I never knew of its existence, it came as a terrible shock to me when my child disclosed to me that she had been sexually abused. I felt devastated by this news. I felt guilt that through my ignorance my child had been subjected to such cruelty. I felt such a sense of shame as I felt I had not protected my child and had not been a good parent. I felt anger with society that the knowledge and awareness of child sexual abuse had not been put into the public arena but had instead been kept secret. I felt self-condemnation that I was so uneducated and could not read the signs and symptoms my child displayed and that I was not able to support my child during those years. I felt like I had been a bad parent.

To overcome my ignorance and to improve my own recovery I read whatever I could find on the subject. I talked with those who knew more about it or who were in the same situation as myself. I attended meetings where I spoke about child sexual abuse. I held markets to raise money to increase society's awareness about the cause. I wrote to journalists and newspapers on the topic and I wrote letters in response to articles in newspapers and magazines on the subject. By being active and doing these things I re-gained a feeling of self-worth, my confidence grew and my deep sadness dissipated more and more over time.

To all the victims/survivors of child sexual abuse and to all the parents and carers of the victims/survivors of child sexual abuse, please know that there is light at the end of the very dark tunnel. I hope that my testimony will encourage all of you to move forward with hope and love in your hearts and that you will know that you do not have to walk alone. I hope this Guide will be a light to your path towards healing and recovery— for you and your child.

With love,

Chloe

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Guide is to assist parents and carers who have a child or children who have been sexually abused. This Guide is designed especially to assist parents and carers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), migrant, refugee and/or asylum-seeking backgrounds and those holding other temporary visas. The Guide contains introductory information on the topic of child sexual abuse as well as practical ways in which you can help lessen the impact of the abuse on your child and your family.

Your role as a parent or carer is critical in assisting your child to recover from sexual abuse. It is hoped that this Guide will provide you with information and practical strategies to assist in your child's recovery from the trauma of sexual abuse. All forms of child sexual abuse are harmful, but as a caring parent, you are in a unique position to alleviate some of the negative effects of the abuse. Without the support of at least one parent or caregiver, it is much harder for children to recover from sexual abuse.

As a caring parent, you were probably unaware that your child was being sexually abused. The person who sexually abused your child was possibly someone you know and trusted. It is likely that you will be experiencing a wide range of confusing emotions. If your child was sexually abused by your partner or a close relative, you are likely to be feeling a wide range of possibly conflicting emotions and feeling the heavy responsibility of having to make choices you never thought you would ever have to make.

The aim of this Guide is to give you some clear information at this difficult time to help you sort through the confusion and help you to be the best possible support to your child. The Guide provides an overview of the roles of organisations in responding to child sexual abuse including information that may assist you in some of the choices you may face. The Guide also provides prevention strategies you can use to keep your children safe in the future and may be of assistance to other people in your family affected by the sexual abuse, such as brothers, sisters, relatives and others affected by the abuse of your child.

Even though recovery from child sexual assault is a complex process, it is possible for your child, your family and for you to recover from the trauma with the right care and support. Please re-read the *Message of Hope to Parents and Carers from a Fellow Parent* whenever you need to be reminded that hope, healing and recovery are possible!

WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

The subject of child sexual abuse is cloaked in secrecy in most societies. More recently, however, there has been a willingness to learn more about the issue, to have open discussions about it, and to look for solutions to better protect children. Knowledge of the issue has increased as a result of recent media attention around the world, but from survivors to worried parents, many people's first question is still, "What is child sexual abuse?"

Definitions of child sexual abuse have been provided by researchers and authors worldwide and it is generally agreed that the phrase "child sexual abuse" describes situations in which a person utilises his or her authority or position to engage a child in sexual activity. In Australia, child sexual abuse is typically understood to refer to situations that occur when an adult, adolescent or child uses their position, trust or power to take advantage of a child for their own sexual gratification. Child sexual abuse occurs on a continuum and can involve a range of activities including:

- Grooming for the purposes of sexual abuse.
- Forcing a child to look at pictures of sexual acts.
- Touching a child's body or genitals or getting the child to touch theirs.
- Making threats or blackmailing a child to force them to take part in sexual abuse.
- Coercing a child to pose, undress or perform sexual acts in photos, videos or in person.
- Voyeurism.
- Exhibitionism.
- Oral sex.
- Penetration of the vagina or anal cavity with a penis, finger, or other object.

ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse can also occur online. The term "online sexual abuse" refers to the use of digital communication platforms or the internet for the exploitation, coercion, harassment, or "grooming" of children and/or young people. Grooming refers to situations where the perpetrator gradually establishes an emotional and trusting relationship with a child or young person with the goal of sexually abusing them. Social media, messaging apps, online gaming sites, and other digital platforms can be used by offenders to build rapport with potential child-victims, trick or pressure them into having sex, or convince them to post sexual photos or videos. For many child-victims the grooming process may initially start through online platforms and escalate into in-person sexual abuse.

Please see the 'We Are Survivors: Support for Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation from CALD, Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds' and the 'We Are Survivors: Support for Young People Who Have Experienced Sexual Violence from CALD, Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds' for more information and support on this topic.

WHO ARE THE PERPETRATORS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

In the majority of cases children are sexually abused by someone they know. Offenders may include someone from within the child's immediate family, such as a father, stepfather or brother, or the child's extended family, such as a grandfather, uncle, brother-in-law, or cousin. Offenders may also be known to the child in other ways, such as being a neighbour, teacher, youth worker or family friend.

Children are also at risk of sexual abuse by people they don't know ("strangers"), including in person and online. While most offenders are male, it is important to remember that most males are not offenders. It is also important to acknowledge that while rare, sexual abuse by females does occur and can be just as harmful as sexual abuse by a male offender.

IS IT STILL SEXUAL ABUSE IF THE CHILD DIDN'T SAY 'NO'?

Child sexual abuse is defined as any sexual behaviour that takes place between an adult or older person and a child under the legal age of consent. The age of consent means the age at which a person is deemed legally to be mature enough to agree to sexual activity. The age of consent varies from country to country but in Australia it is 16 years for both males and females. Children under this age cannot properly offer informed consent because of their limited life experience and knowledge, which prevents them from fully understanding the sexual activity and its ramifications. Under normal conditions, children find it extremely difficult to say "no" to adults and this difficulty increases when the child is confused, afraid, or is being tricked, bribed, or coerced.

The sexual abuse of children is never ok.

HOW COMMON IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

Global research on the incidence of child sexual abuse has revealed that it is a serious issue all over the world including in Australia. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2017) estimated that in Australia one in three girls and one in seven boys will experience some form of child sexual abuse in their lifetime. Other Australian studies have reported similar figures.

Research that has investigated studies of adults from countries and cultures all over the world has similarly revealed that 10 – 20% of female children and 5 - 10% of male children have experienced sexual abuse before the age of 18 years, with their experiences ranging from unwanted touching to rape.

WHO ARE THE VICTIMS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

Both boys and girls alike can experience sexual abuse, as can children of all ages, from young babies to teenagers. Sexual abuse can affect children from all types of families, including wealthy and impoverished ones, working-class and affluent ones, as well as those in living in large cities and those living in the most remote communities.

All children are vulnerable to sexual abuse and all children deserve to be protected.

SOME IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

- Children lack the necessary information and maturity to make an informed decision about sexual activities with an older person. They do not have adult knowledge of sex and sexual relationships, or the social meaning of sexuality and its consequences.
- Sexual activity between a child and an adult is inappropriate because of the power difference between adults and children. Children are never in a position to give informed consent to such activities. The perpetrator is always responsible for the abuse.
- Child sexual abuse is a criminal offence.
- Child sexual abuse occurs in all types of families, regardless of income or education level.
- Child sexual abuse occurs in all cultures.
- Child sexual abuse happens to both boys and girls.

- Children of all ages – from babies to adolescents – are vulnerable to sexual abuse.
- All forms of sexual abuse are harmful to children, from abuse that does not involve touching, to rape.
- Child sexual abuse may occur once or many times over a period of months or years.
- Children rarely lie or imagine sexual abuse.
- Children may be sexually abused by family members, by acquaintances or by strangers. However, children are most likely to be sexually abused by someone who is known to them.
- The majority of child sexual abuse perpetrators are male. However, while most offenders are male, most males are not sex offenders.
- Adolescent males who sexually abuse younger children are likely to continue to do so into adulthood without assessment and treatment.

INITIAL REACTIONS TO LEARNING YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED

If your child has been sexually abused you are likely to have a lot of questions and to be feeling a wide range of emotions. Initially, you may be tempted to pretend that the sexual abuse didn't really happen, to try to forget about it, to tell yourself that it wasn't really harmful, that the offender just made a silly mistake and that it won't happen again. You may even be feeling angry with your child (for example, "If it wasn't for him / her then I wouldn't be in this position!").

Although these initial reactions may be quite a normal response to the shock of discovering your child has been abused, none of them are best for you or your child in the long run.

It is important to remember that the person who committed the sexual abuse is the only one responsible for the abuse— always.

FEELINGS YOU MAY HAVE

As a parent, upon discovering that your child has been sexually abused you may experience a wide range of feelings, some of these might be conflicting. Some common feelings experienced by parents include:

- Responsible for not protecting your child from the abuse, for trusting the offender, for overlooking signs that things weren't right, or for denying the abuse was going on.
- Anger at the perpetrator for having harmed your child.
- You may feel confused – not knowing whom to believe, especially if the offender is denying the abuse.
- Resentment at your child and possibly jealous if the offender was your husband or partner.
- If the offender was your husband or partner, you may feel that you somehow caused the abuse (for example "It must have happened because I was unable to satisfy him sexually").
- Overwhelmed by the responsibility for dealing with the consequences of the abuse for you and your family.
- If you are a refugee or asylum-seeker or holding a temporary visa, you may be fearful of the effects the abuse may have on your visa status, especially when thinking about reporting the crime to the authorities.

COMMON FEELINGS OF PARENTS AND CARERS OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED

Grief

Guilt

Shame

Responsible for not protecting your child from the abuse

Conflicting emotions

Divided loyalties if the offender is someone close to you

Confusion

Anger

Powerlessness

Fear of what might happen next

QUESTIONS PARENTS AND CARERS OFTEN HAVE

As a caring parent or carer you probably have a lot of questions about what your child, your family and you are going through. Some questions often asked by parents and carers of children who have been sexually abused are discussed in the following section.

Why does sexual abuse happen?

Child sexual abuse is an abuse of the offender's power and authority over a child. Many victims of crime believe that they must have done something for the perpetrator to target them, and victims of sexual abuse are no different. While we may never understand exactly why sex offenders commit the offences they do, we do know that the victims are never responsible for the abuse. All children are vulnerable to sexual abuse, and as a society we must work together to protect them.

If your child has been sexually abused it is important to remember that neither you nor your child are responsible for the abuse. The only person who is to blame for the abuse is the offender.

How does child sexual abuse happen?

The sexual abuse of children is almost always conducted privately without any witnesses. Offenders go to great lengths to keep their victims silent, from manipulating adults to gain their trust in order to have access to children, to threatening and/or tricking children to keep the abuse a secret. In many cases offenders don't need to use any threats but simply rely on the sense of shame the child feels, the fear the child has of the offender or any consequences that telling would have, such as being taken away from their family.

Child sexual abuse is a misuse of the offender's power and authority and an abuse of the child's vulnerability, trust and innocence. No child is ever to blame for sexual abuse.

Why did the offender abuse my child?

Victims of child sexual abuse come from all types of families – from rich and poor families, from those in working class families to those from privileged backgrounds, from those living in big cities to those in the remotest of communities. Sexual abuse can happen to boys or girls and it can happen to children of all ages, from babies to teenagers. Sex offenders will generally choose victims whom they perceive are vulnerable, which means that all children are vulnerable to sexual abuse.

While it can be difficult to predict which child a sex offender will target, there are some strategies parents can use to better protect their child from potential sexual abuse. Prevention tips for parents and carers are discussed at the end of this Guide.

What if the person who abused my child is someone I know?

It can be very difficult if your child has been sexually abused by someone you know. When you discovered that the person who abused your child was somebody you know, perhaps even someone in your own family, you probably felt a wide range of different emotions, from confusion to betrayal to anger and despair. It is important to be aware that your child is probably feeling many of the same emotions. Your child may be feeling ashamed and embarrassed, and if the offender was someone in your own family, it may have been particularly confusing for your child who may love the offender but wanted the abuse to stop.

What if my child was sexually abused by a stranger?

For a child, sexual abuse by someone they don't know (that is, a stranger) can be equally confusing and traumatic. If your child was sexually abused by a stranger he or she may have felt afraid to tell anyone about what happened for fear that no-one would believe them or that they would somehow be blamed for the abuse.

The sexual abuse of children is a crime and has potentially devastating effects on the child, no matter who the perpetrator is. Whether a child is abused by someone known and trusted or by a stranger, it is important to remember that what happened to your child was not his or her fault. Neither was it your fault. Only the offender is the responsible for the abuse.

Was it my fault?

A common reaction for parents whose child has been sexually abused is for them to blame themselves. They may feel that they should somehow have known that the abuse was going to happen, that they should not have left their child alone, they should have trusted their instincts about a particular individual, etc.

While these feelings are very normal and an understandable reaction, it is important to remember that the only person responsible for the abuse of your child is the offender.

It is important to remind your child of this fact too, as one of the most common effects of sexual abuse is for children to blame themselves for the abuse. When confronted with traumatic life events (e.g., parental divorce, death of a loved one) children often blame themselves. In cases of child sexual abuse, the tendency for children to blame themselves is exacerbated. Let your child know that the abuse was in no way his or her fault. Sometimes it takes many times for a child to hear this, or from many different sources, but realising that s/he was not to blame for the abuse is a big step forward in recovering from sexual abuse.

Why didn't my child tell me?

Many children don't tell anyone if they have been sexually abused. It can be very distressing for a parent of a child who did not tell them about the abuse. It is easy for parents to blame themselves for this and question the trust and quality of the relationship they have with their child. However, there are many reasons why children choose not to disclose if they have been sexually abused.

In many cases, children do not want to upset their parents by telling them what has happened. They may also have been forced to keep the abuse a secret by the offender, including by threats, tricks or coercion. They may have been afraid that they wouldn't be believed if they told anyone, especially if the offender was someone well-known and liked. They may also have been afraid that they would somehow be blamed for the abuse. For many children there is a fear that others, especially their parents, will think less of them if they found out about the abuse.

If the offender was someone in your own family, your child may have been afraid that if they told anyone they would be sent away, your family would break up or the offender would go to prison. Your child may also have been afraid that the person who did this to them might be deported from the country, or even that your whole family will be.

As a parent or carer of an abused child it is important that you reassure your child that all of these feelings and fears are very normal and that s/he has done nothing wrong and has nothing to feel ashamed of.

If your child didn't tell you about the abuse, it is important to let her / him know that you understand. It is possible

for your relationship with your child to heal from the trauma of the abuse. It is also possible to encourage an open and trusting relationship where your child will feel confident talking to you about everything.

What is the best way for me to talk to my child about what has happened?

Offenders will often make excuses for what they have done and may try to manipulate others into feeling sorry for them. It is important to always keep your focus on your child. Address any threats that the offender may have made. For example, the offender may have said that if the child tells anybody s/he will no longer be loveable. It is important to emphasise to your child that you still love him / her very much.

Your child may also have been told no one will believe them if they tell anyone about the abuse. It is important to re-establish trust and openness with your child to reassure your child that you believe them. Your child will need your ongoing belief, support and protection and they will require regular reassurance from you.

Why does my child say they feel guilty or ashamed about the abuse?

Many children who have been subjected to sexual abuse feel guilt associated with the abuse. It is important to understand this emotion so that you can be able to support your child through this often-debilitating consequence of the abuse. Your child is likely to feel responsible for the abuse in one way or another. He or she may feel responsible because they did not scream, yell, run away, say no, tell someone sooner, or protect their sibling/s. They may feel responsible for changes that will now occur within the family, for the offender getting into trouble, even for upsetting you.

It is crucially important that you let your child know that they have done nothing wrong and they have nothing to feel guilty or ashamed about. The only person responsible for the abuse and its consequences is the offender.

THE EFFECTS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

How will the sexual abuse affect my child?

Sexual abuse can have life-changing effects on a child and their development. Some of the possible effects are listed below. However, if your child has been sexually abused it is important to know that it healing from the trauma is possible. There are many people who have overcome the trauma of childhood sexual abuse. A crucial factor in determining whether or not a child will recover from the trauma of the abuse is the support they receive from their parent/s, carers and other loved ones. The long-term effects of sexual abuse can also be reduced with sensitive, trauma-informed counselling.

Possible Effects of Childhood Sexual Abuse

Feelings

- confusion
- depression
- isolation
- low self-esteem
- feelings of shame and guilt
- problems with intimacy and trust
- 'blocking out' of feelings
- anger and hostility
- anxiety and/or panic attacks
- fear of being abused again
- fear for the safety of siblings / own children
- confusion about sexuality
- fear of becoming an offender

Behaviours

- difficulty trusting others
- difficulty with intimate relationships
- flashbacks
- nightmares and sleep disorders
- mental health problems
- eating disorders
- running away

- drug / alcohol abuse
- sexualised behaviours and/or sexual problems
- confusion about sexual identity
- self-harming behaviours
- suicide attempts or suicide

A crucial factor in how well a child is able to heal and/or recover from sexual abuse is the reaction the child receives to his / her disclosure, especially from their parent/s. As a caring parent and carer, you can help your child recover from the trauma of sexual abuse by reassuring them that what happened to them was not their fault, that they have nothing to feel ashamed about, that you are proud of them for speaking up about the abuse and that you will do everything you can to help keep them safe.

Some Do's and Don'ts for talking with your child.

The most important message that you can give to your child is that you believe him / her, that you are glad they told you, that they were in no way to blame for the abuse, and that you will do everything you can to keep them safe now and in the future.

Here are some helpful ways to talk with your child as well as some things to avoid.

DO

Tell them you believe them

Reassure them that they have done the right thing in speaking up about what has happened to them

Let them know that they have not done anything wrong and that they are in no way responsible for the abuse

Let them know that you will do all that you can to keep them safe now and, in the future

Tell them that you are glad they told you

Let them tell you what happened at their own pace and in their own words

Let your child know that they can talk with you about what has happened, including their worries

Try to remain as calm as you can be under the circumstances (it is likely that any anger you display, even if it is justified anger directed at the offender, will be interpreted by your child as anger at him / her)

Be sensitive to the individual effects of the abuse on your child so that you can best support your child in his / her healing journey

DON'T

Disbelieve your child

Blame your child

Express annoyance or anger at your child for telling

Become visibly distressed (this will compound your child's guilt and self-blame)

Tell your child to forget it happened

Tell your child not to talk about it

Get upset when your child talks about the abuse

Threaten to hurt / punish / kill the offender

Tell people about the abuse indiscriminately – it is important to respect your child's privacy while not "keeping the secret" – it may be necessary to confide in a few trusted friends and/or relatives in order to obtain support for yourself and your child

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD, YOUR FAMILY AND YOURSELF

How will the abuse affect my family?

Child sexual abuse has a potentially devastating effect, not just on the child-victim, but on the whole family. You may find that your child is angry with you, believing that you did not protect him or her from the abuse or that you knew the abuse was going on and did not stop it. Although it is distressing for a non-offending parent to experience this, it is important to remind yourself that this is a normal reaction in children.

It may be that your other children have strong reactions to the abuse too. Siblings may feel responsible for not protecting their brother or sister from the abuse, especially if they have been abused too. If your other children were not abused, siblings may even feel jealous of the attention their brother / sister is getting as a result of the abuse.

The offender will have sought to transfer responsibility for the abuse onto anyone but him or herself. It is important for everyone in your family to shift that responsibility back to where it belongs.

Remember, the person responsible for the abuse is the person who committed the abuse.

How do I cope with all of the consequences of the abuse for my child and family?

If the offender is someone in your family it is likely that the effects will be far-reaching for your whole family. It is likely that you will feel overwhelmed at some points, and there will be many things for you to consider and organise. Specialist counselling and support organisations can assist you in working through these emotions and in dealing with some of the practical issues. Specialist legal services can help you with the legal issues facing your child and your family, these may include:

Financial security

Where to access financial assistance if the offender is removed from the home.

Housing

How to access alternative housing for your family if the offender remains in the home.

Visa status

Obtaining specialist legal advice about any implications for the family's immigration /visa status.

Family reactions

Dealing with the reaction of other family members and how to access counselling for family.

Community reactions

Dealing with the reaction of members of the community.

The offender

You may be experiencing a wide range of emotions toward the alleged offender and your child.

It is important to obtain the assistance of specialist organisations as soon as you can. *A list of helpful organisations is provided at the end of this Guide.*

How can I support my child?

It is likely that your child will feel a range of emotions once their situation has become known. They may feel relieved that something is going to be done to help them be safe and get the help and support they need. However, they may also feel confused, frightened, guilty and/or ashamed. As a parent, your support will be very important during this period. Here are some things that you may be able to do to continue to support your child during this difficult time.

- Provide a stable, nurturing family environment.
- Create predictability by maintaining routines as much as possible.
- Be available if the child wants to talk with you.
- Allow the child to express him/herself naturally through other means such as art and play.
- Get as much support as you can to deal with the effects of the abuse on your child (e.g., positive behaviour management strategies) and information about community resources.
- Preserve your child's positive contacts with safe, significant people in their life (e.g., grandparents).
- Support your child's continued participation in positive activities outside the home (e.g., sport, faith related child programs, etc).
- Seek child and/or family counselling if you are not already linked in with a support service.

What do I say to other people about what has happened?

It is important to respect the privacy of your child. It is also important that you receive support for this difficult time. It may therefore be necessary to tell a few trusted friends and / or relatives about what has happened. Make sure they respect your and your child's privacy. You may wish to talk to a counsellor if you cannot be sure that any information you share with others will not be kept confidential. It may also be necessary to talk with your child's teacher if your child is displaying behaviours at school that are connected with the abuse, or if there has been a sudden behaviour or personality change in your child. The classroom teacher may also be able to put some strategies in place to assist your child's recovery. However, it may not be necessary to tell your child's teacher if he or she is not displaying any overt behavioural / emotional effects from the abuse. You may wish to tell your child's doctor, especially if your child has experienced physical effects from the abuse.

What is counselling and can it help?

Counselling can provide much-needed support to you, your child and other members of your family in the aftermath of abuse. Some people feel reluctant to seek counselling in relation to personal problems, including sexual abuse. There are many reasons for this, the most common being fear of the unknown. In some societies there is a degree of stigma associated with counselling, as well as false ideas about what counselling is.

For children, counselling can be used to help children resolve the range of feelings they have in relation to the abuse. This can be done through a variety of methods, most often through play therapy. For adults, counselling provides support and the role of the counsellor is to listen to your concerns and feelings and help you resolve them. Some people are afraid that what they talk about will not be kept confidential. However, counsellors' have a strict code of conduct and are required to keep anything you say confidential (unless there is a risk to your safety or to the safety of others). Many children, adults and families find counselling to be very beneficial in helping them recover from the trauma of abuse.

If you come from a refugee or asylum-seeking background or if you are a temporary visa holder, you may be afraid that seeking counselling or attending counselling might have a detrimental impact of your application for residency in Australia. It is important to be reassured that seeking or attending counselling services will not affect a person's application for permanent residency or their visa status. Counselling is a tremendously helpful tool for many people as they work towards healing from abuse and counselling might benefit your child, other family members and you.

A list of specialist counselling and legal services and support organisations is provided at the end of this Guide.

REPORTING THE ABUSE AND OTHER LEGAL QUESTIONS

Should I report the abuse?

Child sexual abuse is a crime. Sadly, legal systems all around the world are renowned for their lack of sensitivity towards victims of sexual abuse and the difficulty in prosecuting child sex offenders. This is, in part, why many victims of sexual abuse and of sexual assault in general choose not to report the abuse to the police or to take the case to court. If you and/or your child are thinking of reporting the abuse to the police, it may be helpful to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of doing so with someone you trust. It may be particularly helpful to discuss it with a counsellor who has experience with the legal processes relating to child sexual abuse cases.

Many refugees, asylum seekers and other temporary visa holders are afraid to talk to the police or other authorities if their child has been subjected to sexual abuse because they are concerned that it might have a negative impact on their visa application/status. If you are reluctant to report the sexual assault for this reason it is important to discuss your situation with a specialist legal service.

All victims of crime, including victims/survivors of child sexual abuse and their non-offending family members, have rights and safeguards. There are a number of organisations and agencies that can help you and help to protect you, your child and your family. *See the end of this Guide for a list of organisations that can help.*

If we do decide to report the abuse, how do I make a report?

Some child-survivors find a lot of relief in reporting the abuse they endured to police and seeking justice through the legal system. For some children it is a matter of ensuring there are consequences for the perpetrators and to prevent other potential victims from being subjected to the same abuse. However, it is important to know that this is not something your child has to do. The justice system is limited in what it can do and it can be an extremely daunting, and at times, insensitive process. Justice may not be delivered in the end, which can be a re-traumatising experience itself. Nevertheless, some survivors find at least reporting to police to be helpful.

Reporting the abuse is your and your child's decision and only you can decide what is best for you and your child and family. While it can be a very difficult process, every effort is made to make child-victims feel as safe and comfortable as possible throughout the process.

Can I make a report if my child was sexually abused in another country?

If your child was sexually abused in another country and you and your child are now living in Australia, if you are considering reporting the crime to the police or other authorities, it is recommended that you contact a specialist legal service about your specific circumstances. You may wish to have a friend or support person with you, and you may request the assistance of a translator, interpreter and/or multicultural liaison officer, if one is available. Seeking support from organisations that specialise in helping survivors of child sexual assault and their families can provide invaluable assistance and guidance.

You may not be certain if you will have to go back to your previous country and have concerns that going back after reporting to Australian police will put you in danger. You can discuss these and other concerns you may have by contacting any of the relevant organisations or agencies listed at the end of this Guide.

Investigating and prosecuting child sexual assault that happened in another country can be difficult and is dependent

on a number of factors, such as the laws of the country where the abuse took place, the laws of the nation the victim is currently residing in (Australia in this case), and any relevant international agreements or conventions.

If a crime has an extraterritorial component—that is, it happened outside of Australia—law enforcement authorities may be able to investigate it. Some of the factors that may be taken into account include the following:

Jurisdiction: If the offender is an Australian citizen or resident, Australian law permits the prosecution of certain offenses committed overseas. Nevertheless, different laws may have different prerequisites and specifics, and not all crimes may be prosecuted.

Extradition: If an applicable extradition treaty or agreement is in effect and the accused offender is found in another nation, Australia may request extradition. Through the legal procedure of extradition, one nation might ask another for the extradition of an individual so they can face charges or serve out their sentence.

International Agreements: Australia and other nations may have bilateral or multilateral agreements that promote collaboration in criminal matters, such as the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault cases.

Time Limits: Statutes of limitations may impose time limits on if or when a prosecution can begin.

Victim Support: Victims of crime, especially those who have been sexually assaulted, can receive help from organisations and support services available in Australia. These services can assist victims in navigating the judicial system, getting support, and understanding their rights.

How do I make a report and who do I report to if the crime happened in Australia?

Reporting child sexual abuse requires navigating specific processes and procedures and you will most likely need the assistance of organisations that have been created to handle such cases. It can be extremely beneficial to obtain help from counselling services, support groups, and other options accessible to child-victims throughout the reporting and legal process. These services can help you, your child and your family to access the many tools available to provide assistance and support, before, during and after the reporting process.

It is important to know that procedures may differ across states and territories but generally speaking, the process of reporting child sexual abuse involves the following steps:

Seeking Support

Children can obtain support from specialised services or organisations that assist survivors of child sexual abuse. These organisations can provide counselling, information, and assistance throughout the reporting process. This can happen before or after the report has been made to the police. This may be especially helpful if you choose to pursue legal action as the legal process can be extremely difficult emotionally for your child, yourself and everyone involved.

Contacting the Police

Victims/survivors of child sexual abuse can report the incidents to the local police. In some cases, specialised units, such as the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Investigation Teams, may handle these cases.

Legal Advice

It may be helpful to seek legal advice to understand all your child's rights and options. Legal professionals experienced

in handling cases of child sexual abuse can provide helpful guidance that is tailored to your specific situation. See the end of this Guide for a list of specialist legal services.

Medical Investigation

Your child may need to go through a medical examination, depending on the situation, in order to record any physical proof or injuries connected to the abuse.

Preserving Evidence

It may be crucial for an investigation to save any pertinent evidence, including documents, letters, and personal belongings.

Police Investigation

In order to look into the reported history of abuse, the police may speak with your child, possible witnesses, and the suspected abuser.

Legal Actions

Legal actions may be taken if the police investigation produces enough evidence to warrant charges being laid against the alleged offender. Your child may have to testify if the case is brought before a judge and/or jury. This can be extremely difficult for children, it can even be re-traumatising. For example, your child may be required to testify and be cross-examined in front of the perpetrator, whether in person or remotely.

It is important to remember that the decision to pursue justice through the legal system or not is yours and your child's and if you do choose to you can pull out of the process at any stage.

Redress and Compensation

As a victim of a crime, your child may be eligible for financial compensation. Different states and territories in Australia have different crimes compensation agencies. In NSW the service is called NSW Victims Services. The contact information for NSW Victims Services is provided at the end of this Guide.

What are the legal processes and how will they involve my child?

Please be aware that the following information is general in nature and is not legal advice.

In Australia, a person is presumed innocent unless proven guilty under the law. When someone is accused of abusing a child, the police may file a charge (or charges) against them. This initiates a court case where the accused is tried for the offense or offenses, judged guilty or not, and punished if found guilty. This process involves the child or young person who experienced the abuse. Even if the victim is the one who has suffered, child abuse is legally regarded as a crime against the community, which is why the victims are referred to as “witnesses” in the proceedings. As a result, your child will not need their own lawyer because the community prosecutes through the Attorney General. There is no requirement for your child to appear in court if the offender pleads guilty.

Since the investigation and judicial processes can be extremely emotionally taxing and even frightening for children, it is imperative that you and your child receive support throughout the process.

OTHER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

What if I am worried about how my community will react?

If you belong to a close cultural network and the person who sexually abused your child is part of your cultural community you may be afraid of reprisals or revenge from the offender or from people close to the offender. This may make you hesitant about seeking help for your child and/or your family. There may also be a stigma associated with sexual assault, mental health disorders, and talking about sexual matters in your cultures or religion. You may be worried that disclosing what has happened to your child will lead others in your community to judge your child and/or your family and perhaps even socially reject you.

It is important to remind yourself that the person who sexually abused your child is the one who should carry any shame, not your child and not your family. By receiving support from counsellors and other support agencies you can be reassured of this and receive invaluable encouragement and acceptance.

What if English is not my first language?

If you feel that you have limited English language skills you might feel reluctant to approach the police and other support agencies. You may also be worried about you or your child not being understood or the possibility of details being misinterpreted. However, most services and government agencies, including the police, have access to interpreters and you have the right to request an interpreter. It is important that you feel comfortable with the interpreter.

Will my child or children be taken away from me?

If the offender is someone close to you, such as your partner or a member of your immediate even extended family, child protection authorities will want to ensure that you are able to protect your child from further abuse. This may involve the removal of the offender from the family home, or your commitment to ensuring the child has no contact with the alleged offender. If you are unable to guarantee the safety of your child, he or she may have to be moved to a safe place until such time as it is established your child will be safe while in your care.

What if I don't trust authorities due to negative experiences from my original country?

You may have come from a country where the legal and law enforcement agencies are viewed as corrupt or untrustworthy and you might therefore feel extremely reluctant to disclose what has happened to your child to Australian authorities as a result. You may also worry that you know very little about your rights and the Australian legal system. It can be quite difficult to understand the nuances of court proceedings, legal jargon, and reporting requirements, all of which can make reaching out to make a report and/or get support extremely difficult.

However, it can be very helpful to obtain the support of specialist services who have professionals who are experienced in working within these systems, who can advocate for you, your child and your family and who will be sensitive to the needs of all of you. *See the end of this Guide for a list of organisations that can help.*

Would it be better to try to forget the past and start a fresh life?

If you, your child or any other members of your family have experienced previous trauma, the psychological obstacles arising from the trauma of the sexual abuse may make it extremely challenging for you and/or your child to talk about the abuse. If your child was sexually abused before arriving in Australia, you may wish to forget the traumas you, your child and any other members of your family experienced before arriving here and have a "fresh start"

completely. Unfortunately, the experience of childhood sexual abuse is not easily “forgotten” and attempts to bury the memories or experience may result in further and ongoing trauma for your child. Obtaining help and support may actually be the most effective way to obtain a fresh start for you, your child and your family.

Will my child be “scarred for life”?

When the sexual abuse ends the repercussions often continue and healing and recovery from child sexual abuse takes time. Even though recovery from child sexual abuse is a complex process, with the right care and support it is possible for your child to recover. While survivors of child sexual abuse are not necessarily “scarred for life”, many children who have healed from the abuse say that they were forever changed by it. Please re-read the *Message to Parents and Carers from a Fellow Parent* whenever you need to be reminded that hope, healing and recovery for your child and your whole family are possible!

PREVENTION TIPS FOR PARENTS

Good communication between you and your children is the most important way to keep them safe from sexual abuse. Here are some strategies that you can use to help protect your child/ren from sexual abuse in the future.

Listen and Talk with Your Children

Take time every day to listen to and observe your children. This may be difficult, especially for working parents and parents of teenagers. Learn as many details as possible about your children's activities and feelings. Encourage them to share their concerns and worries with you.

A trusting and loving relationship creates an environment in which children are not afraid to talk to their parents about anything.

Be Aware

Get as much information as you can about child-minding services, teachers and other caregivers with whom your child comes in contact.

Do not leave your child in the care of a person who has a history of abusing children. Research indicates that unless offenders undertake an effective treatment program they are highly likely to re-offend.

If a neighbour, coach, teenager or any other individual takes a special interest in your child, spends a great deal of time with him/her and/or gives your child money, gifts etc, ask your child about their time together and listen for any indication of inappropriate behaviours.

If you have an intuitive sense about not leaving your child in the care of a particular person, trust your feelings. It is better to be safe than sorry.

Teach Your Children Rules For “Staying Safe with People”

Children are taught how to cross the street, not to play with matches, and water safety. Precautions about sexual abuse (or “unsafe touching of private parts”) can and should be included in these general safety discussions. Information can be introduced as early as two years of age. Even young children can understand these concepts. Children, provided with accurate information at an early age, can learn to avoid or stop sexual advances. An unprepared child may be too confused or ashamed even to admit an assault has taken place.

Teach your children what touches are “safe” and what touches are “unsafe”. Discuss the fact that touches may be confusing at times, and they may not be sure if the touches are safe or unsafe.

Explain to your children that they have the right to say no to anyone who might try to touch them in a way that is unsafe, confusing or in any way they don't like.

Teach your children a basic working vocabulary for parts of the body, including private body parts.

Encourage your children to trust their own feelings and instincts, including being able to identify early warning signs and their body's natural reactions when they feel unsafe, worried, or scared. These may include feeling butterflies and having sweaty palms and a racing pulse.

Tell your children that sometimes some adults or older children may try to touch them in a way that is unsafe or

make them do things they don't feel comfortable doing. Sometimes they might tell the child to keep what they are doing a secret.

Explain that some adults / older children may even threaten children by saying their parents will be hurt if the children ever tell the secret. Tell your children that anyone who does this is wrong.

Tell your children that some adults / older children they know, trust and love (such as a friend, a babysitter, a relative or a teacher) might try to touch them in an unsafe way. Emphasise to your children that it's OK to say no and move away from *anyone* who is making them feel unsafe even if it is someone they know and should be able to trust.

Try not to scare your children. Tell them that most grown-ups never do this and want to protect children from harm.

Teach your child the "NO! GO TELL" safety rule (if someone tries to touch you in an unsafe way, say "no", get away from that person as quickly as you can, and tell someone straight away (if you can) – and keep telling until someone helps you to be safe again). Reinforce this safety rule often.

Discuss with them whom they can trust and/or place the "Helping Hand" in a place where your child can see it often.

Problem-solving games, story-telling and role-plays are effective and entertaining ways to talk to children and reinforce personal safety rules.

TIPS FOR PREVENTING GROOMING AND ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

Encouraging open and honest communication, without shame or stigma, will help to better protect your children from grooming and other forms of online sexual abuse. Teach your children about what is appropriate and inappropriate contact online.

Practise safe online behaviour, including deleting and blocking requests and messages from people they don't know.

Review and update the privacy settings on all your and your children's devices.

Teach your children to know what to do and who to talk to if something makes them feel uncomfortable, as well as what support services are available if they are unsure or if something unsafe has happened.

Teach your children to say no to requests to engage in unsafe behaviours or sexual advances.

Be sure to block unsafe users, make a complaint to social media companies and report online grooming. (National Office for Child Safety)

SERVICES THAT CAN HELP

In Australia, a number of organisations and services are available to help survivors of sexual violence from all cultural backgrounds, including those who have experienced childhood sexual abuse. These services provide a range of support, including medical, psychological, legal, and advocacy assistance.

INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATING SERVICES

TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETING SERVICE (TIS) NATIONAL

<https://www.tisnational.gov.au/en/Contact-us>

TIS provides immediate phone interpreting services.

Call and request an interpreter 24 hours a day, every day of the year

Phone: 131 450 (within Australia)

Phone: +613 9268 8332 (outside Australia)

Automated Telephone Interpreting Service (ATIS)

Call and request an interpreter 24 hours, every day of the year

Phone: 1800 131 450

Free Interpreting Service (FIS)

Enquiries about free services

Email: tis.freeinterpreting@homeaffairs.gov.au

Phone: 1300 575 847

Postal address

TIS National GPO Box 241 MELBOURNE VIC 3001

SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND THEIR SUPPORTERS

SEXUAL VIOLENCE TELEPHONE HELPLINE SERVICES

NSW Sexual Violence Helpline

For anyone in NSW impacted by sexual assault (including friends, families and supporters). Available 24/7.

Phone: 1800 424 017

Sexual Abuse and Redress Support Service

For adult survivors of childhood institutional sexual abuse. Supporting anyone accessing the Redress Scheme and alternative compensation. Available 24/7.

Phone: 1800 211 028

Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Helpline

For anyone in Australia whose life has been impacted by domestic or family violence. Available 24/7.

Phone: 1800 943 539

Rainbow Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Helpline

For anyone from the LGBTIQ+ community whose life has been impacted by sexual domestic and/or family violence. Available 24/7.

Phone: 1800 497 212

SEXUAL ASSAULT, COMPLEX TRAUMA AND/OR RELATED SERVICES

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR SERVICES AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE (NASAV)

NASAV provides an *Australian directory for sexual assault services*.

<https://www.nasasv.org.au>

<https://www.nasasv.org.au/support-directory>

PO Box 442

Mandurah WA 6210

Phone: (08) 9535 8263

NSW VICTIMS SERVICES

Victims Services in New South Wales offers support and assistance to victims of crime, including information on financial support and access to counselling services.

<https://victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au>

Commissioner of Victims' Rights
Victims Services
Department of Communities and Justice
Locked Bag 5118
Parramatta NSW 2124

Phone: Victims Access Line: 1800 633 063

Translating and Interpreting Service: 131450

Aboriginal Contact Line: 1800 019 123

Voice calls or teletypewriter: 133677

Voice Speak and listen service: 1300 555 727

Email: vs@dcj.nsw.gov.au

NSW DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES AND JUSTICE (DCJ)

www.dcj.nsw.gov.au

Head office location: 6 Parramatta Square, 10 Darcy Street, Parramatta.

Mailing address: Locked Bag 5000 Parramatta NSW 2124.

Phone (General): 02 29377 6000

NSW Police

https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/contact_us

Phone:

All Emergencies: 000

Non-Emergencies: 131 444

Crime Stoppers: 1300 333 000

BIRCHTREE CENTRE – TRAUMA INFORMED THERAPISTS

The Birchtree Centre provides support and healing for those experiencing trauma and mental health challenges.

<https://www.birchtreecentre.com.au>

Phone: (02) 9518 8719

Forest Lodge

58 Parramatta Road, Forest Lodge NSW 2037

Phone: (02) 9571 5750

Pymble

14/33 Ryde Road, Pymble NSW 2073

Phone: (02) 8002 1073

BLUE KNOT FOUNDATION

Blue Knot provides information and support for anyone who is affected by complex trauma. Complex trauma is repeated, ongoing, and often extreme interpersonal trauma (between people) – violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation experienced as a child, young person and adult.

<https://blueknot.org.au>

Phone: 1300 657 380

Email: helpline@blueknot.org.au

FULL STOP AUSTRALIA – NATIONAL SEXUAL ABUSE AND REDRESS SUPPORT SERVICE

Offers confidential, trauma specialist counselling for people of all genders who are impacted by violence and abuse, as well as their friends, colleagues and family members.

<https://fullstop.org.au>

Phone: Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS): 1800 11 FASS

Phone: 1800 385 578

Phone: (02) 8585 0333

Fax: (02) 9555 5911

Post: PO Box 555 Drummoyne NSW 2047

Email: info@fullstop.org.au

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SEXUAL ASSAULT (ACSSA):

ACSSA provides research, resources, and information on sexual assault, including the impacts and responses to sexual violence.

<https://apo.org.au>

CENTRES AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT (CASA):

CASA centres provide free, confidential counselling and support services for individuals who have experienced sexual assault. Services may include crisis intervention, counselling, and advocacy.

CASA HOUSE

3rd Floor

Queen Victoria Women's Centre

210 Lonsdale Street

Melbourne

Phone: Counselling and Support Phone: (03) 9635 3610

Phone Admin Line: (03) 9635 3600

Facsimile: (03) 9663 9742

Email: casa@thewomens.org.au

SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES VICTORIA (SASV)

<https://www.sasvic.org.au>

Phone: 1800 806 292

Email: contactus@sasvic.org.au

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

KIDS HELPLINE

Provides free 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people.

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/>

Phone: 1800 55 1800

E-SAFETY COMMISSIONER

The *e-Safety* Commissioner can help individuals experiencing online bullying or abuse to take action or make a complaint in Australia.

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/contact-us>

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/young-people>

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/report>

BRAVEHEARTS

Bravehearts is an *Australian* child protection organisation, solely dedicated to the prevention and treatment of child sexual abuse.

<https://bravehearts.org.au/>

<https://bravehearts.org.au/get-help/>

Phone: 1800 272 831

REACH OUT

Reach Out Australia's services provide self-help tools so that you have information and practical steps to help you understand what's going on and how to take action.

<https://au.reachout.com>

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR PEOPLE FROM ASYLUM-SEEKING AND REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS

ASYLUM SEEKERS CENTRE (ASC)

The Asylum Seekers Centre is a place of welcome and support. The ASC provides practical help for people seeking asylum in Greater Sydney and advocate for fair and humane policies for refugees and people seeking asylum.

<https://asylumseekerscentre.org.au>

Newtown 43 Bedford Street

Newtown, NSW 2042 **Phone: (02) 9078 1900** Hours: Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm

Auburn 44A Macquarie Road

Auburn, NSW 2144 Hours: Wednesdays, 10am to 3pm

NSW SERVICE FOR THE TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION OF TORTURE AND TRAUMA SURVIVORS (STARTTS)

STARTTS is a specialist, not-for-profit organisation that provides culturally relevant psychological treatment and support, and community interventions, to help people and communities heal the scars of torture and refugee trauma and rebuild their lives in Australia.

<https://www.startts.org.au>

152–168 The Horsley Drive
Carramar NSW 2163

Phone: (02) 9646 6700

Fax: (02) 9646 6710

Email: stts-startts@health.nsw.gov.au

SETTLEMENT SERVICES INTERNATIONAL (SSI)

<https://www.ssi.org.au>

SSI delivers a range of human services that connect individuals, families and children from diverse backgrounds with opportunities – from settlement support to disability programs, community engagement initiatives and training and employment pathways.

Head Office:

2/158 Liverpool Road,

Ashfield NSW 2131

Phone: (02) 8799 6700

Email: info@ssi.org.au

NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT, DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICES

1800RESPECT

<https://www.1800respect.org.au>

1800RESPECT is a national helpline providing confidential counselling, information, and support for individuals impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence.

Phone: 1800 737 732

Text: 0458 737 732

WHITE RIBBON AUSTRALIA

White Ribbon is a global movement working to stop men's violence against women and children.

<https://www.whiteribbon.org.au>

OUR WATCH

www.ourwatch.org.au

Our Watch is a national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia. It does not provide emergency assistance or support services.

GPO Box 24229

Melbourne VIC 3001

<https://www.ourwatch.org.au/contact>

MEN'S SPECIFIC SERVICES

MEN'S REFERRAL SERVICE

Men's Referral Service provides advice for men about family violence.

<https://ntv.org.au/mrs>

Phone: 1300 766 491

MEN'S LINE AUSTRALIA

Men's Line Australia supports men and boys who are dealing with family and relationship difficulties. 24/7 telephone and online support and information service for Australian men.

<https://mensline.org.au>

Phone: 1300 789 978

LEGAL AID SERVICES

Various legal aid services in each state and territory can provide information and assistance regarding legal processes, including seeking justice for survivors of sexual violence.

LEGAL AID NSW

Legal Aid NSW provides assistance to people who are unable to afford legal representation and access to the court system.

<https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/contact-us/our-offices>

Phone: 1300 888 529

(from 9am–5pm, Monday to Friday excluding public holidays).

Web chat: <https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/contact-us>

Legal Aid Domestic Violence Unit

<https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/my-problem-is-about/my-family-or-relationship/domestic-and-family-violence/domestic-violence-unit>

Phone: 1800 979 529

WOMEN'S DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURT ADVOCACY SERVICES (WDVCAS)

WDVCAS is funded by Legal Aid NSW to provide information, assistance & *court advocacy services* to women and children experiencing *domestic violence*.

<https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/my-problem-is-about/my-family-or-relationship/domestic-and-family-violence/womens-domestic-violence-court-advocacy-services>

Phone: 1800 WDVCAS or 1800 938 227

SPECIALIST LEGAL AID SERVICES

REFUGEE ADVICE AND CASEWORK SERVICE (RACS)

The Refugee Advice and Casework Service is a nonprofit providing essential legal support to people who have fled persecution to find certainty and safety in Australia.

www.racs.org.au

Eora Country, 30 Botany St, Randwick NSW 2031

Phone Legal Help / Client Line: (02) 8355 7227

Reception Line: (02) 8317 6500

Fax: (02) 7251 1532

Email: reception@racs.org.au

IMMIGRATION ADVICE AND RIGHTS CENTRE (IARC)

The Immigration Advice and Rights Centre (IARC) is a specialist, not-for-profit community legal centre (CLC) with over 35 years' experience in migration law and policy. IARC assists migrants experiencing vulnerability in NSW by providing free legal information, advice, and casework services.

<https://iarc.org.au>

Suite 3, Level 8
377-383 Sussex Street
Sydney, NSW, 2000

Phone: Info line: (02) 8234 0700

Domestic Violence Priority Line: (02) 8234 0777

Email: info@iarc.org.au

WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICE NSW

Women's Legal Service NSW does not provide legal advice by email. Confidential information about the substance of a matter should not be given by email as it is not possible for WLS NSW to protect any confidential information provided. For legal advice please call their legal advice lines.

Office hours: Monday–Friday: 9am–1pm and 2pm–4.30pm

<https://www.wlsnsw.org.au>

PO Box 206, Lidcombe NSW 1825

Phone: (02) 8745 6900,

Fax: (02) 9749 4433

For the Telephone Interpreter Service **131 450** and ask them to call Women's Legal NSW on **(02) 8745 6900**. They will connect you to a solicitor for legal advice.

Email: reception@wlsnsw.org.au

FORCED MARRIAGE

MY BLUE SKY

My Blue Sky is a national service run by Anti-Slavery Australia for people who are in a forced marriage or worried about being forced to marry.

<https://www.mybluesky.org.au/>

Phone: 02 9514 8115

SMS: +61 481 070 844

Email: help@mybluesky.org.au

TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

ANTI-SLAVERY AUSTRALIA

Anti-Slavery Australia is the only specialist centre providing free legal and migration services to people who have experienced or are at risk of modern slavery in Australia.

<https://antislavery.org.au>

Phone: +612 9514 9660

Email: antislavery@uts.edu.au

Anti-Slavery Legal Practice

Phone: +612 9514 8115

Email: ASALegal@uts.edu.au

AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS

Australian Red Cross: Support for Trafficked People Program

<https://www.redcross.org.au/migration/support-for-trafficked-people/>

Phone: 1800 113 015

Email: national_stpp@redcross.org.au

THE SALVATION ARMY

The Salvation Army Trafficking and Slavery Safe House

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/>

Phone: 1300 473 560 or 1800 000 277

Email: endslavery@salvationarmy.org.au

AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE (AFP)

<https://www.afp.gov.au/crimes/human-trafficking-and-people-smuggling/human-trafficking-and-slavery>

Phone: 131 237

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Support for Trafficked People Program (STPP)

<https://www.dss.gov.au/women/programs-services/reducing-violence/anti-people-trafficking-strategy/support-for-trafficked-people-program>

LGBTIQA+ COUNSELLING AND/OR SUPPORT SERVICES

ACON

ACON is NSW's leading HIV and LGBTQ+ health organisation.

www.acon.org.au

Sydney 414 Elizabeth Street Surry Hills, NSW 2010

Phone: 02 9206 2000

Email: acon@acon.org.au

Northern Rivers Suite 4P Conway Court, Lismore, NSW 2480

Phone: 02 6622 1555

Email: northernrivers@acon.org.au

Hunter (Hunter, New England, Central Coast, Central West)

129 Maitland Road

Islington, NSW 2296

Phone: 02 49627700

Email: hunter@acon.org.au

Southern, Far West & Blue Mountains

Phone: 1800 063 060 / 02 9206 2114

Email: regionaloutreach@acon.org.au

KIRKETON ROAD CENTRE

The Kirketon Road Centre is a health care service that provides free and anonymous care to people who experience barriers to accessing health care. South-Eastern Sydney Local Health District (nsw.gov.au)

Phone: (02) 9360 2766

Fax: (02) 9360 5154

QLIFE

[www.qlife.org.au](http://www qlife.org.au)

Phone: 1800 184 527

Webchat available between 3pm and midnight

<https://qlife.org.au/resources/chat>

RAINBOW FAMILIES

'Rainbow Families' supports, connects, celebrates, empowers, and advocates for LGBTQ+ parents and their families at every stage of their lives. Rainbow Families serves as an important voice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, diverse and queer (LGBTQ+) parents and their children.

www.rainbowfamilies.com.au

PO BOX 306, Erskineville NSW 2043

Phone: 0481 565 958

https://www.rainbowfamilies.com.au/contact_us

ASYLUM- SEEKERS CENTRE LGBTIQ+ peer-group (for people seeking asylum only)

<https://asylumseekerscentre.org.au>

The Asylum Seekers Centre is a place of welcome and support. The ASC provides practical help for people seeking asylum in Greater Sydney and advocate for fair and humane policies for refugees and people seeking asylum.

Phone: (02) 9078 1900

Hours: Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm

Address

43 Bedford Street
Newtown, NSW 2042

Address

44A Macquarie Road
Auburn, NSW 2144

Hours: Wednesdays, 10am to 3pm

SOME RESOURCES THAT CAN HELP

Care Package for Survivors of Sexual Trauma

By Sexual Assault Resource Centre (Government of Western Australia)

<https://www.kemh.health.wa.gov.au/~media/HSPs/NMHS/Hospitals/WNHS/Documents/Patients-resources/SARC---Care-Package-for-Survivors-of-Sexual-Trauma.pdf>

NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence

<https://www.ecav.health.nsw.gov.au/Resources/Resource-Shop/booklets>

“What Happened to You?: Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing” by Bruce D Perry and Oprah Winfrey

Oprah Winfrey and trauma expert, Dr Bruce Perry, discuss the impact of trauma and adverse experiences – and how healing must begin with a shift to asking ‘What happened to you?’

“The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse” by Ellen Bass and Laura Davis

The Courage to Heal is a comprehensive guide that offers hope and a map of the healing journey to women who were sexually abused as children and their loved ones.

“Victims No Longer: The Classic Guide for Men Recovering from Sexual Child Abuse” by Mike Lew and Ellen Bass

The first book written specifically for men, *Victims No Longer* examines the changing cultural attitudes toward male survivors of incest and other sexual trauma. This book offers compassionate and practical advice, supported by personal anecdotes and statements of male survivors. *Victims No Longer* helps male survivors to:

- * Identify and validate their childhood experiences
- * Explore strategies of survival and healing
- * Work through issues such as trust, intimacy, and sexual confusion
- * Establish a support network for continued personal recovery
- * Make choices that aren't determined by abuse

Psychotherapist Mike Lew has worked with thousands of men and women in their healing from the effects of childhood sexual abuse, rape, physical violence, emotional abuse, and neglect. His book contains invaluable strategies for, particularly for men, on recovering from incest and other abuse.

SOME USEFUL WEBSITES

NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)

Hints For Healing

<https://www.hintsforhealing.startts.org.au>

NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence

A wide range of resources for survivors and relevant professionals.

<https://www.ecav.health.nsw.gov.au>

Women's Legal Resource Service NSW

Ask LOIS is a free legal online information service provided by Women's Legal Service NSW.

<https://vimeo.com/asklois>

E-Safety Commissioner

The e-Safety Commissioner can help individuals experiencing online bullying or abuse to take action or make a complaint in Australia.

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/contact-us>

National Office for Child Safety (NOCS)

A new documentary from the National Office for Child Safety (NOCS) aims to encourage families and the community to have open discussions with children and young people about online risks and how to keep them safe online.

www.childsafety.gov.au/shadows-of-the-web