

How to have a difficult conversation

INFORMATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE PROFESSIONALS

As mandatory reporters, early childhood education and care professionals will be required by law to refer vulnerable children and families for support, or report child protection concerns to Child Safety.

If you are concerned about a child's safety, you may find it difficult talking about your concerns with the child's parents.

This information sheet provides some advice about how to talk with parents about your concerns.

How do I discuss my concerns with parents?

Here are some helpful tips:

- Talk about your concerns sooner rather than later. If you put off talking about your concerns, the issues may escalate and become more difficult to address.
- Be prepared for your discussion, and have a clear agenda of what you want to talk about.
- Be open and honest with parents, and tell them what you have observed.
- Explain why you think it might be a concern.
- Try not to make assumptions about what parents 'need to know'.
- Listen to parents carefully when they ask questions, and acknowledge that they may be anxious.
- Ask parents what they think about the issue, and whether they are concerned about it. Ask if they experience the same kind of issue at home.
- Show empathy. Make a genuine effort to understand the parent's perspective and express this understanding.
- Offer support without judgement.
- If there is a crisis, acknowledge that parents may be confused, or highly emotional. Try to remember that a crisis can happen to anybody.
- Talk about what the solutions could be. If parents are open to getting some help, ask for their consent to refer them to Family and Child Connect.



What happens when I talk to parents about my concerns?

Parents may react in different ways.

Some parents may feel relieved and grateful for a chance to talk about their situation, and get help. Other parents may feel insulted or become angry, and fear for their child's safety and health.

It is important to recognise anger as a normal human emotion, and a response to perceived threat or loss of control.

If parents become angry, try to explore what is causing the anger. It could be fear about information being shared without their consent, or past experiences with statutory authorities.

Talking with parents about their child's needs is an opportunity for you to show that you care and are there to help, and advocate for the parent and child.

Who do I talk to if I have concerns about a child?

Remember, if you are unsure about what to do if you have concerns about a child, you can:

- talk about your concerns with your work colleagues
- refer to the **Child Protection Guide**: <https://www.dcssds.qld.gov.au/our-work/child-safety/about-child-protection/child-protection-guide>
- call **Family and Child Connect** on **13 FAMILY** or **13 32 64** for information and advice
- call **Child Safety** if you have formed a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering, or is at unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse, and there is not a parent willing and able to protect the child from harm:
 - Brisbane and Moreton Bay: 1300 682 254
 - South East Queensland: 1300 679 849
 - South West Queensland (Darling Downs): 1300 683 390
 - South West Queensland (West Moreton): 1880 316 855
 - North Queensland: 1300 706 147
 - Sunshine Coast and Central Queensland: 1300 703 762
 - Far North Queensland: 1300 684 062
 - Child Safety After Hours Service Centre: 1800 177 135 or 3235 9999

Be aware that it is a criminal offence for any adult not to report sexual offending against a child by another adult to police. For more information, see [Failing to report sexual offences against children | Your rights, crime and the law | Queensland Government \(www.qld.gov.au\)](#).