



# Information Sheet for Homestays Child Protection Responsibilities

As a homestay provider it is important that you are aware of your responsibilities in regard to child protection.

Information in this sheet can be confronting – look after your own well-being.

## Relevant convention and legislation

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child identifies the entitlement of all children to be protected from sexual abuse, to receive help if they are abused and to have their opinions heard about matters that affect them and to be treated with dignity if disciplined.

The *Children's Protection Act 1993* (The Act) identifies people who are obliged by law to make a notification if they suspect on **reasonable grounds** that a child/young person has been or is being abused or neglected and the suspicion is formed in the course of their role.

As a homestay provider of international students for the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) – International Education Services (IES) you have a *Duty of Care* to provide your student/s with an adequate level of protection against all reasonable foreseeable risk of injury. Please refer to the *IES Code of Ethics and Quality Service Expectations*.

## Definition of Abuse and Neglect

Abuse or neglect of a child or young person is defined as:

- sexual abuse – where someone in a position of power uses his or her power to involve the child/young person in sexual activity
- physical or emotional abuse or neglect to the extent that:
  - the child has suffered or is likely to suffer, physical or psychological injury detrimental to the child's wellbeing
  - the child's physical or psychological development is in jeopardy.

## Suspicion on Reasonable Grounds

Generally children/young people should be happy, healthy, socialising normally with peers and adults, developing normally and attending school regularly.

If young people are not *generally and regularly* showing these behaviours, your suspicions may be raised.

There could be good reasons for any of these behaviours on their own not to be evident at different times, so it is **patterns and clusters of behaviour** that could be cause for concern.

Your suspicion might also come as a result of:

- a child/young person telling you that they have been abused
- your own observation of the behaviour of a child/young person and /or injuries, or your knowledge of the child generally leads you to suspect abuse is occurring
- a child/young person tells you they know someone who has been abused (they may be referring to themselves)
- someone else who is in a position to provide reliable information, tells you of the abuse.

It is not acceptable to minimise, ignore or delay responding if you are told about or observe inappropriate behaviours by other adults. Concerns need to be shared with the International Student Program (ISP) Manager at your student's school, your IES Accommodation Officer or the IES Executive Manager International Student Services so that the appropriate action can be taken to ensure patterns and clusters of behaviours can be discussed.

You are required, as a person identified under The Act, to report child abuse or neglect when you have suspicion on reasonable grounds, but you are encouraged not to act alone.

Making a notification about abuse or neglect is a serious action that has repercussions for everyone concerned:

- the child/young person
- their parents/homestay family
- school staff.

As a mandated reporter, no-one can prevent you from making a report about suspected abuse or neglect.

Remember however, it is highly recommended that you **share your concerns** with the school or IES to determine the next course of action. By not doing this you may put yourself and others at risk.

**Always report your concerns to and seek guidance from the school or IES.**

**Never act alone.**

### International Education Services

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## Responding to a Disclosure

If a young person begins to talk to you directly (discloses) about abuse or neglect, there are some 'dos' and 'don'ts' about the best way to respond.

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• respect the enormity of what the young person is sharing</li> <li>• listen with and show care. Ask open questions</li> <li>• be patient</li> <li>• write down what you've heard</li> <li>• speak with the school/IES</li> <li>• look after yourself</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stop the young person from talking</li> <li>• act scared or shocked</li> <li>• doubt what the young person is saying</li> <li>• threaten to harm/punish the perpetrator</li> <li>• promise that everything will be OK, that they will be better, happy, safe</li> <li>• ask leading (yes/no type) questions or interview others</li> </ul>

## Protective Practices for You

Inappropriate behaviour to young people is a breach of trust, a failure to meet a duty of care and a failure to conduct requirements of a homestay provider.

As a homestay provider you are providing a family experience for international students. You therefore have a responsibility to provide a level of protection against harm (duty of care) to the students. Your behaviour towards students is also guided by this duty of care and you are expected to maintain appropriate behaviour in your interactions with children/young people. Your duty of care responsibilities also extends to reporting inappropriate behaviour of others towards children/young people.

The following are examples of behaviour that is inappropriate and violates your duties as a homestay provider. Identifying inappropriate behaviour assists in establishing and maintaining **expected** behaviour and boundaries. This list is not exhaustive.

Situation	Example of Inappropriate Behaviour
Communication (including via social media)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inappropriate comments about appearance; excessive flattering comments</li> <li>• inappropriate conversation/enquires of a sexual nature</li> <li>• use of inappropriate pet names</li> <li>• vilification or humiliation</li> <li>• facilitating/permitting access to sexually explicit material</li> <li>• correspondence of a personal nature that is unrelated to your role</li> </ul>
Physical Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unwarranted or unwanted touching</li> <li>• corporal punishment</li> <li>• initiating, permitting or requesting inappropriate or unnecessary physical contact</li> <li>• organising situations which unnecessarily result in close contact</li> </ul>
Place / Common Courtesy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• entering bedroom/bathroom without knocking or seeking permission</li> </ul>
Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• photographing, audio recording or filming young people via any medium when not authorised</li> </ul>
Possessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• taking still/moving images or audio recordings on your camera without consent from the student/their family</li> <li>• uploading or publishing images or recordings to any location without consent from the student/their family</li> </ul>

If you have concerns about whether a situation may compromise or breach your duty of care responsibilities, contact the school or IES.

### Using Social Media

Homestay providers are expected to model responsible and respectful conduct to the young people for whom they have duty of care. You should be aware of the following DECD expectations when using social networking sites:

- consider the images of and information about yourself. They should represent you in a favourable light.
- do not make comment about other homestay providers or young people that if published, may cause hurt, embarrassment to others, risk claims of libel, or harm reputations.

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### Appropriate Physical Contact

Different cultures have different attitudes and traditions regarding appropriate touch. Homestay providers are encouraged to become as familiar as possible with the values of cultural groups in the International Student Program.

There may be times where you will be required to give practical assistance to a young person who is hurt, distressed or needs particular encouragement or assistance. Examples of appropriate physical contact are:

- administering first aid
- supporting someone who has hurt themselves
- non-intrusive gestures to provide comfort to someone who is experiencing grief and loss or distress eg a hand on the upper arm or upper back
- non-intrusive touch to congratulate eg hand shake or pat on the upper arm or upper back. It is important to accompany this with positive and encouraging words.

It is good practice:

- not to presume that physical contact is acceptable
- to seek the person's permission to touch
- to avoid being in one-to-one, out of sight situations and never touch a young person if in such a situation
- to respect and respond to signs that a young person is uncomfortable with touch.

### Core messages for you

- Enjoy your interactions with young people.
- Any concerns you have regarding the health and well-being of your student and/or the young people you interact with should be referred to the school or IES as soon as possible.
- If concerning personal information is shared with you, respond in a supportive way and refer it to the school or IES as soon as possible.
- Confidentiality is critical in these circumstances.
- You are encouraged not to act alone.

Approved on: 17.02.14

Authorised by: Director, IE



Government of South Australia

Department for Education and  
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