



# Trust and confidentiality

(when working with trauma survivors)



***Trust is important in the relationship you develop with the person you're working with. It can help the person feel they can be honest and open with you because they feel safe.***

***Sometimes you might have the ethical and legal responsibility to break confidentiality, which can place pressure on the trusting and safe relationship you've built with the person. For trauma survivors this can be difficult.***

***It's important to know: Relationships are powerful for healing. Sometimes we may not be able to change a situation for a person, but we can provide a positive experience by knowing how to be there for those moments that are difficult.***

## Mandatory reporting

There are professionals who have a legal requirement to make a report immediately after forming a belief that child sexual abuse is happening. These professionals can be fined if they do not report. This law applies during their paid or unpaid work.

A professional with this legal requirement will know they are a mandatory reporter. If you are not a mandatory reporter, you still have the duty to protect children. Make sure you:

- Consult your supervisor
- Follow your agency procedures
- Report all suspected abuse to Child Protection and Family Services or the police

If you don't know that you have these requirements, check with your workplace manager.

For regional/rural workers, you will have your own challenges. These can include under resourcing issues or being well known due to the nature of living in a small town.

***Remember: Breaking confidentiality can be difficult for the person you're working with, they may experience increased stress or a reactive response. Make sure to prioritise your safety.***

# Breaking confidentiality

*Every organisation is different and can require different styles of response. Ensure you always consult with your supervisor and follow your agency's policies and procedures before breaking confidentiality.*

## When to break confidentiality:

Under Western Australian law, as a worker you have the ethical and legal responsibility to break confidentiality when:

- The person has harmed themselves or is at risk of harming themselves or another person
- There is a child that has been harmed or injured, or is believed to be at risk of harm or injury
- You have formed a belief based on reasonable grounds that child sexual abuse is happening
- The person has made a report or plans on making a report to the police and has provided permission for the service they received support from to provide a copy of the notes made
- The courts and regulatory bodies request that information be presented to them

*Supporting your person through the limits of confidentiality can be hard. Use debriefing, supervision and self-care.*

## Things that work when breaking confidentially:

- Knowing your organisation's policy and speaking to your supervisor first
- Taking your time to be honest and clear
- Always check the person is understanding
- Allowing the person to express their reactive response within reason

It can be helpful to:

- Let the person know who will receive their information
- Let the person know what will happen next
- Always try having the person involved as much as possible in decisions



## Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC)

**Metropolitan area:** A free 24-hr emergency service providing medical and counselling services for people who have experienced a recent (within 14 days) sexual assault, and counselling services for any form of unwanted sexual contact that has happened in the past for all genders ages 13 years and above.

**State-wide area:** Advice and education and training can be provided to services across the state of Western Australia.

Call SARC on (08) 6458 1828 or Freecall 1800 199 888.

Email SARC Education and Training on [SARCTraining@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:SARCTraining@health.wa.gov.au)

### Yorgum Healing Services

Disability counselling, intensive family support and National Redress services

Call 1800 469 371

### 13 Yarn

The first national crisis support line for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping, 24hrs/7 days a week

Call 139 276 (13YARN)

### WA Police

To report a sexual assault:  
Go to your local **police station**.  
Call **131 444**  
Go online [Safe2Say.com.au](https://www.safe2say.com.au)