



Frequently asked questions Reporting abuse

General questions

How do I protect privacy?

An individual's privacy can be protected by ensuring that any statements (written and oral) obtained are shared only with those who have a legitimate or legal reason to hold that knowledge in order to progress investigations. Refer to the [Privacy Policy](#) for more information.

Should I keep notes if I'm suspicious?

If something concerns you and you suspect improper conduct, it is important that you keep notes and speak with your ministry agent about those concerns. Your ministry agent will help you to determine what to do next. Keep notes in the [statement template for recording and reporting complaints and allegations](#).

Who do I report to?

If you are a member of a congregation, parent, leader or helper in children's activities, you should report your concerns to the ministry agent. If the concern is about the ministry agent, you should report to the [Presbytery chairperson](#).

What if something is not reportable, but I'm still concerned about it?

It is important that you make the church aware of anything you feel is important for them to know. In order to determine whether you should raise your concerns with the church you can speak with your ministry agent, or with your [Presbytery chairperson](#).

What should I do if I have a concern about the behaviour of my minister or ministry agent?

If you have a concern about your ministry agent, you should discuss it with the [Presbytery chairperson](#).

What will happen when I report to the ministry agent or Presbytery chairperson?

In accordance with the Uniting Church in Australia's policies and procedures it is mandatory for ministry agents to report alleged criminal offences to the police. In some cases the police will want a statement from you. Your ministry agent will offer pastoral support to you in such circumstances. That is, unless your concern is in relation to your ministry agent, in which case your Presbytery chairperson will offer pastoral support to you.

Can I report directly to the police/Child Protection Investigation Unit if I want to?

All members of the public have a right to report any concerns of alleged criminal activity directly to the police and/or other statutory authorities. Should you decide to report your concerns directly to the police we simply ask that you notify the church so that the church can activate any necessary procedures pursuant to the church's policies and regulations to ensure the safety of all involved until such time as the police have completed their investigation.

Why does the church want to know about these matters?

By reporting matters of concern to the church, you are enabling the church to ensure that the appropriate authorities are notified and that measures are put in place to address any further risk to the safety of children.

Questions relevant to ministry agents

What if something is not reportable, but I'm still concerned about it?

Speak with someone you know and trust (mentor/professional supervisor or Presbytery chairperson/minister) in order to determine whether you should raise your concerns with the church. You should also report important information to Crime Stoppers. See [Reporting process](#).

Why would I report to Crime Stoppers?

In the past, important pieces of information have not been collected in a central place which would enable them to be joined up. If when you check your information against the threshold test for reporting to the CPIU (police) you determine that it doesn't meet the threshold, it is important that you report it to the Synod office and Crime Stoppers so that records can be matched and aligned and reporting completed if there are multiple sources which bring it above the reporting threshold. [See Reporting process](#).



Is there a list of important phone numbers for reporting these matters?

The [Reporting process](#) contains a reporting and referrals section with contact details of statutory authorities (police and Department of Child Safety) and support services in your region. Ensure that local, relevant phone numbers are prominently displayed and appropriately distributed. Business cards and magnets with key emergency contact numbers are available with space to add your local numbers.

Do I need permission from parents to report my concerns to the Department of Child Safety or CPIU?

No, permission from the child or family to release information is not required. In cases where the parent or guardian is suspected of being the abuser, it is important to follow the instructions of police officers before speaking to the family. In most cases, subject to police or CPIU advice, a courtesy communication with the parent or guardian is warranted, informing them about what has happened and offering them support. [See Reporting process.](#)

Do I need permission from parents to make a referral for support?

Yes. If a referral to a family support service is recommended, then consent from the family is required before making these referrals. See [Reporting process](#).
[link]

What support options are there for survivors or families who may need extra assistance?

There are many support options available for survivors of abuse and harm. If the survivor or family require some assistance and counselling, the reporting and referrals section of the [Reporting process](#) contains details about

referral points such as Family and Child Connect (FCC) a central referral point to link families and children to appropriate support services when the threshold for reporting to statutory authorities has not been reached. See [Reporting process](#).

How does the policy requirement for mandatory reporting align with the Regulations of the Uniting Church and the Code of Ethics requirements for referring concerns about sexual misconduct to the Synod Sexual Misconduct Complaints Committee (SSMCC)?

The mandatory reporting policy requirement is consistent with Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice (COE 8.3) requiring “Ministers to inform the appropriate council or officer of the church if the behaviour of any minister, lay employee or lay appointee could be considered as sexual misconduct (as defined in Regulation 5.6.2).”

Regulation 5.6.7 (a) identifies that anyone who wishes to make a complaint of sexual misconduct may do so by making a complaint to the chairperson of the Presbytery, the Presbytery minister, the moderator, the Synod secretary, or the chairperson of the [Synod Sexual Misconduct Complaints Committee (SSMCC)].

Therefore it is not necessarily the responsibility of the person making the complaint to ensure that the complaint is made to the SSMCC. However in making the complaint to any of the named roles identified above, the SSMCC will be informed and involved, as outlined in the Code of Ethics (COE 8.4). By making reporting mandatory under policy, we are ensuring that concerns or complaints are reported in order that the church can deal with those concerns or complaints appropriately.

Document Review History

Version Number	Reason	Author/reviewer	Consulted	Approved by	Date of Approval
1	Modified from previous tools to support Safe Ministry with Children policy	Safe Ministry (children) administrator	Presbytery (Safe Ministry) reference group Presbytery Ministers' Nominee – Royal Commission Task Group Legal counsel Risk and Insurance manager Associate general secretary	General secretary	24.05.2017
Due	Annual review cycle				24.05.2018



Document Review History

Version Number	Reason	Author/reviewer	Consulted	Approved by	Date of Approval
1	Created to support Safe Ministry with Children policy	Safe Ministry (children) administrator	Presbytery (Safe Ministry) reference group Presbytery Ministers' Nominee – Royal Commission Task Group Legal counsel Risk and Insurance manager Associate general secretary	General secretary	24.05.2017
Due	Annual review cycle				24.05.2018