



**uniting
church**

in Australia,
Synod of NSW & ACT

Mandatory Reporting Policy Synod of NSW & ACT

This policy applies to all Synod entities other than those which require a specific tailored policy. In particular, it is for Ministers, Ministry of Pastor, Lay Leaders, Employees, Volunteers and Members of Councils in a Congregation, Parish Mission or Presbytery of the Uniting Church, Synod of NSW and the ACT.

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Synod Mandatory Reporting Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Our understanding of God's will for love and justice is our primary motivation for keeping children safe. The Uniting Church believes all children and young people should feel safe in their own homes, the community and in our churches.
- 1.2. Keeping children safe is a priority for the Uniting Church. The implementation and adoption of policy is a practical response a range of safeguarding standards and regulations. The NSW Young Persons Care and Protection Act 1998 and the Children and Young People Act 2008 in the ACT provide for mandatory reporting of child protection concerns.
- 1.3. Mandatory reporting laws aim to identify children who are being abused or neglected so they can be protected.
- 1.4. The Synod is committed to having reporting structures in place to support mandatory reporting. This includes developing and communicating policy and procedures aimed at ensuring best practice in child protection reporting.
- 1.5. This policy is supported by Mandatory Reporting Guidelines for NSW and for the ACT. These guidelines detail the roles which have mandatory reporting responsibilities, and the specific reporting requirements which must be followed in each jurisdiction.
- 1.6. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Synod Reportable Conduct Policy and the Working with Children Guidelines for NSW and the ACT.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy and the accompanying guidelines for each state or territory is to ensure compliance by the Synod of NSW and the ACT to Mandatory Reporting regulations, and to support the primary intent of the legislation to protect children.
- 2.2 'Mandatory' (NSW) or 'mandated' (ACT) reporters are those people who are required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect to specified government authorities.
- 2.3 Along with mandatory reporters, everyone in the Uniting Church has a role to play to ensure children are safe and protected. Any adult with concerns about a child's safety or welfare is expected to appropriately report those concerns and act in the interests of the safety of children.

3. What should be reported?

- 3.1 The World Health Organization defines abuse as 'All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.' ([WHO], 2006, p. 9).
- 3.2 Mandatory reporting relates to notifying the relevant authority of current concerns about the safety, welfare and wellbeing of a child. This may be because abuse or neglect is suspected which arises in the child's life outside the church's connection with the child.
- 3.3 Each jurisdiction has definitions of the types of abuse, specific criteria and thresholds for what must be reported. Synod has created guidelines for each jurisdiction to assist in the effectiveness of applying the relevant laws. Refer to the NSW or the ACT Mandatory Reporting Guidelines for more details on what and how to report child protection concerns. Both guidelines can be found on the Safe Church page of the Synod website.
- 3.4 All mandatory/mandated reporters of the Synod are required to abide by the relevant Mandatory Reporting Guidelines, including by making all required reports according to the Synod process, and by observing confidentiality and privacy requirements.

4. Mandatory Reporting and Related Policies

4.1 The Uniting Church has policies and practices that take a preventative approach to keeping children safe, and for the early identification and response to risks of child abuse.

Such policies and practices include the:

- National Child Safe Policy Framework
- Synod Person of Concern Policy and Guideline
- Synod Reportable Conduct Policy and Guidelines
- Synod Background Check Policy
- Synod Child Safe Policy
- Codes of Conduct for Ministers and Lay people
- Synod Volunteer Policy

These policies apply to all congregations in the Synod of NSW and the ACT and are implemented with the support of the Synod. The Synod Safe Church Unit resources and supports child protection systems and practice and assists congregations to fulfil child protection requirements and expectations.

In addition, some Synod entities require specific tailored child protection policy frameworks, and these will include policy and procedures for mandatory reporting.

4.2 The UCA considers training as an important part of its preventative approach to child protection. All mandatory reporters are expected to participate in the appropriate training as well as an understanding of the UCA National Child Safe Policy Framework.

The Synod provides training and resources which include:

- Safe Church Awareness Training
- Ongoing Ethical ministry training
- The formation of candidates for ministry process
- Engaging with the National Child Safe Policy Framework
- Guidance material for mandatory reporting requirements and procedures
- Tools and resources via the Synod website.

All church leaders and relevant staff and volunteers are expected to complete the Safe Church Awareness Training relevant to their role.

5. The Synod's role in Mandatory Reporting

5.1 When a mandatory report is to be made about a child or young person who is a member of the church community, the report should be made through the Synod Safe Church Unit to the General Secretary of the Synod. The Synod will lodge a report on behalf of the church with the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) in NSW or with Child and Youth Protection Services (CYPS) in the ACT.

The steps to making a report via the Synod are as follows:

1. If you are reporting as a mandatory or mandated reporter and are not a ministry agent, speak to your ministry agent or Presbytery Minister in the first instance.

If your concerns involve the ministry agent, please contact the General Secretary of the Synod of NSW and the ACT directly. Note that child protection concerns which relate to church leaders, workers and volunteers are associated with reportable conduct. Refer to the Reportable Conduct Guideline for NSW for how to make these reports.

2. Ministry agents will report the concern to the General Secretary via the Safe Church Unit as soon as practicable.
3. Synod will lodge a report using the online portal in accordance with the procedure in NSW and the ACT and inform the mandatory/mandated reporter that this has taken place.
4. Any further instructions will be given by the relevant authority. This may include recommendations about support services. The Safe Church Unit will assist the mandatory/mandated reporter to continue to support the child or young person.
5. There may also be other reporting required, such as to Police. Details of the specific reporting requirements are found in the NSW and the ACT Guidelines.

Direct reporting

Mandatory reporters can report directly to the appropriate authority, such as in cases where there are significant sensitivity or confidentiality concerns which mean the person is not comfortable in reporting via the Synod. They should directly report to DCJ, or CYPS child protection concerns related to children who are not members of the church community or activities.

In the instance of a report being made directly to DCJ or CYPS relating to a child in the church community, the reporter must inform the General Secretary of the report with its reference number.

6. Support for Mandatory Reporters

- 6.1 Mandatory reporters are encouraged to seek support for vicarious trauma which may arise out of dealing with child protection concerns. Support can be provided by the Synod Employee Assistance Program or further guidance can be given by the Synod Safe Church Unit. [Link to EAP](#)

7. Relevant Legislation

[Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#) (NSW)
[Children and Young People Act 2008](#) (ACT)

8. Related Synod Documents

Mandatory Reporting Guideline in NSW
Mandatory Reporting Guideline in the ACT
Guideline - Working with Children Check in NSW
Guideline - Working with Vulnerable People Check in the ACT
Reportable Conduct Guideline in NSW
Reportable Conduct Guideline in the ACT

9. Policy Review

This policy is to be reviewed annually by Synod Risk & Compliance and amendments approved by the Synod Governance Oversight Committee (SGOC).