



DATE 17 December, 2010
SUBJECT Receiving and Reporting Disclosures or Suspicions of Harm
Approved by SLSQ Board of Directors

The following policy statement was adopted at the SLSQ Board of Directors meeting held 17 December 2010 and adopted as State Policy from that date:

POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Surf Life Saving Queensland (SLSQ) is totally committed to the safety and wellbeing of members who participate in any related activities. Our volunteers and staff will treat all members with respect and understanding at all times.

The aim of this SLSQ policy and supporting procedures are to assist members/ staff when confronted with disclosures or suspicions of harm, to children and young people. It will enable staff/ members to respond professionally, and as quickly as possible, and in the best interests of the child or young person, under the age of 18, who is the subject of alleged harm. SLSQ recognises that children and young people are vulnerable members of the community and that extra measures must be taken to protect and support them.

REFERENCES/RELATED DOCUMENTS:

- SLSA Member Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- SLSA Codes of Conduct
- SLSQ Child & Youth Risk Management Strategy including:
 - SLSQ Codes of Conduct
 - SLSQ Blue Card Screening Policy
 - SLSQ Chaperoning and Supervision of Minors
 - SLSQ Policy and Protocols for dealing with police investigations, criminal charges, guilty pleas and/ or convictions

DEFINITIONS

Harm - as defined under the *Child Protection Act 1999* is "any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. For harm to be significant, the detrimental effect on the child's wellbeing must be substantial or serious, more than transitory and must be demonstrable in the child's presentation, functioning or behaviour".

Harm may be categorised in the following types:

- physical abuse, for example, beating, shaking, burning, biting, causing bruise or fractures by inappropriate discipline, giving children alcohol, drugs or inappropriate medication
- emotional or psychological abuse, for example, constant yelling, insults, swearing, criticism, bullying, not giving children positive support and encouragement
- neglect, for example, not giving children sufficient food, clothing, enough sleep, hygiene, medical care, leaving children alone or children missing school, and
- sexual abuse or exploitation, for example, sexual jokes or touching, exposing children to sexual acts or pornography or having sexual intercourse with a child or young person under 16 years of age (even if the child appears to have consented).

Suspicion of harm - You can suspect harm if:

- you are concerned by significant changes in behaviour or the presence of new unexplained and suspicious injuries.

Disclosure of harm - A disclosure of harm occurs when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened or is likely to happen.

Disclosures of harm may start with:

- “I think I saw...”
- “Somebody told me that...”
- “Just think you should know...”
- “I’m not sure what I want you to do, but...”

Any disclosure of harm is important and must be acted upon, regardless of whether:

- the harm to a child or young person had been caused by a person from within or outside surf lifesaving, or
- the child or young person disclosing the harm to you is from within or outside surf lifesaving.

Irrespective of the source of the harm, i.e. whether from within our organisation (internal) or outside our organisation (external), a disclosure must be made to a surf lifesaving volunteer or employee.

PROCEDURES FOR RECEIVING A DISCLOSURE OF HARM

For a summary of procedures refer to Appendix 1 - SLSQ’s Reporting Guidelines Flowchart.

When receiving a disclosure of harm:

- remain calm and find a private place to talk (it is recommended to stay within sight of others)
- don’t promise that you’ll keep a secret; tell them they have done the right thing in telling you but that you’ll need to tell someone who can help keep them safe
- only ask enough questions to confirm the need to report the matter; probing questions could cause distress, confusion and interfere with any later enquiries, and
- do not attempt to conduct your own investigation or mediate an outcome between the parties involved.
- **Under no circumstances should any member or club of Surf Life Saving Queensland:**
 - Conduct their own investigation to substantiate claims
 - Hold its own internal hearing (a “kangaroo court”), or
 - Attempt to mediate settlement of the matter instead of notifying relevant authorities.

REPORTING DISCLOSURES OR SUSPICIONS OF HARM

The following are the actions staff/ members of our organisation will take immediately following a disclosure or suspicion of harm.

Documenting a suspicion of harm

If you or others have concerns about the safety of a child, record your concerns in a non-judgmental and accurate manner as soon as possible. If a parent explains a noticeable mark on a child, record your own observations as well as accurate details of the conversation. If you see unsafe or harmful actions towards a child in your care, intervene immediately, provided it is safe to do so. If it is unsafe, call the police for assistance.

Documenting a disclosure of harm

Complete an *Incident Report Form – Member Harm* (refer to Section 12 of the SLSQ Patrol Operations Manual) or record the details as soon as possible so that they are accurately captured. Include:

- time, date, and place of the disclosure
- ‘word for word’ what happened and what was said, including anything you said and any actions that have been taken, and
- date of report, and signature.

If you need to take notes as the person is telling you, explain that you are taking a record in case any later enquiry occurs.

Reporting the disclosure or suspicion of harm to authorities

SLSQ will not conduct its own enquiries in relation to the disclosure or suspicion of harm or try to come to an agreement between the parties involved. The person who receives a disclosure or suspects harm is to contact the relevant authority to ensure information provided is comprehensive and accurate. If the person who has received the disclosure or suspects harm is not able to report to the authorities directly, another person can assist in the reporting process.

If there is immediate risk of harm to a child or young person the matter must immediately be reported to:

- Department of Communities (Child Safety Services), or
- Queensland Police Service.

If, the disclosure or suspicion of harm is related to club activities, and there is no immediate risk of harm, report the matter to:

- The Club President/ Club Grievance Officer/ Club Captain who will report the matter immediately to either-
 - Department of Communities (Child Safety Services), or
 - Queensland Police Service.

If the disclosure or suspicion of harm is unrelated to club activities, report the matter directly to:

- Department of Communities (Child Safety Services), or
- Queensland Police Service.

Still not sure who to contact?

If you are unsure whether the harm disclosed has been caused by a family member or someone outside the family, contact the Queensland Police Service. If it is a matter for the Department Communities, Child Safety, the Queensland Police Service will refer the matter to them.

If you are unsure that the matter has been reported directly to the authorities, you may report the matter directly to the Department of Communities (Child Safety Services), or Queensland Police Service. The safety of the child or young person is paramount.

ACTIONS FOLLOWING A DISCLOSURE OF HARM

Support and counseling must be offered to all parties involved through appropriate organisations.

Processes for those involved in the report

The child or young person:

The children and young people involved must be offered appropriate counseling and support through organisations such as Kids Helpline or Lifeline.

The person who made the report:

Under Section 22 of the *Child Protection Act 1999*, a person who reports suspected child abuse is protected from civil or criminal legal actions and is not considered to have broken any code of conduct or ethics.

Details of the person who made the report are to be kept completely confidential and will not be made available to the family of the child or young person, or the person against whom the allegation has been made.

The person against whom the allegation has been made:

If the person responding to the allegation of harm is a member of the organisation, you will need to review their duties. If they continue to interact/ work with children, ensure that they are appropriately supervised at all times. You are advised to seek legal advice as to the extent to which that person can carry out duties in the organisation.

POLICY REVIEW:

SLSQ's policy and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm are to be reviewed and assessed regularly to ensure that the organisation is continuing to provide a safe and supportive environment for children and youth.

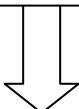
APPENDIX 1 -**SLSQ Reporting Guidelines Flowchart****RECEIVING A DISCLOSURE**

Remain calm and find a private place to talk
Explain why you can't keep it a secret
Only ask enough questions to confirm the need to report the matter
Do not attempt to conduct your own investigation
Do not attempt to mediate the situation

**DOCUMENTING A DISCLOSURE**

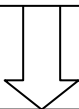
Complete an *Incident Report Form – Member Harm* and include:

- *Time, date and place of the disclosure*
- *'Word for word' what happened and what was said, including anything you said and any actions that have been taken*
- *Date of report and signature*

**Is disclosure club related?**

Yes – Immediately contact Club Greivance Officer/ President/ Club Captain who will report disclosure as follows.

No – proceed to report disclosure as follows.

**REPORTING A DISCLOSURE**

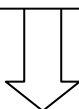
Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) - 1800 811 810

OR

Queensland Police Service:

In an emergency – 000 *(If a crime is happening now; When a life is threatened; When the event is time critical, for example a fire.)*

Policelink 131 444 (24 hours 7 days when it is not an emergency)

**FOLLOWING A DISCLOSURE**

Support and counseling must be offered to all parties involved. For example:

- *Kids helpline – 1800 55 1800*
- *Lifeline -13 11 44*

The policies and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm are to be reviewed.