



Keep Them Safe

A shared approach to child wellbeing

Participant's Guide

KTS Training for the Early Childhood Sector



PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

KTS Training for the Early Childhood Sector

TARGET AUDIENCE

This training has been developed specifically for people working in the Early Childhood Sector.

The training will focus on the contextualising of the *Keep Them Safe* reforms for the Early Childhood sector and will cover topics such as: the new threshold for reporting risk of significant harm; the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG); Information Exchange and Interagency Collaboration. Case Studies will be used to demonstrate how these changes will affect the Early Childhood sector.

TRAINING OUTCOMES

At the completion of this training, Early Childhood Sector staff will:

- Understand their responsibilities as Mandatory Reporters;
- Understand how the Keep Them Safe reforms link to the Early Childhood sector;
- Understand the new legislation and definition of 'Risk of Significant Harm' as the new threshold for reporting to Community Services;
- Have knowledge of the changes in legislation relating to Information Exchange and how this impacts on their work in relation to Interagency Collaboration;
- Be familiar with the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) and how to use it when deciding whether a matter requires a report to Community Services;
- Be aware of the support available to them as Mandatory Reporters.

TRAINING DURATION

The training session is of two and a half hours duration.

TRAINING OUTLINE

KTS Training for the Early Childhood Sector

SESSION	TOPIC AND CONTENT	TIME (approx)
1 WELCOME & INTRODUCTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome Address to Country Introductions Overview of Training & Expectations Housekeeping 	10 mins
2 BACKGROUND TO KTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW Keep Them Safe – the Government's response 	10 mins
3 KTS AND THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role of the Early Childhood sector within KTS reforms Early Years Learning Framework National Quality Framework and Standards for Early Childhood Education Community Services Data 	20 mins
4 NEW REPORTING THRESHOLD & GROUNDS FOR REPORTING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to the reporting threshold to Community Services Risk of Significant Harm New Grounds for Reporting to Community Services 6 Early Childhood Case Studies to demonstrate matters above or below threshold 	20 mins
5 OVERVIEW OF MANDATORY REPORTER GUIDE (MRG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) development Where to locate the MRG MRG Decision Trees & Definitions How to use the MRG 	20 mins
6 USE OF MRG WITH CASE STUDIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of 2 Case Studies to discuss how to apply the MRG Identifying appropriate decision trees Reviewing the Decision Tree definitions Reporting to DoCS Where to get help 	20 mins
7 INFORMATION EXCHANGE & INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to Information Exchange Interagency Collaboration What this means for practice in the EC sector Group Discussion Applying to EC context 	40 mins
8 SUMMARY, QUESTIONS & CLOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary Question Time 	10 mins

SESSION 2

BACKGROUND TO KEEP THEM SAFE

OVERVIEW

This session provides brief information about the background to Keep Them Safe and the Wood Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection.

KEY POINTS

- December 2007 – Commissioner Wood led an inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW
- Report released November 2008 with 111 recommendations to reform the Child Protection System
- NSW Government accepted 106 of these recommendations and drafted Keep Them Safe as a 5 year plan of reform to implement these recommendations
- Key component of Keep Them Safe is it's support of Wood's recommendation that agencies should take on a greater role and responsibility in supporting children and families and that Non Government organisations are equal partners with government in the delivery of services to children, young people, families and communities
- Goals of Keep Them Safe
 - All children are healthy, happy and safe and grow up belonging in families and communities where they have opportunities to reach their full potential.
 - All agencies such as Health, Education, Police and Human Services should expand their role in supporting children
 - Fewer children and young people reported to Community Services
 - More families supported on a local level in a coordinated approach by other government agencies and NGOs.
- There is a new focus on shared responsibility, new systems and new ways of working together, and importantly, there is great emphasis on child protection being a collective responsibility, not just that of Community Services, and that NGOs are important stakeholders in this system.

KEY RESOURCES

- PowerPoint slide handouts
- **The Wood Report – Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection in NSW**
http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/publications/news/stories/special_commission_of_inquiry_into_child_protection_services_in_new_south_wales
- **Keep Them Safe website** <http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/home>
- **Keep Them Safe Newsletter subscription**
http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/resources/keep_them_safe_newsletter
- **Keep Them Safe e-Learning presentation**
http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/training/elearning_presentation
- **Keep Them Safe Information Sessions Facilitator Guide, Participant's Manual, PowerPoint Slides and Fact Sheets**
http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/training/training_resources
- **Keep Them Safe Frequently Asked Questions**
http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/frequently_asked_questions
- **ACWA – Keep Them Safe Information**
http://www.acwa.asn.au/wood_commission.php

SESSION 3

KTS & THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR

OVERVIEW

This session provides information about implementing Keep Them Safe reforms within the Early Childhood Sector. It will include information on how the reforms link with existing Early Childhood policies and procedures, and to the new *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *National Quality Framework Standards for Early Childhood Education*. Finally, the session provides reporting data from Community Services, and in particular, reporting data from the Early Childhood Sector.

KEY POINTS

- Early Childhood staff have a vital role in the child protection system as many children, who are not old enough to attend school, regularly attend some form of Early Childhood care or schooling.
- As Mandatory Reporters, all Early Childhood staff must report cases of suspected Risk of Significant Harm to the Community Services Child Protection Helpline. Before doing so, staff must have completed the Mandatory Reporter Guide.
- It is important to remember that even when a report about concerns for a child do not meet the new threshold, Early Childhood staff have a role to play in monitoring and offering appropriate services to families.
- Keep Them Safe links to the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care and the Early Years Learning Framework. The guiding principle in both these documents is that the rights of the child are paramount, and that those who work with them have an obligation to protect children from harm, respect their dignity and privacy and safeguard and promote every child's wellbeing".

Community Services Statistic

- In 2008/2009 there were a total of 309,676 reports made to Community Services. 34% of these reports were made on children 0-4 years of age.
- Schools and Child Care Centres make 14% of reports to CS
- The most common reason for reporting is Physical abuse, then Neglect, Emotional Abuse and Sexual Abuse.

KEY RESOURCES

- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations – Australian Government (2009). ***Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*** (2009). [Online] Accessed at http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Pages/EarlyYearsLearningFramework.aspx as at 6 March 2010.
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations – Australian Government (2009). ***National Quality Standard for Education and Care and School Age Care*** – Council of Australian Governments. [Online] Accessed at: http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Pages/QualityStandards.aspx on 6 March 2010.
- NSW Department of Community Services (2009). ***DoCS Annual Report 2008/09***. [Online] Accessed at http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/annual_report09/index.htm on 6 March 2010.

SESSION 4

NEW REPORTING THRESHOLD & GROUNDS FOR REPORTING

OVERVIEW

This session provides brief information changes to the *Children & Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*, including the raised threshold, *risk of Significant Harm* and new grounds for reporting to community Services. It will also provide Case study examples of matters that are below and above the threshold.

KEY POINTS

- New reporting threshold to community Services is 'Risk of Significant Harm'
- **Significant harm** is defined as: *a concern about a child or young person that is sufficiently serious to warrant a response by a statutory authority irrespective of a family's consent. It is something that is not minor or trivial and may be reasonably expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on the child or young person's safety, welfare or wellbeing. In addition, it can result from a single act or omission or an accumulation of these.*
- **For Unborn Children**, *what is significant is not minor or trivial and may reasonably be expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on the child **after the child's birth.***
- Threshold increase due to: NSW having the lowest threshold for reporting in Australia; demand for Community Services has quadrupled since 2000; up to 30% of reports to Community Services do not warrant statutory intervention, and only 13% of reports made are responded to by sighting a child or conducting a detailed assessment.
- Keep Them Safe reforms hope to reduce the strain on Community Services and provide support and services to families who need them without the need for statutory intervention.
- **Two new grounds for reporting** – in addition to the current grounds for reporting to CS under Section 23 of the Act, there is now additional grounds: 1) when a parent or carer has not arranged (and are not willing to arrange) for their child to receive an education; and 2) A series of acts or omissions when viewed together may establish a pattern of significant harm.

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1 – Ava

- Ava is a 3-year-old child who started pre-school this year and attends 2 days per week.
- A few times in the last week, you have found Ava playing with other children at the centre and pointing to their genitals and asking them to pull their pants down.
- On one of these occasions, you heard her telling another child, "It's a secret".
- When discovered, Ava often becomes aggressive and pushes you or the other child away.
- You speak with your Director about your concerns and the Director contacts Ava's parents who are shocked at the information.
- The Director implements a strict supervision plan for Ava whilst she is at the centre and has also spoken to the parents about the same plan at home as Ava has an 18 month old sibling.

Case Study 2 – Luca

- Luca is a 12-month-old boy who attends your centre 3 days per week.
- One day this week, he presented with severe nappy rash, redness around his penis and anus and down his thighs, with some parts forming small blisters, and complained when he was being cleaned during a nappy change.
- You speak with your Director and then speak with the mother when she picks Luca up that day. The mother became very upset and told you that Luca did not have any nappy rash that morning and that she is concerned about the level of care Luca is receiving at the centre. The mother

indicates that she will be making a report about the centre to Community Services. When the Child Protection Helpline Caseworker speaks with the mother, she asks her whether the mother had noticed any redness or irritation around the child's genitals the night before.

- The mother indicated that Luca was crying during the night and that he did have some redness on his legs and penis but that she was so tired she just changed his nappy and put him back to bed.
- During the conversation, the mother informs the Caseworker that this is her first child, and that she is struggling with his care, as the father is not supportive and works long hours.

Case Study 3 - Ruby

- Ruby is a 3-½ year old girl who attends your centre 3 days per week. The other 2 days she is with her maternal grandmother.
- Yesterday, Ruby attended the centre and told her teacher that he heard her parents fighting and yelling loudly and that it hurt her ears. She continued to say that, "*Daddy doesn't have any more dollars, and mummy is angry*".
- You speak with your Director and note that Ruby is always well presented, clean and is a happy child who engages well with her peers and teachers alike.
- Her mother or father always pick her up on time, and if they are unable to, the maternal grandmother will pick her up.
- She has been attending your centre for 1 year and you have had no other concerns about her during this time whatsoever.

Case Study 4 – Caleb

- Caleb is a 5-year-old boy who attends your pre-school 4 days per week (Mon-Thu)
- Today (Monday) you notice a bruise on the child's forehead, approximately the size of a 50-cent piece. Caleb did not have this bruise when he was at the centre last week.
- You mention the bruise to Caleb and he says, "*Daddy was very angry today because I wasn't getting ready for kindy*". You got a cold cloth to place on Caleb's forehead and whilst doing this, he said, "*Daddy pushed me on the wall, I hit my head*". "*I cried and told Mummy and she said, 'That's what happens when you don't get ready for kindy'*".
- Whilst telling you this, Caleb was upset and crying. You decide to consult with your Room Coordinator who suggests you all meet with the Director to discuss the situation.

Case Study 5 – Alice

- Alice is a 4 ½ year old girl who attends your centre 5 days a week. She has two older siblings, Rosalie who is 10, and Emmett who is 14 years old.
- You are aware that Alice is left with her older siblings every morning as the parents leave for work at 6:00am.
- Emmett drops Alice off to pre-school every day on his way to school. You are concerned that he is only 14 and has too much responsibility in the morning, getting both Rosalie and Alice ready for school and pre-school and dropping them off to their respective schools.
- You have spoken with your Director in the past about this, and the Director has contacted the parents with her concerns on a number of occasions.
- On the last occasion (4 weeks ago) the mother advised that the situation will be coming to an end soon as she will be working night shifts and will be available to care for the children in the morning and drop them at school and pre-school.
- This is still going on 4 weeks later, and you are getting more concerned about Emmett's ability to continue to care for his siblings every day. You speak with your Director again.

Case Study 6 – Jake

- Jake is an 18-month-old boy who attends your centre 2 days per week.
- He has been attending for 2 months and in the last week you have noticed a significant change in his presentation.
- He has had head lice for the last 2 days and it doesn't seem to have been treated as it is getting worse and he is constantly scratching his head. His clothes are smelly and you noticed that paint

from yesterday has not been wiped off his hands or face and his sheets have mould on them and smell damp.

- You know that Jake attended a nearby centre 6 months ago and his mother told you that she moved him because she thought the staff were “*too nose y and asked too many questions*”.
- In the last week, during drop off time, you notice the mother is also unkempt and is unwilling to make eye contact with you, just dropping Jake off and leaving in a hurry.

KEY RESOURCES

- Case Studies
- **KTS Support line** for Non-Government Mandatory Reporters **Phone 2800 772 479**
- **New Legislation** http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/new_legislation
- **Keep Them Safe Factsheets** – www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/resources/factsheets

SESSION 5 OVERVIEW OF MANDATORY REPORTER GUIDE (MRG)

OVERVIEW

This session provides information about the Mandatory Reporter Guide. You will be show the steps to complete the MRG and how to interpret the results.

KEY POINTS

- MRG is an interactive online guide for mandatory reporters to determine whether their concerns about a child or young person meet the risk of significant harm threshold.
- Important to remember that the MRG is not a replacement for professional judgment of professionals, but a tool to support your decision making.
- The MRG is available on the Keep Them Safe website and the Community Services Website and you don't need a username or password to access the site.

STEPS TO COMPLETING THE MRG

- Step 1 – Choose a Decision Tree
- Step 2 – Answer the questions using the definitions carefully. Remember the tips to using the definitions.
- Step 3 – Continue to answer YES or NO to questions based on your reading of the definitions until you reach the MRG Final Decision Point
- Step 4 – Depending on the Final Decision recommended by the MRG, either make a report to Community Services or seek additional assistance and support from your supervisor, the Keep Them Safe support line or other professionals.

KEY RESOURCES

- **Mandatory Reporter Guide (online)**
<http://sdm.community.nsw.gov.au/mrg/app/summary.page;jsessionid=7BAB11C929AF09148A32C070A058FC59>
- **Mandatory Reporter Guide (PDF)**
http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/reporting_children_at_risk/mandatory_reporter_guide
- **Mandatory Reporter Guide presentation (CRC) - PDF**
http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/reporting_children_at_risk/mandatory_reporter_guide
- **Community Services Website**
http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/welcome_to_community_services.html
- **KTS Support line for Non-Government Mandatory Reporters** Phone 2800 772 479

- **Keep Them Safe Factsheet** – www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/resources/factsheets

SESSION 6

USE OF MRG WITH CASE STUDIES

OVERVIEW

In this session, 2 Case Studies will be used in depth to go through the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) and determine whether the concerns would be sufficient to meet the ROSH threshold for a report to Community Services.

KEY POINTS

Case Study 4 – Caleb

- Caleb is a 5-year-old boy who attends your pre-school 4 days per week (Mon-Thu)
- Today (Monday) you notice a bruise on the child's forehead, approximately the size of a 50-cent piece. Caleb did not have this bruise when he was at the centre last week.
- You mention the bruise to Caleb and he says, *"Daddy was very angry today because I wasn't getting ready for kindy"*. You got a cold cloth to place on Caleb's forehead and whilst doing this, he said, *"Daddy pushed me on the wall, I hit my head"*. *"I cried and told Mummy and she said, 'That's what happens when you don't get ready for kindy'"*.
- Whilst telling you this, Caleb was upset and crying. You decide to consult with your Room Co-ordinator who suggests you all meet with the Director to discuss the situation.

Case Study 5 – Alice

- Alice is a 4 ½ year old girl who attends your centre 5 days a week. She has two older siblings, Rosalie who is 10, and Emmett who is 14 years old.
- You are aware that Alice is left with her older siblings every morning as the parents leave for work at 6:00am.
- Emmett drops Alice off to pre-school every day on his way to school. You are concerned that he is only 14 and has too much responsibility in the morning, getting both Rosalie and Alice ready for school and pre-school and dropping them off to their respective schools.
- You have spoken with your Director in the past about this, and the Director has contacted the parents with her concerns on a number of occasions.
- On the last occasion (4 weeks ago) the mother advised that the situation will be coming to an end soon as she will be working night shifts and will be available to care for the children in the morning and drop them at school and pre-school.
- This is still going on 4 weeks later, and you are getting more concerned about Emmett's ability to continue to care for his siblings every day. You speak with your Director again.

KEY RESOURCES

- Case Studies from Session 5 (Caleb and Alice)
- MRG Decision Trees (Handout)
- **Mandatory Reporter Guide (online)**

<http://sdm.community.nsw.gov.au/mrg/app/summary.page;jsessionid=7BAB11C929AF09148A32C070A058FC59>

- **Mandatory Reporter Guide (PDF)**

http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/reporting_children_at_risk/mandatory_reporter_guide

- **Mandatory Reporter Guide presentation (CRC) - PDF**

http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/reporting_children_at_risk/mandatory_reporter_guide

- **Community Services Website**

http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/welcome_to_community_services.html

- **KTS Support line for Non-Government Mandatory Reporters** Phone 1800 772 479

SESSION 7

INFORMATION EXCHANGE & INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

OVERVIEW

This session provides brief information around changes to the legislation about Information Exchange and the importance of Interagency Collaboration.

KEY POINTS

- **Changes to legislation** about Information Exchange resulted from Wood's recommendation that agencies should take on a greater role and responsibility in supporting children and families and that Non Government organisations should be equal partners with government in the delivery of services to children, young people and their families.
- The changes to the legislation mean that agencies can now exchange information about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of children and young people more freely.
- **Information Exchange can only occur under certain conditions.** Information must relate to the safety, welfare and wellbeing of a child or young person. The information could assist the agency to make decisions or undertake an assessment or plan, initiate or conduct an investigation, provide a service, or manage any risk to the child or young person.
- **Types of information that can be exchanged** are: the child or young person's circumstances or history, information on a parent or family member, or people having a significant or relevant relationship with a child or young person, or information about an agency's dealings with the child or young person or their family.
- **Why is Interagency Collaboration important?** – provides a whole picture of a child or young person and their family. Agencies often hold small parts of information which on their own may not constitute ROSH, but together with information held by others may be considerably more serious.

GROUP DISCUSSION 1

In your workplace, under what circumstances might you request information, or provide information to other agencies about a child?

GROUP DISCUSSION 2

What are some of the benefits of collaborating, with, and sharing information about the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children with other agencies? What are some of the challenges? What are some strategies to overcome the challenges?

INFORMATION EXCHANGE CHECKLIST

- Consider the information you have and what additional information you may need
- Consult with your supervisor
- Ensure that the request meets with best practice
- Document the process and consult with your supervisor
- Seek the information
- Consider all of the information
- Document your progress
- Take action as required

KEY RESOURCES

- **Interagency Guidelines**

http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/kts/guidelines/info_exchange/introduction.htm

- **ACWA - Guidelines for Information Exchange for NGOs - 29 January 2010**

http://www.acwa.asn.au/wood_commission.php

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES & LINKS

Department of Premier and Cabinet

www.dpc.nsw.gov.au

Human Services Network (HSNet)

<https://www.hsnet.nsw.gov.au/login/ServiceLink.aspx>

KTS Support line for Non-Government Mandatory Reporters

Phone 2800 772 479

- The NSW Government has established a telephone support line to assist NGOs with the changes under Keep Them Safe (KTS), specifically with the introduction of the new reporting threshold.
- It is called the KTS Support Line and is a transitional service for the first six months of the new system that will be reviewed to identify future need.
- The KTS Support Line will operate 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays), from 25 January 2010. The phone number is **1800 772 479**.
- The Support Line is for mandatory reporters in NGOs (including non-government schools) and General Practitioners. It will provide assistance in using the new Mandatory Reporter Guide, in determining whether a matter meets the significant harm threshold, and in understanding the changes under KTS. It will also assist NGO mandatory reporters with referral pathways for cases that fall below the threshold, including providing information about how to access HSNET (the Human Services Network Service Link Directory) and details for referral services.
- It is difficult to predict the demand for the service, particularly in its early stages. The aim is to answer calls within three minutes; however, there may be some delays if the demand is greater than anticipated and callers are encouraged to be patient.

NSW Department of Education and Training

www.det.nsw.edu.au

NSW Department of Health

www.health.nsw.gov.au

Association of Children's Welfare Agencies

www.acwa.asn.au

Council of Social Service of NSW

www.ncoss.org.au

Australian Council of Social Services

www.acoss.org.au

Education Centre Against Violence

www.ecav.health.nsw.gov.au

