



Assessing a report of risk of significant harm at the Child Protection Helpline

Who is responsible for assessment?

Section 30 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* identifies Community Services as the agency responsible for the assessment of reports that a child or young person is suspected of being a risk of significant harm:

On receipt of a report that a child or young person is suspected of being at risk of significant harm:

(a) the Director-General is to make such investigations and assessment as the Director-General considers necessary to determine whether the child or young person is at risk of significant harm, or

(b) the Director-General may decide to take no further action if, on the basis of the information provided, the Director-General considers that there is insufficient reason to believe that the child or young person is at risk of significant harm.

What is involved in an assessment?

Assessment is a holistic and ongoing process which involves analysing information and using professional judgement to come to a conclusion.

Assessing a report that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm will involve analysing available information and, where necessary, gathering further information to apply the Child Protection Helpline Structured Decision Making (SDM) screening and response priority tools.

This first stage of assessment will occur without direct contact with the child, young person or family, unless they are making the report or requesting services.

The Child Protection Helpline caseworker will consider the reported concerns about the child, young person or unborn child, in conjunction with any available child protection history information in Community Services client electronic database (KiDS – Key Information and Directory System).

When considering child protection history for the purposes of assessing a report the following information may be of particular relevance:

- previous episodes of abuse and neglect and any patterns arising from these
- previous or current Children's Court Orders and placements in out-of-home care
- previous assessments and actions by Community Services caseworkers
- previous assessments and actions by Child Wellbeing Units and mandatory reporters
- any complicating parent or carer issues, such as domestic violence, parental substance misuse or mental health concerns.

Based on the information received, the Child Protection Helpline will determine the most appropriate action.

This can include one of the following:

OUTCOME	DESCRIPTION
Risk of significant harm	The reported matter meets the threshold of risk of significant harm (ROSH) according to SDM screening tool and requires a response by Community Services. The response times are: < 24 hours < 72 hours < 10 days
Non risk of significant harm - close	The reported matter does not meet the threshold of ROSH and the child/ren and/or young person(s) do not have an open case plan at any Community Services Business Unit.
Non Risk of Significant Harm – Brighter Futures potential	The reported matter does not meet ROSH. However, there is the potential for a Brighter Futures referral.
Reports that do not require screening but do require a Community Services response in line with relevant policy	Child abduction (Hague) Youth Protocol (Commonwealth Government) Disaster Welfare Request for assistance
Other reports that may require an additional response by Community Services	Allegation involves Community Services employee or authorised carer Sibling safety following a child death Joint Investigation Response Team referral required Unauthorised carer Family Court matter Case management issues for child/young person in care of Director-General or under parental responsibility of the Minister Case management issues for open and allocated child protection cases Crisis Response Team action required Critical incident/allegation report
Non ROSH - Contact Forward	The reported matter does not meet risk of significant harm AND the child/ren or young person(s) has an open Community Services case plan and this includes multiple reports (that is, the information is already known).

How are reports assessed?

The SDM screening tool guides caseworkers through a structured analysis of all the information available to them about a child or young person (including any family history that may be recorded on KiDS) to determine whether a matter meets the threshold of risk of significant harm.

The information provided to the Child Protection Helpline by mandatory reporters is critical to ensuring accurate assessments of 'risk of significant harm' through this screening tool.

Also see: [Information required by the Child Protection Helpline](#).

For further information:

- Visit Community Services website: www.community.nsw.gov.au
- Visit *Keep Them Safe* website: www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au
- Call the Child Protection Helpline: 132 111 or 133 627 (mandatory reporters)

