



Education &
Communities



Child protection awareness training



Child Protection Awareness Training

Introduction

This self-paced module provides child protection awareness professional learning for any person who has a role in working with children and young people in government schools

Outcomes

Completion of this course will increase your understandings about:

- the purpose and application of current legislation to the agencies that have a role in protecting children and young people

Activities

You will also participate in a variety of activities to reinforce your knowledge and understanding in each section. It is necessary to complete all of the activities in each section of the module.

Introduction

Support

Situations involving child abuse and neglect can be stressful for all those involved. You may have had some personal experiences that may cause you distress when working through this course. You may find that you need to contact a support person at this time to help you work through your feelings in a healthy and constructive way.

Introduction

Content overview

Section 1: Legislation, agencies and policies – identifies each piece of legislation and explains its purpose and application to the agencies that have a role in protecting children and young people.

Section 2: Responsibilities – outlines the responsibilities to report concerns about possible risk of harm to a child or young person or possible misconduct of other people.

Section 3: Professional practice – explains the requirement to provide a safe environment for children and young people in teaching

Proceed to Section 1 →

Section 1

LEGISLATION, AGENCIES AND POLICIES

Section 1: Legislation, agencies and policies

Definitions – Child and young person

A child is a person under the age of sixteen years. A young person is aged sixteen or seventeen years.

Section 1: Legislation, agencies and policies

Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998

Community Services responds to reports of possible risk of harm to children and young people

Children and Young Person (Care and Protection) Act 1998

The Ombudsman's Office oversees systems to protect children

Children Legislation Amendment (Wood Inquiry Recommendations) Act 2009

The Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) screens prospective child related employees

Section 2

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCRIPTURE TEACHERS (ALSO CALLED “EMPLOYEES”)

Section 2: Responsibilities

Identifying and reporting risk of harm

As an employee working with children and young people, you are in a position to observe their safety, welfare or wellbeing. Because you are in a position of trust, a child or young person may also choose to disclose to you that they are being mistreated. Keep in mind that siblings, especially babies or young children, may also be at risk and need to be reported.

Your role is to:

- be aware of the indicators of risk of harm
- report your concerns about risk of harm to your principal
- fulfil your duty of care to children and young people, within your role
- provide support to children and young people, as appropriate to your role
- plan for a safe environment in all relevant activities
- participate in relevant child protection professional learning

Section 2: Responsibilities

Indicators of risk of harm

- the child's or young person's **basic physical or psychological needs are not being met** or are at risk of not being met
- the parents or other caregivers have not arranged and are unable or unwilling to arrange for the child or young person to receive **necessary medical care**
- the child or young person is at risk of **educational neglect**
- the child or young person has been, or is at risk of being **physically or sexually abused or ill-treated**
- the child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious **physical or psychological harm**
- a parent or other caregiver has behaved in such a way towards the child or young person that the child or young person has suffered or is at risk of suffering serious **psychological harm**
- a parent has behaved in such a way before the birth of a child that the child may be at risk of **significant harm after his or her birth**
- the child or young person is at risk of **cumulative harm**, when abusive and/or negative behaviour form a pattern that is repeated over time.



Case study 1: Annie

Three students in Year 4 told me this morning that Annie, a student in the class next door, has been stealing sandwiches from their bags. They said that she's been doing this for weeks, even though they have told her to stop.

One of the students also told me that he has seen Annie going through the neighbourhood garbage bins after school, that Annie's father is an alcoholic and that he doesn't think she has a mother.

I've noticed her hanging around other kids' bags when the bell rings for assembly in the morning. She doesn't look healthy and she's very thin.

I am now very worried about her and I think I need to inform the principal.

Section 2: Responsibilities

How do you decide if you need to report risk of harm?

Keep the following points in mind:

- you must have current concerns for the safety, welfare and wellbeing of a child or young person
- the circumstances of risk of harm must be present
- while the Act does not make it mandatory for you to report suspected risk of significant harm to young people (age 16 and 17) to Community Services, the NSW Department of Education and Communities requires all staff to report to their principal, who will determine if a report needs to be made to Community Services.



How do you make a report?



If you have reasonable grounds to suspect risk of harm to a child or young person tell your principal,

It is the role of the principal, to make a formal report to Community Services if they believe there is suspected risk of significant harm. You will be required to provide them with all the relevant information to assist in that process.

If you are unsure about your grounds for concern, discuss this confidentially with your principal.

What is reportable conduct?

There are clear definitions regarding what is acceptable and unacceptable conduct towards children and young people. It is essential that you understand the professional boundaries regarding your conduct and the conduct of others.

Under the *NSW Ombudsman Act 1974*:

- any **sexual offence**, or **sexual misconduct**, committed against, with or in the presence of a child (including a child pornography offence)
- any **assault**, **ill-treatment** or **neglect** of a child or young person
- any behaviour that causes **psychological harm** to a child or young person, whether or not, in any case, with the consent of the child or young person.



What is not reportable conduct?

Reportable conduct does not extend to conduct that is reasonable for the purposes of the discipline, management or care of children or young persons, having regard to their age, maturity, health or other characteristics and to any relevant codes of conduct or professional standards.

Examples of conduct that would not constitute reportable conduct include touching a child or young person in order to attract their attention, to guide a child or young person or to comfort a distressed child or young person, a teacher raising their voice in order to attract attention or to restore order in the classroom, and conduct that is established to be accidental.

Case study: Risk of physical harm

A teacher is in the staff room at the end of the school day. A student comes to the door in an angry state. He says that his teacher stood in the doorway of the classroom to prevent his class from leaving at the end of the day. The student complains that when he tried to push past the teacher to get out of the doorway the teacher put his arm out to stop him and hit him on the face. The teacher observes a red mark on the student's right cheek.

Q. What would you do if you were the teacher to whom the student complains?



Model answer: risk of physical harm

You must immediately report the allegation by the student to the principal. You do not have to collect more information and you must keep the matter confidential. You must not discuss it with the teacher.

Similar situations can occur in classrooms. Clear routines must be established for students about the procedures for packing up and leaving the classroom in an orderly manner at the end of the day. If these are not established, students may try to leave all at once and this can be a dangerous situation. It is not appropriate to physically restrain a student who is attempting to leave the room without permission unless there is an immediate concern for their safety or the safety of the teacher or other students.

In this situation the student is alleging that he has been hit and there is evidence of a hit. This must be reported so that the truth of the situation can be established.

You can advise the student that you are going to report the matter to the principal and can ask that he accompany you to see the principal. You must also consider whether or not the student requires first aid attention. It is the principal's role to notify the Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate and seek advice about the matter. The Principal may be asked to inform the parents, clarify the allegation with the student or other students and, if required, arrange further support for the student. As there is an alleged injury, the principal could contact the Child Wellbeing Unit if the student is a child or young person.

Case study: risk of psychological harm

A parent complains to a teacher that a female teacher who teaches a Year 5 class emotionally abuses her son. She alleges that the teacher targets male students and screams abuse at them in class, ridicules them in front of the whole class and places them on detention for not completing homework. The parent complains that her son is afraid of getting questions wrong and is becoming hysterical when trying to do his homework, cannot sleep and is fearful of going to school each day.

Q. What would you do if you were the teacher to whom the parent complains?



Model answer: risk of psychological harm

You must immediately report the allegation by the parent to the principal. You do not have to collect more information and you must keep the matter confidential. You must not discuss it with the teacher.

The issues of concern in this matter are the nature of the alleged conduct towards a particular group of students and the alleged affect on this particular student. While a teacher may need to occasionally raise their voice to restore order in a classroom or to get his/her attention, verbal abuse, ridicule or intimidation of students of any age is not acceptable. Such conduct may be particularly harmful if it targets one particular student or group of students.

You can advise the parent that you are going to report the matter to the principal and can ask that they accompany you to see the principal so that they can make their complaint first hand. It is the principal's role to notify the Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate and seek advice about the ongoing management of the situation which may include the implementation of risk management strategies and the gathering of further relevant information.

Case study: risk of sexual harm

A casual teacher, who teaches senior students in a secondary school, has noticed that a female teacher of English has given gifts of a personal nature, including chocolates and jewellery, to a Year 12 female student who is 17 years old. Another senior student tells the casual teacher that she has seen the teacher of English with the 17 year old student at a music concert last Saturday evening and that she knows the teacher makes a lot of telephone calls to the student's mobile during the day and also sends her email messages when she is at home.

Q. What would you do if you were the teacher to whom the student complains?



Model answer: risk of sexual harm

You must immediately report your concerns to the principal. You do not have to collect more information and you must keep the matter confidential. You must not discuss it with the teacher or the student involved.

There are a number of issues in this case study that are concerning. The gifts appear to be of a personal nature. There appear to be many phone calls and email messages. There also appears to have been a social outing. The teacher appears to be targeting one particular student for attention.

It is not appropriate for a teacher to take a personal interest in one student, give personal gifts, make numerous telephone calls, send email messages and accompany the student to social events.

It is important that teachers establish and maintain appropriate boundaries in their interactions with students. This is also relevant if a teacher has a pastoral role such as year adviser or is acting as a mentor for a student. It is important that it is made clear that they are taking a professional rather than a personal interest in any student.

If there is an established pastoral role or mentoring program the principal will be aware of this and will provide this contextual information when notifying the matter to the Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate. As the concern is of an inappropriate relationship that may be of a sexual nature by a teacher with a young person, the principal should contact the Child Wellbeing Unit.



Barriers to responding to possible risk of harm

We all hold many **attitudes** that affect the way we behave towards children and young people and what we think is acceptable and unacceptable.

Some community attitudes may also minimise the seriousness of maltreatment of children and young people. The following attitudes can act as barriers to responding to possible risk of harm:

- **minimising the seriousness of child abuse**
- **discounting the seriousness of child abuse**
- **fears about responding to disclosure**

Remember

It is important to remember that child abuse is a crime and that adults have a responsibility to protect children and young people.

Barriers to responding to possible risk of harm

Minimising the seriousness of child abuse

Children and young people rarely tell an adult that they have been, or are being abused in a direct way. They are more likely to give hints or little pieces of information to see what the reaction is. Depending on the reaction, they will either remain silent or disclose.

Many children and young people do not disclose and/or do not get protection from adults in their lives. This often happens if adults do not focus on the child or young person and discount the evidence they see. Instead, priority is given to the needs and accounts of adults over those of children and young people.

People respond to abuse of children and young people in different ways. This response often reflects commonly held beliefs or myths or their own personal experiences. Such beliefs and experiences may lead some people to denying the existence of harm or risk of harm, particularly in their circle of family, friends, neighbours and colleagues. Others may recognise that the abuse of children and young people is a problem in society, but feel helpless to do anything about it, feeling any intervention should be left to 'experts', or that intervention does 'more harm than good'.

Barriers to responding to possible risk of harm

Discounting the seriousness of child abuse

Some statements are typically used as a means to discount the seriousness of actual or potential harm to children and young people. Adults and workers often use these statements to give themselves permission not to get involved in protecting a child or young person.



Statements which discount the seriousness of child abuse	
Rationalisation of personal experiences of abuse	'This happened to me too, but it didn't do me any harm. I really deserved it at the time.' 'I've done something like this too. Does this make me an abuser?'
Definition of abuse	'This situation is not very good but it isn't actually abuse.'
Worker's distress leads to denial	'This is too horrible to think about.'
Parent focus	'S/he really loves them, but is under so much stress.'
Culture	'Parents are entitled to discipline as they see fit. It's not up to me to judge.'
Attitudes to children and young people	'This is just a very naughty, provocative child.' 'Adolescents are always difficult and need strict discipline.'
Trivialising the effects on the child or young person	'It's not that bad – she'll have forgotten all about it by dinner time.' 'It's normal for children to go through this.'
Racism and stereotyping	'All Kooris/Greeks do this. It's normal for them.'
Class stereotypes	'But this is a respectable family.' 'This is what you can expect from disadvantaged families.'
Worker's inexperience, lack of information and support	'I know it's pretty terrible, but what can I do about it?'
Workload stress	'If I define this one as abuse then I'll open a Pandora's box.'
'Professional' distance	'This isn't my business.' 'I'm not trained to deal with this.'
Needs of the system taking precedence over needs of the child or young person	'This child is already creating too many problems.'
Defeatism	'The damage is already done, and intervention will distress the family and may make it even worse.'

Barriers to responding to possible risk of harm

Fears about responding to disclosure

Some people may be concerned about a child or young person at risk of harm but may have fears about suspected cases of child abuse being reported to Community Services. These fears may be based on:

- media reports they have heard about or read in newspapers, where it appeared that the child or young person was not protected after a report to Community Services
- fears that they may be wrong
- fears that the family may be broken up
- fears that reporting will damage the relationship between them and the family
- fears that the child or young person may be removed from his or her home
- fears that they may have to go to court
- fears for their own safety
- fears that the situation may get worse, and
- a general mistrust of welfare agencies.

Section 2: Responsibilities

A child-focused response to disclosure

If a child or young person discloses directly to you that he or she is being abused, it is important:

- to listen to the child or young person and acknowledge that it is hard to talk about what is happening to him or her
- to be aware of the child or young person's cultural and linguistic background and how this might impact on disclosure
- to be aware of your own emotions in relation to what the child or young person is telling you, and keep those emotions under control
- to be prepared to listen and support a child or young person when he or she tells you about an event or behaviours that indicate risk of harm
- not to draw conclusions, engage others in discussion, ask probing questions, accuse parents/carers or discuss the circumstances of the disclosure with parents or carers
- to use a calm reassuring tone and talk at the child or young person's level
- to tell the child or young person you believe him or her
- not to make promises you cannot keep - especially that you won't tell anyone
- to offer support to the child or young person
- to avoid expressing doubt, judgment or shock
- to trust your judgment and translate your concern into action - think of the child or young person.

Section 2: Responsibilities



They are:

- that it is not his or her fault - it is never the child or young person's fault
- that it was right to tell - "I am glad you told me"
- that other children have been in this situation - he or she is not alone
- that it is not acceptable for adults to harm children or young people - no matter what.

It is also important to tell the child or young person that you will need to talk to other people whose job it is to help children and young people to be safe.

(Source: *NSW Child Protection Council 1998* in Cameron and West, 2001.)



Acting on suspicion

If you suspect abuse, but the child or young person has not disclosed to anyone, you need to be aware that the child or young person may be experiencing emotional distress. You need to approach the child or young person in a caring and sensitive way and assure him or her that you are willing to listen and to help if there is a problem.

Responding to your belief that harm to a child or young person has occurred, or that there is a risk of harm, can be the first important step in stopping the harm and preventing further harm from occurring.

Section 2: Responsibilities

Remember your role

It is essential that you are aware of the following:

- it is not your role to investigate or prove that an injury is non-accidental, probe for details, contact parents or carers, take the child or young person home or arrange medical examinations
- it is not your role to seek corroboration of the child or young person's story
- it is not appropriate to question a child or young person about the details of the abuse. Community Services will determine what investigation is required. It is vital to minimise the need for the child or young person to retell the details. Also, legal proceedings may be jeopardised if you ask investigative questions
- you do not discuss your feelings about the abuse or the perpetrator in front of the child or young person
- you do not make promises to the child or young person that you cannot keep, for example "you will be safe now" or "this will never happen again"
- it is not appropriate to indiscriminately discuss the circumstances of the child or young person

Section 2: Responsibilities

Remember your role (continued)

To minimise the effects of abuse, a child or young person needs:

- the abuse to stop
- a specific help line: people who are available in a practical way
- people who understand his or her behaviour
- people who respect his or her rights and will attend to his or her needs
- help to see that he or she is not to blame
- opportunities to safely express his or her feelings and make sense of things
- optimism about his or her future
- consistency between service providers.



Remember

All employees are entitled to support and advice from their supervisor in fulfilling their responsibilities in the area of child protection in an ethical and confidential manner. Do not hesitate to ask for any assistance that you require.

A child or young person is constantly sick and does not seem to receive adequate food, shelter or clothing.



The child's or young person's needs are not being met or are at risk of not being met.



The parent or other carers have not arranged and are not willing to arrange for the child or young person to receive necessary medical care.



The child or young person is at risk of educational neglect.



The child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, physically or sexually abused or ill-treated.



The child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm.



A parent or carer has behaved in such a way towards a child or young person that the child or young person has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, serious psychological harm.

A child or young person frequently has bruising on her legs and marks which show the shape of a buckle.

- The child's or young person's needs are not being met or are at risk of not being met.
- The parent or other carers have not arranged and are not willing to arrange for the child or young person to receive necessary medical care.
- The child or young person is at risk of educational neglect.
- The child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, physically or sexually abused or ill-treated.
- The child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm.
- A parent or carer has behaved in such a way towards a child or young person that the child or young person has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, serious psychological harm.

An older child is constantly left by his parents inappropriately on his own, without supervision.

- The child's or young person's needs are not being met or are at risk of not being met.
 - The parent or other carers have not arranged and are not willing to arrange for the child or young person to receive necessary medical care.
 - The child or young person is at risk of educational neglect.
 - The child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, physically or sexually abused or ill-treated.
 - The child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm.
 - A parent or carer has behaved in such a way towards a child or young person that the child or young person has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, serious psychological harm.
-

A parent has warned you to be careful in dealing with her six year old son as she is convinced he is evil and is 'the spawn of the devil'.

- The child's or young person's needs are not being met or are at risk of not being met.
- The parent or other carers have not arranged and are not willing to arrange for the child or young person to receive necessary medical care.
- The child or young person is at risk of educational neglect.
- The child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, physically or sexually abused or ill-treated.
- The child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm.
- A parent or carer has behaved in such a way towards a child or young person that the child or young person has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, serious psychological harm.

During the past year a child has had an unexplained dislocated elbow and on two occasions, a sprained wrist. He is now absent with a twisted ankle.

- The child's or young person's needs are not being met or are at risk of not being met.
- The parent or other carers have not arranged and are not willing to arrange for the child or young person to receive necessary medical care.
- The child or young person is at risk of educational neglect.
- The child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, physically or sexually abused or ill-treated.
- The child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm.
- A parent or carer has behaved in such a way towards a child or young person that the child or young person has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, serious psychological harm.

In a story writing activity an eight year old child has shown detailed knowledge of sexual acts. When asked about the story he said it is a 'secret'.

- The child's or young person's needs are not being met or are at risk of not being met.
- The parent or other carers have not arranged and are not willing to arrange for the child or young person to receive necessary medical care.
- The child or young person is at risk of educational neglect.
- The child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, physically or sexually abused or ill-treated.
- The child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm.
- A parent or carer has behaved in such a way towards a child or young person that the child or young person has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, serious psychological harm.

An older child tells you that her seven year old stepbrother has not been enrolled at a school.

- The child's or young person's needs are not being met or are at risk of not being met.
- The parent or other carers have not arranged and are not willing to arrange for the child or young person to receive necessary medical care.
- The child or young person is at risk of educational neglect.
- The child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, physically or sexually abused or ill-treated.
- The child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm.
- A parent or carer has behaved in such a way towards a child or young person that the child or young person has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, serious psychological harm.

An older child tells you that her parents are constantly fighting and last night her mother had to be taken to hospital after a fight with her father. She says she is scared to go home.



The child's or young person's needs are not being met or are at risk of not being met.



The parent or other carers have not arranged and are not willing to arrange for the child or young person to receive necessary medical care.



The child or young person is at risk of educational neglect.



The child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, physically or sexually abused or ill-treated.



The child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm.



A parent or carer has behaved in such a way towards a child or young person that the child or young person has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, serious psychological harm.

A young person who is constantly in trouble for aggressive behavior towards female students tells you that his father has a gun at home and uses it to keep his mother under control.

- The child's or young person's needs are not being met or are at risk of not being met.
- The parent or other carers have not arranged and are not willing to arrange for the child or young person to receive necessary medical care.
- The child or young person is at risk of educational neglect.
- The child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, physically or sexually abused or ill-treated.
- The child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm.
- A parent or carer has behaved in such a way towards a child or young person that the child or young person has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, serious psychological harm.

Section 3

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Section 3: Professional practice

Defining child-focused practice

Child-focused practice has two essential components:

- The practice is based around a child-centred belief that every child or young person has the right to a safe passage through childhood and the right to grow in an environment free from harm.
- The child's needs and welfare are the primary concern and the primary focus of practice. Professional knowledge and practice need to be examined in terms of their potential for furthering the best interests of children and young people.

If we are not child-centred:

- it is easier to lose sight of the child or young person in our practice
- there is less chance of effecting change for children and young people
- it is difficult to know if we have produced effective interventions.

Section 3: Professional practice

Defining child-focused practice (continued)

Child-focused practice includes:

- listening to the child or young person
- believing the child or young person: being aware that children and young people rarely lie about harm or risk of harm
- respect
- age-appropriate responses
- empathy
- focusing on the child's or young person's needs
- the provision of accurate information to the child or young person
- ensuring the child or young person is able to participate in decision making about his or her future
- maintaining appropriate boundaries
- addressing individual differences such as special needs and culture
- ensuring that services are relevant and accessible to children and young people, and that they are child-friendly in focus.

Section 3: Professional practice

Professional judgement

The legislation makes it clear that teachers are able to use reasonable conduct for the discipline, management or care of children and young people. It is important then to understand what **reasonable conduct** means.

Teachers continually use their professional judgement to decide on the best strategy in any given situation.

It is clear that employees, particularly teachers, may take reasonable action to exercise effective classroom management and discipline. This includes actions such as reasonably restraining a student for the safety of that student or others, comforting a distressed student, or raising their voice to restore order with a group of students.

Teachers may often be placed in a range of situations where they are unfamiliar with students, school or campus routines. They are often required to respond very quickly to manage difficult situations, and it is important to understand what is expected in these circumstances.

Case study: leaving the classroom without permission

A casual teacher is teaching a Year 9 English class on the last lesson on Friday afternoon.

The teacher she is substituting for has left some written work that she wants the class to complete before an assessment task scheduled next week. A group of students – Dion, Shayne, Mohammed and Nathan – have not settled down to the task and have not followed her repeated requests for them to get on with their work.

She reminds them again that they must complete this work for the assessment task next week and that they must sit down and not disturb other students.

Dion replies that the work is a joke and that he is not going to do it. He loudly pushes the desk away with his foot so that it pushes into the chair of the student in front of him and disturbs that student.

The other three students laugh.

The teacher shouts at them that they are thoughtless, lazy and that she is going to report them for their misbehaviour. Dion replies that he doesn't care and that he is going home and moves towards the doorway.



Q1. What would you do if you were the teacher in this situation?

Q2. What could you do to prevent a situation like this?

What would you do if you were the teacher in this situation?

In this situation it is important that you do not try to physically prevent Dion from leaving the room. Do not try to stand in the doorway to stop him leaving as you may come into physical contact with him and as he is already angry he may think you are trying to hit him. Calmly ask him to go back to his desk and also let him know that you will have to report him if he leaves without permission, but do not try to physically force him.

If he does leave the classroom, send someone to report to the main office or staffroom that he has left the room without permission. If he resumes his seat, try to find out what the problem is and perhaps offer an alternative activity that the group can work on together.

What could you do to prevent a situation like this?

It is possible that the disruptive students were not able to complete the set task or that it is unsuitable for that time of day. You may decide to sit with the group to get them started on the task or provide an alternative task for them to complete. If they do get on with some work, it is important that you follow up on your earlier statement that you are going to report them for misbehaviour. You may reconsider this decision in light of their subsequent good behaviour, but they need to know what you are going to do before they leave at the end of the period.

Above all, remain calm. If you want some help you can send someone to get the head teacher to come to the classroom

Case Study: comforting a student

A female student falls in the playground while a teacher is on playground duty and grazes both her knees. She is crying and her friends are trying to comfort her.

Q1. What would you do if you were the teacher in this situation?



What would you do if you were the teacher in this situation?

In this situation it is quite acceptable for you to put your hand on the student's shoulder and calmly reassure her that she is going to be OK. Ask her to show you her injury so that you can assess how serious it is. Depending on your assessment of the injury, you can ask her to sit or lie quietly while you send for another staff member to come and help her to the sick bay, or if you think the graze is minor, once she has settled down you can ask a friend to go with her to sick bay. It is also good practice to make sure that the person responsible for the sick bay knows that the two students are there.

Case study: stopping a fight between students

A teacher is taking a Year 5 class. She has not taken this class before and does not know the names of all the students. She has noticed that there has been an argument brewing between two of the boys and that they have been exchanging insults throughout the day. Some of the other students have been encouraging them to fight.

Just before lunch she asks the class to pack up the books they have been using and put them on the shelves. The two boys cross paths and start hitting and punching each other. Some of the other students start yelling encouragement to them to continue the fight.



- Q1. What would you do if you were the teacher in this situation?**
- Q2. What could you do to prevent a situation like this?**

What would you do if you were the teacher in this situation?

In this situation it is important to take immediate action to safeguard the fighting students, the other students in the class and yourself. Do not take any action that risks your own safety. Send a reliable student to the front office or staff room for help if you think it is warranted. Calmly ask all the students to stand back and instruct them that they are not to call out to the fighting students.

Ask one of the students the names of the fighting boys and, using their names, firmly instruct them that they must stop fighting immediately. Repeat the instruction if they do not respond. If you think it is safe you may put your hand on the shoulders of one or both boys and pull them away from each other. While it is reasonable to physically restrain students in this situation, this restraint must be proportional to the risk of possible injury.

Once they stop fighting, they must be released from any restraint. Keep the students separated as much as possible and separated from any student who may continue to encourage fighting. When the bell for lunch has gone, dismiss the other students and take the two students who were fighting to your supervisor for the day.

As soon as possible after the incident, write a report detailing what happened, the time and place of the incident, the names of students involved, and the actions you took with reasons why, adding the names of student witnesses. Give the original to your supervisor and keep a copy for your own records.

What could you do to prevent a situation like this happening?

When you first noticed the students were having a disagreement that was being encouraged by other students, you may have intervened to find out their names, ask them what the problem was, and seek suggestions from them to resolve the argument at that time or to meet with them after class to resolve it. This can allow them both to save 'face' in front of their friends to find a 'win/win' solution.

If you find that you cannot help them to resolve the argument, then it is important that they understand that they must not carry on the argument during class and involve other students. If you find that one student is initiating the argument, it is important his behaviour is addressed and that the other is protected. Do not give them a message that they can fight it out after the class is over, but make it clear that fighting is not accepted in class or the school. If other students are interfering or encouraging them to fight, firmly instruct them that this is not acceptable. If any of them persist in the disagreement then report their misbehaviour and inform them that you are doing so.

Congratulations!

You have completed the child protection awareness training module

Acknowledgment

- This course was adapted from the Child Protection Awareness Training offered by the Department of Education and Communities.