

SEXUAL HEALTH IN PLAIN ENGLISH

GETTING HELP

Rights

Everybody has the right to have relationships and sex. Everyone has the right to make their own decisions about their body that are free from fear, force or pressure.

The laws about sex

There are some laws around sex designed to keep everyone safe. These laws are the same for all sexual relationships, regardless of sex or gender.

It is against the law:

- to do sexy things without consent
- for people in the same family to do sexy things together (it's only O.K. if they are an adult couple doing things together e.g.: parents, grandparents)
- for a carer/support worker/ therapist to have sex with the people they support
- to have sex with someone who is under the legal 'age to consent'. These ages vary across Australia. For state specific information about each state go to Youth Law Australia <https://yla.org.au/about-us/>

When to report a problem

People should always seek help for things that make them feel scared, worried or unsafe. A person's body can give good clues to tell when they are feeling scared, worried or unsafe. These body signs are called 'early warning signs' and, if a person feels unsafe, they must tell a trusted adult ([see the Protective Behaviours factsheet](#)). Nothing is ever so bad that a person can't tell someone. It is important to tell trusted adults and keep telling them until they listen and help.

Who to report a problem to

There are some good adults to report problems to. These adults, by law, have to help. They are mandated reporters, that means these helpers must help.

Mandated reporters might include people from:

- health care (doctors, nurses, paramedics)
- welfare (psychologists, social workers)
- education (teachers, aides)
- residential services (support staff, community housing)
- law (police)
- disability services (support and personal care workers, carers).

For information on mandatory reporting in the state/place you live in:

<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>



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Problems around sex, including sexual abuse or image-based abuse (when someone threatens to or shares private images of a person without their consent) should be reported. The reporting process may be different from state to state.

People can report a problem to:

- a support provider
- the police
- a person/institution through an advocate
- The National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline (To make a report, contact the Hotline on [1800 880 052](tel:1800880052) or send an email to: hotline@workfocus.com)

How to report a problem

For most people, the first person to go to when wanting to report a problem may be someone from their safety team (a trusted adult, parent, support worker). These people can help someone decide what to do ([see the Protective Behaviours factsheet](#)). Sometimes it might be necessary to talk to the police. Someone from the safety team should be able to help. If the first person you tell doesn't listen, keep telling people in your safety team until someone listens and helps. If the person with the problem feels confident to make a report themselves, they can contact the police on 131 444 Australia-wide.

For support people

It is important for parents, carers and support workers to set up an environment in which it is **O.K.** to talk about private body parts or sexual behaviour.

Empower people to be agents for their own safety by developing support networks that they can call upon during times when they feel unsafe. These networks can provide encouragement, assistance or action.

A personal network of trusted, helping adults needs to be reviewed regularly to ensure that:

- the adult is available
- the person still feels safe with that adult

Support workers may find themselves dealing with complex and sensitive personal relationship issues or dilemmas that have no easy answers. Support workers can do many things to become more comfortable in dealing with personal relationships.

They can:

- suggest taking time during staff or work meetings to discuss specific issues
- ask for relevant training
- learn more about healthy relationships, sexuality and sexual health.

There are many excellent books, videos and other resources that focus on sexuality and disability.

People with disability have a right to know about avenues for complaint if they believe they are victims of abuse or neglect. Cases of abuse and neglect can include physical, sexual, psychological, legal and civil abuse, restraint and restrictive practices, or financial abuse. It can also include the withholding of care and support that exposes an individual to harm.

When a support worker does not feel able to respond to a sexuality issue, it is important to acknowledge this and refer the matter to their manager. The manager can arrange for someone else to assist. Support workers should try to develop skills and confidence in responding to personal relationship issues.

Making a complaint

If someone with disability, wants to make a complaint, they or a support person can (assist them to) contact the NDIS commission. Click on this link

<https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/about/complaints>