



Child abuse and neglect position statement

1. Purpose

This position statement sets out the minimum responsibilities the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) considers nurses and midwives, employers, and governments should fulfil to meet their legal responsibilities in relation to child abuse and neglect.

2. Definitions

Child abuse or maltreatment refers to the physical and emotional mistreatment, sexual abuse, neglect, and negligent treatment of children, as well as to their commercial or other exploitation by a person in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.¹

Neglect includes both isolated incidents and a pattern of failure over time, by a parent or other carer, to provide for the development and wellbeing of the child – where they could do so – in health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter or safe living conditions.²

3. Context

Nurses and midwives play an important role in preventing, identifying and intervening in cases of child abuse and neglect and in the ongoing care, education and support of the children and their families.

Nurses and midwives have a duty of care to children, adolescents, young adults and families and statutory obligations under relevant state or territory laws for the mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect.³

4. Position

Nurse and midwife responsibilities

It is the position of the ANMF that:

1. Nurses and midwives working with children, adolescents, young adults and families should ensure they have the necessary skill to assess, identify and report any case of suspected child abuse or neglect and to implement early intervention strategies.³

Employer responsibilities

It is the position of the ANMF that:

2. Employers should bear the cost of legislated criminal history checks for nurses and midwives working with children.
3. Employers should support nurses and midwives to fulfil their mandatory reporting obligations by:

¹ World Health Organization. 2006. *Preventing child maltreatment: a guide to taking action and generating evidence*. World Health Organization and International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. World Health Organization. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/43499>.

² Ibid.

³ Australian Institute of Family Studies. 2017. *Mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect at* <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>.



- providing nurses and midwives with education about their legislative and organisational obligations to report child abuse and neglect
- having policies, protocols and reporting guidelines in place – including screening protocols – that support a culture of reporting when children, adolescents and young adults are at risk of abuse or neglect
- providing practical support and feedback to nurses and midwives who report child abuse and neglect and readily available counselling as needed.

Government responsibilities

It is the position of the ANMF that governments should:

4. Provide adequate funding for:

- education, training and support to parents identified as vulnerable or ‘at risk’ of perpetrating abuse or neglect.
- community education to raise awareness of the impact of child abuse and neglect and to promote and enhance the safety and welfare of children and young people
- services investigating child abuse and neglect.

5. Position statement management

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