



## Handling a Disclosure of Abuse

It is hoped that by having the recommended procedures in place, you will be in a position to react in the most appropriate way.

A disclosure of abuse by a member 18 years and older must be handled with the same sensitivity as that of a disclosure by a young person. With the consent of the victim, you must follow the same reporting procedures as with a young person under 18, as the alleged perpetrator may still be in a position to offend.

It is essential to bear the following points in mind:


- 1. The one thing you must not do is nothing.**
- 2. Never attempt to confront an alleged abuser.**

### Handling a Disclosure of Abuse

If a young person in your group discloses to you abuse/abuses perpetrated against him/her, you should:


- Listen openly without comment, do not interview;
- Stay calm. This may be difficult but it is important not to show an extreme reaction to what you are hearing;
- Avoid making personal assumptions and do not make any judgmental statements against the alleged perpetrator;
- Take what the young person is saying seriously;
- Acknowledge the risk taken by the young person in telling you;
- Reassure the young person that it is OK to tell you;
- Inform the young person of what your next step will be i.e. that you will have to get advice from an individual on the Welfare Committee and that you cannot guarantee that you will be able to keep it confidential as statutory bodies may have to be informed;
- Write a detailed account as soon as possible; this should be a private and confidential report available only to appropriate personnel within Gardai/Health Board. It should outline the following:
  - details of the child/parents/Legal Guardians etc.;
  - details of allegation/concern;
  - details of individual allegedly causing concern;
  - other agencies and or personnel involved with child;
  - details of any referrals;


- details of person reporting concern and completing report.


 Follow the procedure that your youth theatre has adopted in terms of reporting incidents to the authorities. This is a decision that should not be taken alone or without advice;


 Keep a record of your actions.


#### **You should not:**

 Inquire in detail about an alleged incident or incidents with the young person. This should only be done by the appropriate authority such as a Gardai or duty social worker. This protects the young person concerned and also protects the leader in the event of a criminal case being pursued;

 Ask leading or invasive questions;


 Make promises that you cannot keep around the issue of confidentiality, as you may have to discuss the case with health professionals and others;

 Ask the young person to repeat unnecessarily what s/he has told you;


 Be tempted to investigate the case yourself; that responsibility lies with the HSE and the Gardaí.

### **Handling a Suspicion of Abuse**

If you suspect a young person in your group is **at risk outside** the youth theatre:


 Maintain a balance between support and intrusion, however difficult this may be;


 Avoid personal assumptions;


 Do follow the procedure that your youth theatre has adopted in terms of reporting incidents to the authorities;


 Do not make any decision alone or without advice.

If you suspect a young person in your group is **at risk from within** the youth theatre:

 Bring the case to the notice of your youth theatre's Designated Person and/or seek advice from the independent welfare consultant to your youth theatre. Should such a course of action not prove possible, contact the Designated Person within the NAYD;

 If it is felt that there is cause for concern, it should be reported to the statutory agency;

 NAYD's Designated Person is always available for advice;

 Should an incident arise in the context of an NAYD event, it must be reported in confidence to the NAYD Designated Person.












## Reporting Abuse

Follow the procedure that your youth theatre has adopted in terms of reporting incidents to the authorities. This is a decision that should not be taken alone or without advice. Contact your youth theatre's Designated Person. Please be advised that when making a report it is important to observe the principle of confidentiality. The Designated Person, in turn, may contact the HSE for advice.

Under The Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act of December 1998, there is a provision of immunity to any person who reports child abuse "reasonably and in good faith to designated officers of the Health Service Executive or Garda Síochána." It is an offence to report "knowing that statement to be false."

### Steps involved in reporting a suspicion of abuse

- Step 1** Contact the Designated Person in person.
- Step 2** The Designated Person should then contact the relevant health board, in writing or by phone.
- Step 3** This Designated Person will be asked to make personal contact with a duty social worker attached to the Health Board to facilitate information gathering. The individual who initially expressed concern may be called on to assist in this process.
- Step 4** The duty social worker will ask that the following information and or Child Protection reporting form be provided. Include as much information as you can in this report. The following information will be sought from you:

-  Names and addresses of the young people and their parents or carers;
-  The name and address of the alleged perpetrator;
-  An account of your grounds for concern;
-  The circumstances in which concern(s) arose or incident(s) occurred;
-  Information of any family difficulties of which you may be aware;
-  Any individuals who act in a supportive or protective role in the family concerned i.e. a helpful family member or neighbour;
-  The young person's school or GP, if known;
-  Your involvement with the family;
-  Details of any action already taken by you;
-  The names and addresses of any agencies or key people involved with the parents;
-  Your name, address, telephone number, occupation and relationship with the family.

**In the event of an emergency or if the Health Board duty social worker is not available, please report your concerns to the Garda Síochána.**

