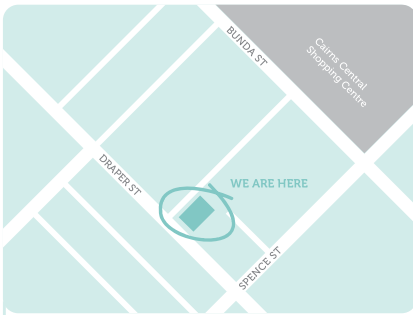




Cairns Sexual Assault Service

SUPPORT HANDBOOK

All children
have the right
to be safe
and heard.



Contact us



Solander Building,
182 Grafton Street
(Opposite Martin Munro
Parklands), Cairns QLD



P 4281 6893



E csas@true.org.au

www.true.org.au/cf

Contents

How we can help	3
Things you need to know	4
What is child sexual abuse	5
Impacts of sexual abuse	6
Sexually Reactive Behaviours	7
Personal Safety Education	8
Safety Planning	9
The Facts	10
Police and Court Process	11
How to support a child who has been sexually abused	12
Useful Contacts	13
Giving Feedback	14
Kids' Rights in Counselling	15

Support is here

We are committed to making our services accessible. If you or your child requires a support person for counselling, or has a communication, cultural or physical access needs, please discuss this with us as soon as possible so suitable arrangements can be made.

How we can help

OUR SERVICE

Cairns Sexual Assault Service provides specialised therapeutic support for children & young people who have experienced sexual abuse, sexual assault or problematic sexual behaviours.

Our qualified counsellors work from a trauma-informed perspective. We understand the impact trauma has on a child's development and what it takes to rebuild and recover from traumatic experiences. We use a variety of therapies to connect with children such as play, art, expressive, narrative and talk therapies. Counselling is free and progresses at the child's pace.

WE WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- who have experienced sexual abuse or sexual assault
- who display problematic or harmful sexual behaviours.

By providing:

- therapeutic support & education
- personal safety education and
- safety planning.

WE ALSO SUPPORT

- non-offending family members, carers and significant others, and
- professionals seeking advice or secondary consultation.

We Value:

Physical, emotional and social safety and wellbeing in relation to sexuality across the lifespan.

We promote positive, respectful and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.

Things you need to know

WHO ATTENDS

We prefer to meet the child's parents, carers and/or guardians first, to discuss issues, provide information about our service and to discuss the counselling process. Depending on the child's age and comfort level, they may want to join you in the session — it's up to them.

Ongoing sessions can include work with the child/young person individually, and/or with care-giver, depending on the situation and needs. Sessions are focussed on the child's needs and goals.

CONSENT

Parents or legal guardians need to sign a written consent form for their child to participate in counselling. Young people 14 years and above can self refer without parental consent. To work effectively, children & young people need to agree to attend and know the reasons why they are attending our service.

REGULAR APPOINTMENTS

Children need regular appointments to be able to consolidate their learnings and reflections, and to work through concerns fully. Your child's counsellor will initially schedule weekly appointments, then less frequent appointments as therapy progresses. If for some reason you cannot make your appointment, it is important you give us a call to let us know. If you miss three appointments without notification, your child's place in the counselling program will be reviewed as spaces are limited.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality within the counselling process is essential for people to feel safe and explore their most inner thoughts. Children have the same rights to confidentiality as adults. Counsellors will always ask your child's permission to share information with others. You can provide opportunities for your child to tell you about their counselling, but it is important to let them decide what they want to share.

LIMITS OF CONFIDENTIALITY

There are limits to confidentiality. If a client reveals they are to going harm themselves or another person or a child reveals they are subject to abuse, counsellors have an obligation to seek additional support, which may mean breaching confidentiality. Your counsellor will explain this further in the first session.

INPUT FROM OTHERS

Sometimes it's useful for counsellors to liaise with others, such as your child's school teacher or other key support people. This can help create a more comprehensive support plan. This also requires carer-giver/guardian consent.

PRIVACY

We have strict record-keeping guidelines to ensure client information is kept private and secure. Counselling records are held in a secure electronic data base. Your counsellor will provide more information on record keeping, accessing records, privacy and confidentiality in the first session.

PARTICIPATION

We encourage full participation of all children and young people attending the service, and support their right to:

- express their views, have them considered and recorded.
- information and involvement in decision making as appropriate for their age, ability and psychological state.

What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse occurs when an adult, adolescent or another child uses their power or authority to involve a child in a sexual activity, such as:

Kissing, touching or holding a child in a sexual manner

Exposing a sexual body part to a child

Sending sexual images or messages to a child

Persistent intrusion of a child's privacy

Showing pornographic material to a child

Having a child pose or perform in a sexual manner

Forcing a child to watch a sexual act

Child sexual exploitation

Penetration and/or oral sex

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE:

- can be a one off event or something that occurs over many months or years.
- can occur from birth to teenage years.
- is present across all socio-economic, racial, cultural and religious backgrounds.
- is against the law and should always be reported to authorities.
- is never a child's fault.

Impacts of sexual abuse

Some children show signs of distress immediately after sexual abuse, whereas others might not show signs for some time. Each person will react differently.

Signs may include:

- feeling anxious or hyper-vigilant
 - trouble sleeping
 - difficulties making and maintaining relationships
 - difficulties trusting others
 - depression, withdrawal or clinginess
 - 'vague-ing out' (dissociating)
 - Aggression
 - self-loathing
 - obsessive behaviours / desire to control situations
 - fear (of certain people, places, situations, sounds, smells etc)
 - self-harm
 - suicidal ideation
 - sexual promiscuity
 - changes to established toilet routines
 - overtly sexual themes in play
 - sexual knowledge well beyond a child's age/stage of development
 - engaging in problematic or harmful sexual behaviours
-

Child sexual abuse interferes with a child's normal developmental pathways. Time, supportive environments and targeted therapeutic support are the best things for healing.

There are several factors that influence a child's experience of and ability to process trauma. These include the extent of the abuse, the developmental stage of the child at the time of the abuse, the child's relationship to the perpetrator, the child's personality and coping styles, being believed and being supported.

All Children have the right to be safe from abuse.

Problematic sexual behaviours

Problematic sexual behaviours are behaviours considered outside age-appropriate healthy sexual exploration.

These may be solitary in nature or involve others. These behaviours need to be considered in the context of the child's life and addressed accordingly.

The presence of problematic sexual behaviours does not necessarily mean a child has been sexually abused. They generally indicate a 'reaction' to something significant that has occurred in their experience.

There are two main categories of behaviours:

- **Problem Sexual Behaviours (PSB's)**
- **Harmful Sexual behaviours (HSB's)**

PROBLEM SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS

PSB's are behaviours present in children under the age of 10 years, that are considered outside the normal age/stage of sexual development and proving problematic to the child or others.

HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS

HSB's are behaviours present in children over the age of 10 years, that are considered outside the normal age/stage of sexual development, are problematic and/or abusive to self or others. Children over the age of 10 years can legally be charged for sexual offences.

At **Cairns Sexual Assault Clinic** we acknowledge behaviour is a form of communication. When working with children who are displaying PSB's & HSBs, we understand the child is more than the sum of these behaviours; they are an individual with a story to tell. By looking into this story, we are able to understand how the child is experiencing their world. It also gives us an insight into the purpose of the child's behaviours. From here we support the child through education and therapy to find alternative meanings and make better choices. We also provide caregivers with information and strategies to support their child or young person.

Sexually abusive behaviours are associated with children and adolescents. This behaviour is varied and may include acts that make the child or young person feel scared or uncomfortable. This behaviour can range from exhibitionism to penetration.

Personal safety education

Cairns Sexual Assault Service provides Personal Safety Education (within counselling) to ensure children are informed about their bodies and their rights and given strategies to improve personal safety.

THERE ARE TWO MAIN THEMES

- We all have the right to feel safe all of the time
- Nothing is so awful that we can't talk about it with someone we trust

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- **Body Ownership** – your body belongs to you
- **Public and private** – places, body parts and behaviours
- **Rules about touch** – understanding different types of touch and boundaries (what is and isn't okay)
- **Feelings** – identifying, understanding and expressing feelings
- **Early Warning signs** – signs from our body that something isn't okay (e.g. butterflies, sweaty palms, wanting to scream or run when scared)
- **Safe and unsafe** – feelings and behaviours
- **Relationships** – exploring different relationships/connections people have in their life and boundaries (what is or isn't okay) within these
- **Problem solving and decision making** – developing skills to help empower children and support safer decisions
- **Safety networks** – exploring the safe people in a child's life and working out strategies to seek help when needed
- **Secrets** – surprises are fun and good (like hiding a birthday present) but secrets can be tricky. Children need to know we should never keep secrets about someone getting hurt or body secrets. It's best to steer away from secrets all together, as it goes against the theme "nothing is so awful that we can't talk about it with someone we trust" and it is one of the main ways perpetrators silence children.
- **Grooming** – the process abusers use to win the trust of children and families. It involves a series of deliberate acts to ensure continued access to children and the gradual desensitization of sexual acts. Bribery, showering the child with gifts, compliments or praise, playing favourites, being "the only one who understands", isolation or using threats are just a few of the tactics used.

All Children have the right to be safe from abuse.

Safety planning

Safety Planning is a part of our counselling process, where we consider all aspects of a child's life to create a plan to optimise safety and protection of self and others.

Safety plans can be simple agreements at the family level, or they can be an intricate document bringing in a variety of support people from the child's environment.

Safety plans are designed to add a layer of protection around a child to help eliminate risks to themselves or others, and to engage those around the child to enact, support or abide by the plan.

Safety plans are used for children who have been sexually abused and those engaging in problematic sexual behaviour.

SAFETY PLANS WILL CONSIDER:

- a support network around the child
- safety across environments
- risks across environments
- routines
- triggers
- non-negotiables
- consequences

Secrecy and community denial of child sexual abuse gives permission for the abuse to continue.

The facts

VICTIMS

By the **age of eighteen**, approximately **1 in 3 girls and 1 in 6 boys** will have experienced some form of unwanted sexual contact.

At the commencement of sexual abuse the **average age** of the victim is **7 or 8 years**. Currently more than half are under ten years of age at the time of reporting. (Australian Crime: Facts and Figures, 2011).

OFFENDERS

93% are male

85% are familiar to the child; only 11% are strangers, and 4% are not specified at the time of reporting. (Australian Crime: Facts and Figures, 2011)

The most common relationship of the offender to the victim is the father (biological or social); "Fathers, step-fathers and other male relatives (including siblings) made up more than half (51.6%) of perpetrators for females, and approximately one-fifth (21.4%) of perpetrators against males" (ACSSA: 2012)

There is no distinctive psychological profile of an offender.
Most offenders are 'average' men.

Many sexually assault more than one child.

Commonly they are heterosexual men (even if the victim is a boy)
(ACSSA, "The Nature and Extent of Sexual Assault and Abuse in Australia, C. Tarczon & A. Quadara, 2012)

Police and court processes

POLICE

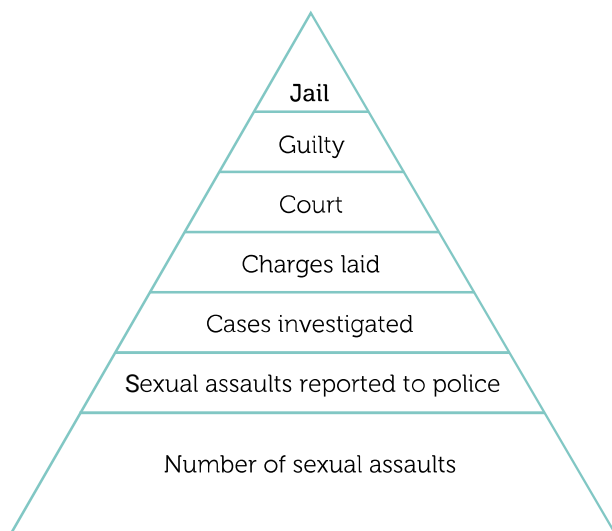
The Queensland Police Service, Child Protection Investigation Unit (CPIU) is responsible for investigating any criminal activities involving children. When

a child makes a disclosure (tells someone they have been sexually abused / assaulted), the police need to be informed. Based on the information provided, the police may interview the child (called an i-care interview). This interview takes place in a special play room at the police station. Everything is recorded and may be used in court at a later stage. Based on this, the police may start a full investigation. If there is enough evidence, charges will be laid. The matter will then be put to the court.

COURT

If the case makes it to court your child will be offered a PACT worker to support them through the process. Your child does not sit in the court with the perpetrator. They are situated on a different floor and interact with the judge via television link up.

Please ask your counsellor to explain PACT and Victim Assist Qld support.



Justice means different things to different people. It is important to note, the number of people convicted of committing a sexual offence is minimal compared to the number of sexual assaults that occur.

How to support a child who has been sexually abused

Remain calm

Be a listener, not an investigator

Be sensitive and supportive

Tell them you believe them

Reassure them they are not in trouble

Talk about their right to be safe, and that you will contact authorities to get help

Inform the Department of Child Safety and/or the Queensland Police Child Protection Investigation Unit (CPIU)

Contact **Cairns sexual assault Clinic** for information and support.

Available Resources

True Relationships and Reproductive Health have some great resources for parents. You can download useful fact sheets for free and/or purchase books from www.true.org.au/Resources/shop

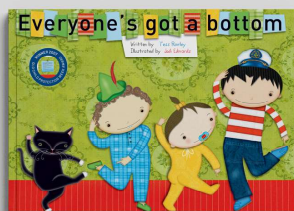
FACT SHEETS

Available from the link above:

- Sexual behaviours in children and young people (traffic lights)
- Sexual development in early childhood
- Communicating about sexuality
- Communicating about pornography
- Feel Safe—promoting personal safety
- And more

BOOKS

Everyone's got a bottom book.



Other useful contacts

Child Safety (Regional Intake Service)
1300 684 062

Queensland Police Service (non urgent)
4030 7000

Cairns Hospital (non urgent)
4226 0000

Family and Child Connect
13 32 64

Statewide Sexual Assault Helpline
1800 010 120

1800 RESPECT
1800 737 732

Kids Helpline
1800 55 1800

Lifeline
131114

Parentline
1300 30 1300

Victim Assist Queensland
1300 546 587

Giving feedback

We encourage people who use our service to give feedback—whether making a complaint, giving a compliment or making suggestions. Our aim is to identify and resolve issues as quickly as possible, and to improve service delivery.

You can do this anonymously or give your details, and request follow-up if you would like it. Complaints will be kept confidential, on a 'need to know' basis.

GIVING FEEDBACK DIRECTLY

You can give feedback verbally to any staff member you feel comfortable with (your counsellor, reception staff or you can ask to speak to the Manager).

You will be given a feedback survey to complete on an i-pad after your first session and regular sessions thereafter.

Or you can give feedback online here www.true.org.au/Contact/email-us

GIVING FEEDBACK EXTERNALLY

You can also give feedback or make complaints about our services to our funding body, the Department of Children, Youth Justice & Multicultural Affairs & the Department of Justice and Attorney General.

If you have a serious concern or complaint about the conduct of your counsellor, you can speak to the service manager directly, or ask for contact information of the staff member's professional registration body.

You have the right:

- to the fair and prompt investigation of any complaints you may have about the services you have received
- to make a complaint without being disadvantaged
- to make a complaint verbally or in writing
- to have an advocate, translator or support person present if making a complaint
- to be informed of the outcome of your complaint as soon as possible

You can ask any staff member for a full copy of our complaints policy.

Kids' rights in counselling

MY COUNSELLOR SHOULD:

- Give me the very best care and comfort I need, and make sure that everyone is working together to do what is best for me.
- Listen to me, and take it seriously when I tell them how I am thinking or feeling, when I am upset or when I have a problem.
- No matter how big or small I am, tell me the things I need to know in a way I can understand.
- Let me have a say in the things that are happening to me.
- Make sure my rights are protected.
- Provide me with a comfortable, safe and private area to talk in.
- Keep everything I tell them private, unless I say it is OK to tell, or if my counsellor gets worried about me.

IN COUNSELLING I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Showing respect to my counsellor, other staff and the things that belong to the service.
- Asking questions if I do not understand something.
- Telling my counsellor if something isn't working for me.
- Telling my counsellor, my Mum or Dad or another adult who I trust, if something happens in my counselling that I do not like. If I feel like I can't tell, I could write it down in a letter and give it to a staff member or another adult that I trust.



Cairns Sexual Assault Service

For more information visit
true.org.au/csas

Disclaimer: True Relationships & Reproductive Health (True) has taken every care to ensure that the information contained in this publication is accurate and up-to-date at the time of being published. As information and knowledge is constantly changing, readers are strongly advised to confirm that the information complies with present research, legislation and policy guidelines. True accepts no responsibility for difficulties that may arise as a result of an individual acting on this information and any recommendations it contains.

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