

What is emotional abuse or psychological harm?

Serious psychological harm can occur where the behaviour of their parent or caregiver damages the confidence and self-esteem of the child or young person, resulting in serious emotional disturbance or psychological trauma.

Although it is possible for 'one-off' incidents to cause serious harm, in general it is the frequency, persistence and duration of the parental or carer behaviour that is instrumental in defining the consequences for the child or young person.

This can include a range of behaviours such as excessive criticism, withholding affection, exposure to domestic violence, intimidation or threatening behaviour.

Possible signs of emotional abuse

All types of abuse and neglect harm children psychologically, but the term 'psychological harm' or 'emotional abuse' applies to behaviour which damages the confidence and self-esteem of a child or young person, resulting in serious emotional deprivation or trauma.

Signs in children

- constant feelings of worthlessness about life and themselves
- unable to value others
- lack of trust in people
- lack of people skills necessary for daily functioning
- extreme attention-seeking behaviour
- is obsessively eager to please or obey adults
- takes extreme risks, is markedly disruptive, bullying or aggressive
- is highly self-critical, depressed or anxious
- suicide threats or attempts
- persistent running away from home.

Signs in parents or caregivers

- constant criticism, belittling, teasing of a child or young person, or ignoring or withholding praise and attention
- excessive or unreasonable demands
- persistent hostility and severe verbal abuse, rejection and scapegoating
- belief that a particular child or young person in their care is bad or 'evil'

- using inappropriate physical or social isolation as punishment
- domestic violence and maltreatment of one parent by the other.

Remember, the above are only possible signs of abuse. The presence of these signs does not necessarily mean abuse has been, or is, occurring.

(the above information is taken from Community Services NSW)

Your role

- Discuss child abuse concerns with your Parish Safeguarding Officer or National Safeguarding Officer at the Eparchy.
- Report to relevant child protection agencies in your State and Territory on the number provided below

State and Territory	24 hours Reporting Lines	
New South Wales	Child protection Helpline	Ph: 13 21 11 TTY 1800 212 936
	Mandatory reporters	Ph: 13 36 27
Victoria	Child Protection Crisis Line	Ph: 13 12 78
	North Division Intake	Ph: 1300 664 977
	South Division Intake	Ph: 1300 655 795
	East Division Intake	Ph: 1300 360 391
	West Division Intake Rural and regional only	Ph: 1800 075 599
	West Division Intake metropolitan only	Ph: 1300 664 977
	After hours Child Protection Emergency Service	Ph: 13 12 78
South Australia	Child Abuse Report Line	Ph: 13 14 78
	After hours crisis care	Ph: 13 16 11
Northern Territory	Child Protection Hotline	Ph: 1800 700 250
Western Australia	Child Protection Service	Ph: (08) 9222 2555 Country Free Call 1800 622 258
		Country Free call:1800 199 008
	After hours	Ph: (08) 9223 1111
	mandatory reporter line	Ph: 1800 708 704

Tasmania	Child Abuse Contact number	Ph: 1300 737 639
Australian Capital Territory	Mandatory Reporters	Ph: 1300 556 728
	General Public	Ph: 1300 556 729
Queensland	Child Safety After Hours Service Centre	Ph: 1800 177 135
local intake locations as below:		
Ipswich	Ph: 1800 316 855	
Far North Queensland	Ph: 1300 684 062	Fax: 07 4039 8320
South West	Ph: 1300 683 390	Fax: 07 4616 1796
Brisbane	Ph: 1300 682 254	Fax: 07 3259 8771
South East	Ph: 1300 679 849	Fax: 07 3884 8802
North Coast	Ph: 1300 703 921	Fax: 07 5420 9049
North Queensland	Ph: 1300 706 147	Fax: 07 4799 7273
Central Queensland	Ph: 1300 703 762	Fax: 07 4938 4697

Reference:

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NSW, Community Services. n.d. <http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/preventing-child-abuse-and-neglect/what-is-child-abuse/signs-of-abuse>. NSW: CS.

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