

Feeling Safe: For Secondary School Students

Get the facts

This fact sheet has been designed to give you the facts about child abuse. It includes advice on what to do if you have been abused, are being abused, or are at risk of being abused. This fact sheet also provides you with advice if you know someone who has been abused, or is at risk of being abused.



What are your rights?

- Everyone has the right to feel safe and be protected from abuse.
- No one is allowed to threaten you, hurt you, or touch you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable, unsafe or afraid.
- This includes all adults, other teenagers and children – it includes everyone from family members, coaches, teachers, to friends and strangers.
- Every relationship should be respectful.
- No one should ever involve you in sexual activity without your consent, and no one should behave in a way that makes you feel unsafe or afraid.
- You don't have to deal with abuse on your own. Talk to a trusted adult. Teachers and other adults at your school can support you to get help.

What is child abuse?

- Child abuse includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological harm, neglect, and family violence.
- Child abuse can also include grooming. This is behaviour where an adult tries to establish a relationship or other emotional connection with a child, to prepare them for a sexual relationship.
- Child abuse does not have to involve physical contact or force. It can include:
 - controlling a child through threats
 - exposing a child to sexual material and sexual acts
 - exposing a child to family violence.
- Child abuse can be perpetrated by any member of a community or a family member. Abuse can impact anyone and it is never the victim's fault.

For more information on sexual abuse and sexual assault visit Youth Central:

<http://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au/know-your-rights/sexual-assault>.

What should I do if I have been abused or I feel unsafe?

- You should talk to an adult you trust.
- If you have been abused, or feel unsafe or threatened in any way you don't have to deal with this on your own.
- Abuse is never your fault and you should tell a trusted adult so you can get the help and support you need to feel safe and protected. Talking to someone won't get you in trouble.
- You can tell a teacher or any adult at your school. They will be able to help you.

What should I do if I think someone I know has been abused or is unsafe?

- You should talk to an adult you trust. Any staff member at your school will be able to help.
- You can also help your friend by encouraging them to tell a trusted adult.

What if my friend doesn't want to tell an adult?

- You should still tell an adult you trust on your friend's behalf.
- Even if your friend has specifically asked you not to tell an adult, you still should. It is more important to make sure that your friend is helped and feels protected.



What will happen if I tell an adult at the school that I feel unsafe, or that I know someone who is unsafe?

- You will be helped.
- Teachers and other adults at your school must listen to your concerns and help you.
- The information will not be shared with the person who is making you feel unsafe.
- Information will only be shared with people who can support and protect you.
- In some cases the people helping you are required by law to tell the police, the Department of Health and Human Services' Child Protection services and/or your family to prevent any further abuse, or risk of abuse.

What if I don't feel like I can talk to anyone at my school?

- You should still find a trusted adult to talk to.
- Abuse or feeling uncomfortable is too big to deal with on your own.

There are many people who can support you to feel safe and protected. You can:

- contact eHeadspace for advice online visit: www.eheadspace.org.au/
Call 1800 650 890
- contact KidsHelp Line: <https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/> (24 hour web chat) **Call 1800 55 1800**
- Call or visit your local police station or call **000**.
- Talk to your doctor, psychologist, social worker, welfare officer, or another trusted adult.