

SPECIAL BULLETIN ON CHILD SAFETY

Dorit Jaffe <dorit.jaffe@ncjwavic.org.au>

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To: Dorit Jaffe <dorit.jaffe@ncjwavic.org.au>

From: JCCV - What's Nu <info@jccv.org.au>

Date: 13 August 2020 at 2:53:50 pm AEST

To: Lee Ann Bassar <leeann.bassar@ncjwavic.org.au>

Subject: SPECIAL BULLETIN ON CHILD SAFETY

Reply-To: info@jccv.org.au

12 August 2020



**At home shouldn't mean at risk.
A Victorian Jewish Community
COVID-19 Taskforce Special
Bulletin on Child Safety.**



SPECIAL BULLETIN ON CHILD SAFETY

Victorian Jewish Community COVID-19 Taskforce <https://vic.thecsg.org.au/covid-19-community-information/>

As a community member, it is your responsibility to do all that you can to protect any child you know, or suspect may be a victim of any form of abuse or neglect.

While many children have been safe from COVID-19 with their families, many have found themselves victims to physical, emotional or sexual abuse, and neglect.

This does not account for the far-reaching implications and hardship suffered by families affected by COVID-19 – who are experiencing an increase in unemployment, alcohol use and mental health issues.

Risks to child safety can include:

- **Insufficient supervision of children**
- **Distress due to the fear of death or illnesses such as COVID19 – with the potential for worsening of a pre-existing mental health condition**
- **Coerced or forced engagement in exploitative behaviour**
- **Physical, emotional and sexual abuse**



Children are NOT responsible for their own safety:

- **Adults bear the responsibility for picking up on signs of abuse.**
- **Adults bear the responsibility for reporting any disclosures of abuse or suspected abuse.**

Child abuse is destructive behaviour that manifests when a person attempts to dominate or control the victim.

Signs of physical abuse can include:

- **A person - adult or child - hitting, punching, pulling the hair, choking, pinching, pushing, stabbing or restraining the child in any way**
- **A person using weapons or items to frighten or cause fear; and damage to property or pets; and**
- **A person preventing the victim from sleeping, eating or neglecting to care for them (such as bathing or changing nappies, if a child is incapable of doing so themselves).**

Signs of verbal (emotional) abuse can include:

- **Harassing or threatening behaviour**
- **Saying things to frighten or threaten the child**
- **Calling the child insulting, derogatory and/or denigrating names; and**
- **Undermining the child in front of their siblings or other relatives.**

Signs of sexual abuse can include:

- **Forcing, coercing or exposing a child to pornography or other sexually explicit materials**
- **Forcing or coercing a child to engage in sexual behaviour such as touching of their or another persons breasts or genitals (even through clothes), oral sex and masturbation; and/or**
- **Forcing or coercing a child to have sexual relations.**

Signs of emotional abuse can include:

- **Controlling the child through anger (such as refusing to speak or look at them), withholding affection or other punitive measures; and**

- **Threatening to harm others and pets.**

Signs of social abuse can include:

- **Putting the child down in front of others; and**
- **Isolating the child from their family and friends (including locking a child inside their room).**

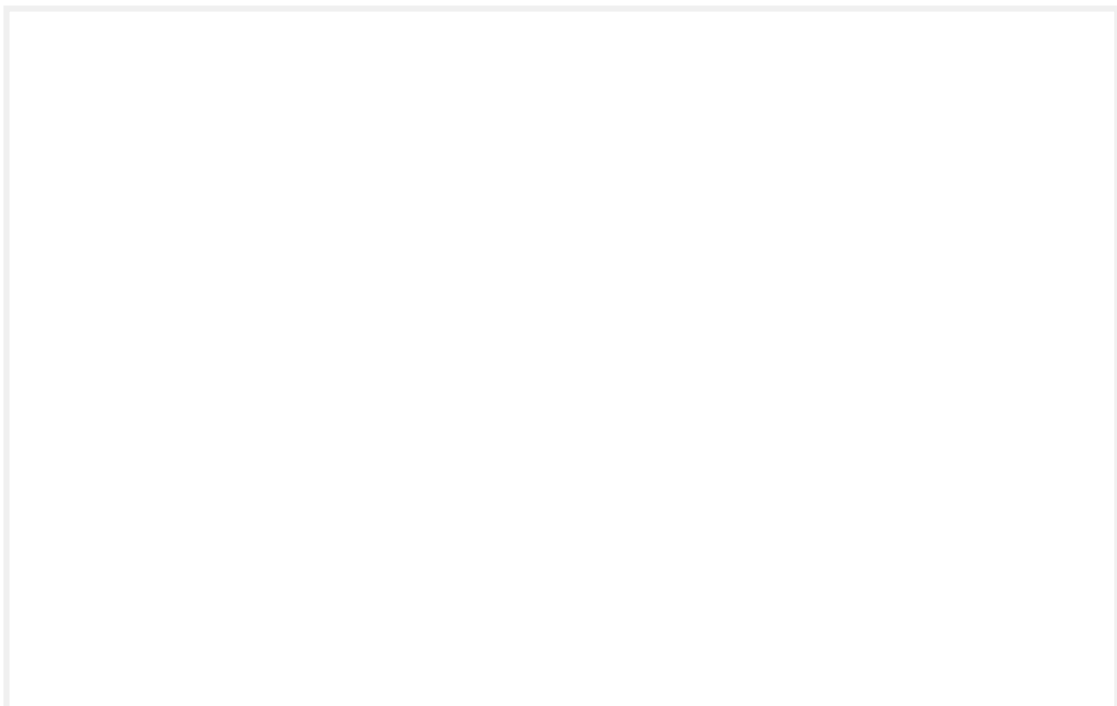
Signs a child may be being abused can include:

- **Displaying distrust towards adults;**
- **Disclosure of current or historic sexual abuse;**
- **Inappropriate sexual knowledge or sexualised behaviour for the child's age;**
- **Major changes in the child's behaviour – nightmares, anxiety, regression, clinginess;**
- **Aggressive behaviour;**
- **Sleeping difficulties (fatigue, falling asleep often);**
- **Low self-esteem;**
- **Difficulty engaging with or relating to adults and peers;**
- **Unexplained bruising, burns or welts in various stages of healing;**
- **Exhibiting concentration difficulties;**
- **Being reluctant to go or be at home; and/or**
- **Social withdrawal or extreme obedience.**

Indicators of child neglect include:

- **Malnutrition**
- **Poor hygiene**
- **Complaining of unattended medical problems**
- **Comments about a caregiver's constant absence from home**
- **Constant fatigue; and**
- **Inappropriate clothing (such as dressing for summer in winter).**

If you have a concern about a child's safety, it must be reported to the Department of Health and Human Services or the special unit of the Victorian Police, Sexual Offences and Child Investigation Team (SOCIT).





Australian Government
 Australian Institute of Family Studies
 Child Family Community Australia

Responding to children and young people's disclosures of abuse

Listen, reassure and respect

Listen

- Move to a suitable environment, free of distractions.
- Be calm and patient—allow for the child or young person to be heard.
- Let the child or young person use their own words—avoid asking leading questions.
- Avoid “quizzing” the child or young person about details of the abuse.
- Don't be afraid of saying the “wrong” thing. Listening supportively is more important than what you say.

Reassure

- Reassure the child or young person that it is OK that they have told you what's been happening.
- Address any concerns about the child or young person's safety.
- Reassure the child or young person that he or she is *not* at fault, and *not* the cause of any distress you may feel.

Respect

- Respect that the child or young person may only reveal some details.
- Acknowledge the child or young person's bravery and strength.
- Avoid making promises you can't keep—manage the child or young person's expectations.
- Explain to the child or young person that in order for them to be safe you will need to report their experience to someone else.

What happens next?

If a child or young person discloses abuse, you should report it to the relevant authorities.

Mandatory reporting requirements vary throughout Australian states and territories. For information about mandatory reporting requirements including who is mandated to report, see CFCA Resource Sheet *Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect* <www3.aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>

State and territory contact details for reporting abuse and neglect are available on the CFCA Resource Sheet *Reporting Abuse and Neglect: State and Territory Departments Responsible for Protecting Children* <www3.aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/reporting-abuse-and-neglect>

Where to find help

Call Triple Zero (000) if a child is in immediate danger OR at any time if you are worried about the safety of a child.



Sexual offences and child abuse are crimes that require a specialist response from police who understand these complex crimes. Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCITs) are staffed by experienced and qualified detectives who are trained to respond to and investigate sexual offences and child abuse by perpetrators known to the victim.

The SOCIT response prioritises the needs of victims. Any investigation is a victim-led process. They aim to ensure your safety and wellbeing; your ability to regain control of your circumstances; and to provide access to support, information, justice and services appropriate to your need.

Remember, any form of a sexual offence is serious and everyone, including you, is entitled to protection under the law.

There are SOCITs throughout Victoria. Some SOCITs work in Multi-Disciplinary Centres (MDCs) which offer a range of services for victims of sexual offences under the one roof, away from the police station environment.

To find out more or contact a SOCIT, [click here](#).



Tzedek provides a national support, prevention and advocacy service to survivors of sexual abuse in the Jewish community. We also work with family members and others affected by sexual abuse.

In 2019 Tzedek joined with the South East Centre against Sexual Assault (SECASA).

Tzedek/SECASA offers a range of services including counselling for victim/survivors of family violence, sexual and physical assault. Our organisation also works in collaboration with other Jewish services to ensure that survivors receive a culturally sensitive service.

Tzedek/SECASA continues to offer counselling during COVID -19 with sessions conducted by phone or via Telehealth.

If you or someone you know needs help, reach out to Tzedek/SECASA on 03 92288741 for guidance and/or support.

Tzedek/SECASA also offers a 24 hour crisis line on 03 95942289 or via their toll-free number 1800 806 292.



Jewish Care's Individual and Family Services team provides a specialised family violence service comprised of end-to-end support for children, individuals and families.

Supports are tailored to meet the needs of the client and may include: multi-lingual telephone support; risk assessment and safety planning; ongoing case management and service coordination; parenting support; links to pro-bono legal support; court support (secular and religious); housing support; financial counselling; and supported referral to partner organisations for individuals who use violence. Our Healthy Communities team also deliver community education, primary prevention and capacity-building initiatives for the Victorian Jewish community.

Jewish Care's work focuses on building safety through a person-centred approach that respects and supports the individual's pace and decision-making. Jewish Care works in partnership with a range of community organisations to develop a tailored response that will best meet the person's needs.

Jewish Care recognises the widespread isolation that has occurred as a result of COVID-19, coupled with the loss of regular community touchpoints such as childcare, schools, shuls and workplaces, has heightened risk and vulnerability for many who are experiencing family violence. In addition to their usual family violence case work, the Individual and Family Services team has been responding to an increased need for emotional support and safety planning via the COVID-19 helpline.

If you or someone you know is in need of support, please reach out and contact the Jewish Care Helpline on 8517 5555. All enquiries are treated with the strictest confidentiality. We understand that for our community in particular, it can be very difficult to seek help - please know that you are not alone.

To contact the Taskforce email covid19@csgvic.com.au

With special thanks to Michelle Mayer for her expertise in assisting us with this special bulletin.

Take care,

Jennifer Huppert President Jewish Community Council of Victoria	Rabbi Daniel Rabin Rabbi Moshe Kahn Rabbinical Council of Victoria	Leon Landau General Manager Hatzolah	Justin Kagan CEO Community Security Group
Bec Feldman Nicole Matejic Crisis & Emergency Management Adviser Jewish Community Crisis Management	Rabbi Gersh Lazarow Progressive Judaism Victoria	Mark Cohen President Council of Orthodox Synagogues Victoria	

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JCCV - What's Nu
The Jewish Community Council of Victoria
Beth Weizmann Community Centre, 306 Hawthorn Road
Caulfield South, VIC 3162, Australia



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