

Supporting families following a serious incident

What happens when a serious incident involving your child occurs at an early childhood education or outside school hours care service in NSW.

We recognise that this may be a difficult time for you and your family and would like to assure you that we are here to support you and will always act in the best interests of your child.

The department assesses and investigates incidents that have occurred in education and care services. When determining the outcome of an incident, we will consider the circumstances of each case and the risk to children.

If the incident raises concerns about the health, safety or wellbeing of a child, we may notify other agencies including the Office of the Children's Guardian, the Department of Communities and Justice or the Police.

The process the department takes when investigating an incident will depend on who reported the incident:

Reported by you

When a family raises a concern, the Regulatory Authority creates a case which is reviewed by our Triage unit so it can be actioned appropriately. Where an immediate risk to the health, safety and wellbeing of child/ren is clearly identified, the

Regulatory Authority will initiate an investigation and contact the family within 1 business day to advise the matter is to be investigated. Where an additional review of information is required or the notification does not pertain to an immediate threat to the health, safety and wellbeing of child/ren, a family can expect notification of a decision within 3 business days.

The Regulatory Authority informs families about the investigation process by providing:

- support resources available for the family
- a contact point for enquiries
- an anticipated timeframe to finalise the investigation, wherever possible¹
- updates on the investigation in accordance with formal procedures
- an outcome of the investigation and the reasons for the outcome.
- if Police are involved, clear advice on how communication will be managed between Police and the Regulatory Authority.

¹ In concurrent investigations, these timeframes may depend on other agencies.

Reported by service

When a service reports an incident to the department, we are in contact with them during the incident assessment process. All services are required to notify the department of serious incidents that occur, such as illness, trauma or the need for medical treatment.

In most instances these incidents occur through no fault of the service or its staff. However, there are some cases where we will follow up the serious incident with an investigation.

In these cases, if we contact you, we will be guided by the following principles.

Respectful treatment: we will treat all families with courtesy, respect and understanding.

Good communication: we will keep families informed about the status of the investigation of a serious incident. This will be done by providing the family with:

- notification of the incident within 24 hours
- information about the investigation process
- information on support resources
- a contact point for enquiries
- an expected timeframe to finalise the investigation
- updates on the investigation at regular intervals
- information on the outcome of the investigation (to the extent possible)
- information about internal and external avenues of review or access to information where available.

Accountability: we will ensure that staff who conduct investigations are appropriately trained and skilled.

Timeliness: we will deal with the investigation of a serious incident as soon as possible. If there are unavoidable delays in dealing with an investigation we will inform the family and explain the reasons.

Who to contact

For questions on reporting incidents

NSW Department of Education: 1800 619 113 or via ececd@det.nsw.edu.au

NSW Police: contact Triple Zero (000) in an emergency. For general enquiries call the Police Assistance Line on 131 444

NSW Department of Communities and Justice (Child Protection): 132 111

For support

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Mental health line: 1800 011 511