

APPENDIX C. Completing documentation

When documenting child protection concerns, staff should be aware that records can be subpoenaed by the court as evidence. If in doubt, you can consult with the principal, student services staff, the Department of Education's Service Response (Child Protection) staff on 08 9402 6124 or the Department of Communities on 1800 708 704 or 1800 273 889.

The principal may complete documentation on behalf of the staff member who reports concerns of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or neglect.

When reporting the belief that a child is or has been the subject of sexual abuse, staff who are mandatory reporters must complete their own documentation. The principal must not do this on their behalf.

The reporter should document, to the best of their ability, observations and factual information about what they have seen or heard, such as:

- relevant dates and times
- the identity of the source of information
- information from a third party that is clearly identified as third party information
- noting of the exact words the child used to describe what happened, even if it's not Standard Australian English e.g. the word or words they used for genitals or other parts of their body, or anything else related to the disclosure or concern
- statements or descriptions made by the child, parent or third party, written verbatim and in quotation (" ") marks
- professional judgments informed by professional training, resources and experience
- any other grounds for concern
- your response to the child
- the current situation i.e. Where is the child? Who is the child with?

Do not include:

- your opinions, for example, "the parent used excessive discipline"
- your personal conclusions about the type of abuse suspected
- your interpretation of what the child or others said.

Language:

- use clear, explicit, unambiguous, objective language
- use the first person singular, for example, "I saw..."
- use the names of people involved rather than she, he, etc.
- if the child uses any language other than English to describe an incident, document those words
- avoid jargon used within the organisation that may not be understood by others who read the report
- only use terms such as 'probably' or 'likely' if there is a reasonable degree of certainty.