

An Introduction to the Reportable Conduct Scheme for Employees

The ACT has introduced a reportable conduct scheme to oversee how organisations prevent and respond to allegations of child abuse and misconduct. This introduction for employees provides a broad description of the elements of the scheme.

The reportable conduct scheme addresses employment-related child protection.

Certain employers who work with children are covered by the scheme and will need to report to the ACT Ombudsman. Broadly, 'reportable conduct' covers allegations or convictions of child abuse or misconduct toward children.

The reportable conduct scheme does not interfere with reporting obligations to ACT Policing or Child and Youth Protection Services (CYPS) or any other relevant professional bodies. If employers suspect criminal conduct has occurred, they should report to police in the first instance.

What is reportable conduct?

Employers must report allegations or convictions concerning child-related misconduct by an employee including:

- ill-treatment of a child (including emotional abuse, and hostile use of force)
- neglect
- psychological harm
- misconduct of a sexual nature
- sexual or physical offences and convictions where a child is a victim or is present
- inappropriate discipline or offences relating to protecting children from harm in accordance with the provisions of the Education and Care Service National Law (ACT) Act 2011.

For more information about reportable conduct, see *The ACT Ombudsman Practice Guide No. 2: Identifying Reportable Conduct* on our website: ombudsman.act.gov.au

Who is an employer?

Employers covered by the scheme are referred to as 'designated entities' and include:

- all ACT directorates

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- health service providers
- out of home care, kinship and foster care
- residential care organisations
- government and non-government schools
- child care services
- education and care service providers, such as after school care.

Some entities providing services to children that are not covered under the scheme include:

- sporting clubs
- religious organisations generally (unless otherwise classified as designated entity, such as a non-government school)
- a service which provides instruction in a particular activity (e.g. ballet, piano, swimming)
- Scouts and Girl Guides
- personal arrangements made for education and care of children (e.g. babysitting)
- universities.

Who is an employee?

All employees under a contract of employment to an employer outlined above are included in the scheme. This means that some employees considered under the scheme will not work directly with children. Volunteers and contractors to an employer in the scheme are also considered as employees under the scheme but only if they are engaged to provide services to children. This includes employees engaged by another organisation to provide services to children on behalf of the employer covered by the scheme, for example, through labour hire or subcontracting arrangements.

Conduct occurring in either a professional or personal capacity is reportable for anyone defined as an employee under the scheme. For example, conduct by an employee, while volunteering in a personal capacity, can be considered by an employer who falls under the reportable conduct scheme.

What will an employer need to do?

Employers in the reportable conduct scheme will need to:

- notify the Ombudsman about any reportable conduct allegations or convictions involving an employee. Contact as soon as possible is encouraged to allow for consultation, but an employer must report no later than 30 days after becoming aware of the conduct
- investigate any allegations of reportable conduct and provide a final report to the Ombudsman
- report to other entities as required (for example, ACT Policing, CYPS, Access Canberra, Teacher Quality Institute, Children's Education and Care Assurance, Human Rights Commission etc.)

- adjust their policies and procedures to reflect their new responsibilities under the scheme and educate employees about these.

What will an employee need to do?

Employees working for an employer in the reportable conduct scheme may wish to:

- seek guidance from their employer about policies and workplace procedures relevant to the scheme
- clarify with their employer how to appropriately respond to reportable conduct allegations which come to their attention and which relate to an employee
- visit the ACT Ombudsman website for more information relating to the scheme.

What is the ACT Ombudsman's role?

The Ombudsman will:

- monitor employers' investigations and procedures and provide guidance and support
- share information with police and key organisations to better protect children from abuse
- take complaints about the handling of reportable conduct
- provide guidance and support to entities on best practice, including conducting investigations that are procedurally fair
- consider investigating an allegation or conviction in limited circumstances
- monitor employers' policies and practices for the prevention of child abuse and related misconduct.

Contact

We may be contacted using the details below.

Telephone: 02 6276 3770

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More information is available at ombudsman.act.gov.au.

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