

# KEEP THEM SAFE

## How the Changes Affect General Practitioners



**Keep Them Safe: a shared approach to child wellbeing 2009-2014** outlines a wide range of actions to be taken over the next five years to improve the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people in NSW. *Keep Them Safe* is the NSW Government's response to the *Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW* (Nov. 2008).

### New Reporting Threshold – 'Risk of Significant Harm'

From **24 January 2010** GPs' legal obligation as a child protection mandatory reporter will change with the commencement of a new reporting threshold.

If you become concerned about possible abuse or neglect of a child or young person and suspect, on reasonable grounds, that the child or young person is at '**risk of significant harm**' you should report your concerns to the Community Services' **Child Protection Helpline, 133 627**. This new reporting threshold has replaced '**risk of harm**' in the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*.

The **NSW Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG)** is a structured decision making tool to assist mandatory reporters, including GPs, to decide whether or not a child or young person is at risk of significant harm. The MRG and new interagency guidelines, "*Making a Child Protection Report What to do When Children and Young People are at Risk of Significant Harm*", are available online at: [www.KeepThemSafe.nsw.gov.au](http://www.KeepThemSafe.nsw.gov.au).

GPs can also call the **Keep Them Safe transitional support line, 1800 772 479**. The support line has been established to assist mandatory reporters in NGOs, non-government schools and GPs with the changes under *Keep Them Safe*, specifically with the introduction of the new reporting threshold. It will provide assistance in using the new Mandatory Reporter Guide, in determining whether a matter meets the threshold for *Risk of Significant Harm* and in understanding the changes under *Keep Them Safe*. It will also assist mandatory reporters with referral pathways for cases that fall below the threshold, including provide information about how to access HSNET, the Human Services Network Service Link Directory, and details for referral services.

It is called the *Keep Them Safe* Support Line and is a transitional service for the first six months of the new system. The *Keep Them Safe* Support line will operate 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays), from 25 January 2010.

### New information exchange laws

Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* - which commenced on 30 October 2009, provides for certain human services and justice agencies and non-government organisations to share information relating to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of children or young people. These new laws aim to improve interagency collaboration in the provision of services to meet the needs of children and young people and their families. They override privacy laws because the safety, welfare and well-being of children and young persons are paramount.

GPs working in incorporated practices are considered 'prescribed bodies' under the new legislation and are therefore required to share information under Chapter 16A. Sole practitioners are not currently included under the legislation (although this is being discussed with GP organisations). You can find out how the new laws operate at: [http://www.KeepThemSafe.nsw.gov.au/information\\_exchange](http://www.KeepThemSafe.nsw.gov.au/information_exchange)

### Vulnerable children and young people below the new reporting threshold

A key message in *Keep Them Safe* is the shared responsibility of Government and the community in ensuring the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people. The action plan includes strengthening early intervention and community-based services to prevent the need for children to enter the child protection system. NSW Health is actively working with GP organisations to consider the supports GPs need in supporting vulnerable children, young people and their families.

### Training and useful resources

A self paced e-learning package is available at: the TAFE NSW website:

<http://nsi.det.nsw.edu.au/nswprojects/KTS/KTS%20eLearning%20Guide/ktsCD/KTS/Splash.htm>

Department of Premier and Cabinet *Keep Them Safe* website: [www.KeepThemSafe.nsw.gov.au](http://www.KeepThemSafe.nsw.gov.au) or NSW Health *Keep Them Safe* website: [www.health.nsw.gov.au/initiatives/kts/index.asp](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/initiatives/kts/index.asp)