STEPS TO TAKE TO PROTECTIVELY INTERRUPT DISCLOSURES OF SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

Protective interrupting can be used to respectfully pause a disclosure when a child is sharing or about to share their experience of harm in a public place or in front of others.

Protective interrupting is not about stopping or discouraging disclosures. It helps ensure disclosures occur in a safe and appropriate environment.

Protective interrupting:

- Protects children's privacy and dignity.
- Avoids exposure of personal information that may increase risk or vulnerability.
- Prevents shame, embarassment, and cultural or religious stigma.
- Protects the wellbeing of other children from being impacted or vicariously traumatised by hearing details of harm.

At times, education and care staff may need to carefully interrupt a disclosure to support the child's safety and wellbeing.

PROTECTIVE INTERRUPTION IN PRACTICE



INTERRUPT THE DISCLOSURE

Gently and respectfully interrupt the child to pause the disclosure or start of a disclosure by acknowledging that what they have to say is important.

- "It sounds like you are about to say something important..."
- "I want to hear what you have to say..."

SUGGEST A MORE PRIVATE SPACE TO TALK

Gently suggest moving to a quieter and more private space where the conversation can continue.

Ensure the location remains consistent with your organisation's child safety policies and procedures and does not isolate the child from others.

- "Let's move over there where it's a bit quieter, so I can hear what you have to say."

TALK TO THE CHILD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

If you are not able to speak with the child immediately in a quieter space, arrange to talk with them as soon as possible once they can be moved away from other children, or other children can be moved elsewhere.

Return to the conversation at the earliest opportunity and give the child the chance to continue sharing what they were trying to tell you.

- "You started to tell me something important, I'm ready to listen now."
- "Before, you began to tell me something. Do you want to keep talking about that?"
- "I've been thinking about what you said earlier. If you want to tell me more, I'm here."

OFFER ALTERNATIVES IF THE CHILD DOESN'T WANT TO TALK

When offered the chance to continue the conversation in a quieter, more private space, the child may choose not to talk. Respect their choice and avoid pressuring, persuading, or forcing them to continue.

- "That's okay. You don't have to talk now."
- "I'm here when you're ready, you can tell me anytime."

Some children feel more comfortable talking while engaged in a familiar activity, such as building, drawing, playing, or using fidgets. This can reduce pressure and help them feel more at ease.

- "We could sit and draw together if you'd like."
- "We can play and talk at the same time if that feels easier."

Let the child know you are available to listen when they are ready. If they would prefer to talk to someone else, support them to choose a trusted adult.

- "If you don't want to talk to me, is there someone else you feel comfortable talking to?"
- "We can find someone you trust to help you."

RESPOND TO DISCLOSURES OF SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

If the child discloses safeguarding concerns, follow the steps for responding appropriately. This includes listening to the child, reassuring them that they did the right thing by telling, letting them know next steps and following service policies and professional obligations for documenting and reporting the disclosure.

If you paused the disclosure to move to a quieter place or safer time, make sure to include this in your recording and reporting.

Adelaide University | Australian Centre for Child Protection

A national Child Safety Reform initiative