

Children and Young People who have been Sexually Abused

About CPS:

CPS is an independent child welfare organisation that provides several programs to address the needs of children and their families.

Our programs include the Sexual Abuse Counselling and Prevention Program (SACPP), Family Services Program, the Fathers' Support Service and Early Years Services.

Most families that are referred to CPS are first matched with two workers who will meet with your family over a number of weeks. During this time the workers will talk with you about what your family's support needs are in order to come up with a plan with your family about how CPS can best support you.

A care plan is made and your family will be allocated a worker/s from the programs who would be the most helpful to your family.

About the Program:

SACPP provides a specialist therapeutic counselling service for:

- Children and young people who have been sexually abused;
- Children under the age of 10 who have engaged in problem sexual behaviours; and
- Young people between 10 and 18 who have engaged in sexually abusive behaviours.

Our counsellors have a broad range of experience and include psychologists, social workers, family therapists and art therapists. Counselling through the SACPP program is provided at no cost to families.

Purpose of Counselling:

Counselling gives children and young people who have been affected by sexual abuse an opportunity to share their experience and talk about their feelings in a safe and accepting environment.

Research shows that children who are listened to and believed following their disclosure and who access counselling are more likely to integrate and heal from their abusive experiences.

Many children and young people appreciate counselling and find it helpful. Counselling aims to:

- Reduce the impact of sexual abuse;
- Provide information and education about sexual abuse;
- Develop strategies of personal safety and protective behaviour in children and young people; and
- Empower you and your child and help you to regain a sense of control in your lives as your family recovers from the impact of sexual abuse.

How long does counselling last?

The length of time your child attends counselling depends on the needs that are identified and the impact of the sexual abuse, often determined by a range of factors, including:

- The nature of the sexual abuse
- The duration of the sexual abuse
- The relationship with the abuser
- The responses of family members and significant others to your child's disclosure.

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What happens in the Program?

The SACPP team uses a whole-of-family approach. Your participation and support of your child's counselling is vital to your child's progress. There are many different ways that counselling can look – sometimes children will be seen on their own and other times they will be seen with their parents or carers, or with the family as a whole.

Usually to start with, your child will be allocated their own counsellor. Your child's counsellor will meet with you to learn more about your child and the experiences your child has had. The counsellor will initially meet with your child for about 6 to 8 sessions. The counsellor will engage your child in a broad assessment around their interests, family, friends, school, their experiences, view of the world and the impacts of the abuse. Usually these sessions occur on a weekly basis at our office.

At the end of the assessment, the counsellor will meet with you to provide feedback and to decide with your family what happens next. If it is thought that your child would benefit from ongoing counselling, your child, the counsellor and yourself will discuss goals for counselling.

Counselling involves using a range of therapeutic tools and mediums including art, play, puppets, painting, drawing and sand tray, depending on the child's age and stage of development.

Your child's counsellor can also provide support to you and your family as well as your child. Sometimes different members of the family can have their own counsellors. If there is more than one worker from CPS involved with your family, the workers will form a care-team to support your family. Workers will meet on a regular basis to make sure they are working together in the best way to support your family.

We will also regularly meet with you and your family to talk about and review the work that we are doing with you to make sure that the service is helpful for your family.

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