



Responding to a Recent Sexual Assault Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of the *Responding to a Recent Sexual Assault Policy* (policy) is to outline the minimum requirements for providing forensic and medical care to individuals aged 13 years or older who have experienced a recent sexual assault.

The policy requirements are based on the trauma informed care principles to consistently deliver care to vulnerable individuals and prevent any further trauma. Inadequate assessment and treatment of individuals who have experienced a recent sexual assault has the potential for re-traumatisation and may contribute to further distress.

For the purposes of the policy, the term 'recent' is defined as the two-weeks following a sexual assault incident.

The policy must be read in conjunction with section 124B of the [Children and Community Services Act 2004](#) relating to the mandatory reporting duties of prescribed health professionals to report concerns of sexual abuse of children to the Department of Communities.

The Child Protection Unit (CPU) at Perth's Children Hospital provides services for children aged 15 years or younger regarding concerns of child sexual abuse.

The policy must also be read in conjunction with:

- [MP 0175/22 Consent to Treatment Policy](#)
- [MP 0051/17 Language Services Policy](#)
- [MP 0166/21 Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse Training Policy](#)

The policy is a mandatory requirement for Health Service Providers under the *Clinical Services and Planning Policy Framework* pursuant to section 26(2)(c) of the *Health Services Act 2016*.

The policy supersedes OP 1928/05 *Coordinated Medical and Forensic and Counselling response to Clients who Experience Recent Sexual Assault and Present to an Emergency Department*.

2. Applicability

The policy is applicable to Health Service Providers (HSPs) except Health Support Services, PathWest Laboratory Medicine WA and the Quadriplegic Centre.

The requirements contained within the Policy are applicable to the services purchased from contracted health entities where it is explicitly stated in the contract between the

contracted health entity and the State of Western Australia or HSP. The State of Western Australia or HSP contract manager is responsible for ensuring that any obligation to comply with the Policy by the contracted health entity is accurately reflected in the relevant contract and managed accordingly.

3. Policy Requirements

HSPs must:

- develop and maintain local policies and procedures for responding to individuals who have experienced a recent sexual assault incident in accordance with the [Responding to a Recent Sexual Assault Procedure](#).
- ensure health care staff are aware of the:
 - Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC) and the services provided for individuals aged 13 years and over
 - Child Protection Unit (CPU) at Perth Children's Hospital and the services provided for children aged 12 years or younger.
 - option where the individual is aged between 13-15 years, health care staff can contact either SARC or CPU.
- ensure healthcare staff undertake the following when managing a recent sexual assault:
 - respond to disclosures of sexual assault in alignment with the trauma informed principles
 - provide the appropriate medical, forensic and psychological care
 - provide psychosocial care, support and safety if assessed as appropriate
 - consider police involvement, if appropriate and consented to by the individual, or where required to
 - consider contact with an appropriate crisis support worker, if appropriate and consented to by the individual
 - ensure appropriate referrals are provided to the individual where required
 - collect data and provide an annual update to Health Networks Directorate as outlined in Section 4 Compliance and Monitoring.

4. Compliance Monitoring

The Health Networks Directorate, Clinical Excellence Division on behalf of the System Manager will monitor compliance with the policy by requesting HSPs to submit an annual report by 30 June each year providing the following information:

- number of sexual assault presentations to the HSP Emergency Department (ED)
- number of referrals made to SARC
- number of recent and historical cases of sexual assault presentations
- demographic information of the individual responded to by the HSP:
 - age
 - gender (male, female, non-binary, unknown, or unstated sex)
 - identifying as:
 - Aboriginal
 - Culturally and linguistically diverse
- number of clinical incident review processes conducted.

The System Manager may also request copies of localised policies, procedures and/or request local data to ensure alignment with policy requirements.

5. Related Documents

The following documents are mandatory pursuant to the policy:

- [Responding to a Recent Sexual Assault Procedure](#)

6. Supporting Information

The following information is not mandatory but informs and/or supports the implementation of the policy:

- [Care package for adults who have experienced sexual trauma](#) (Sexual Assault Resource Centre, North Metropolitan Health Service)
- [Responding to a Recent Sexual Assault: Supporting Information](#) (Department of Health, WA, 2017)
- [Sexual Trauma and Responding to Disclosure of Sexual Assault \(e-Learning package\)](#) (King Edward Memorial Hospital)
- [Guidelines for Protecting Children 2020](#) (Government of WA, Child and Adolescent Health Service)
- [Western Australia's Women's Health and Wellbeing Policy](#) (Department of Health, WA)
- [WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015-2030](#) (Department of Health, WA)

7. Definitions

The following definition(s) are relevant to the Policy.

Term	Definition
Children	Pursuant to s. 3 of the <i>Children and Community Services Act 2004</i> , children mean persons who are under 18 years of age, and in the absence of positive evidence as to age, means persons who are apparently under 18 years of age.
Prescribed health professionals	A person registered under the <i>Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Western Australia)</i> in the medical, midwifery or nursing profession.
Psychosocial care	Crisis intervention or ongoing support to address the psychological and social needs of an individual such as counselling, education, individual advocacy and other services.
Sexual assault	Sexual assault can be any sexual behaviour or act which is threatening, violent, forced, coercive, or exploitive and to which the person has not given consent or was not able to give consent.
Sexual abuse	Pursuant to s. 124A of the <i>Children and Community Services Act 2004</i> , sexual abuse, in relation to a child, includes sexual behaviour in circumstances where — (a) the child is the subject of bribery, coercion, a threat, exploitation or violence; or (b) the child has less power

	than another person involved in the behaviour; or (c) there is a significant disparity in the developmental function or maturity of the child and another person involved in the behaviour.
Trauma informed care	A strengths-based model which is founded on the principles and practice of safety, trust, collaboration, choice, and empowerment. It recognises the importance of individuals and organisations in providing appropriate care in a manner which is non-judgemental and sensitive to the needs of individuals affected by trauma.
WA health system	The WA health system is comprised of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the Department; (ii) Health Service Providers (North Metropolitan Health Service, South Metropolitan Health Service, Child and Adolescent Health Service, WA Country Health Service, East Metropolitan Health Service, PathWest Laboratory Medicine WA, Quadriplegic Centre and Health Support Services); and (iii) contracted health entities, to the extent they provide health services to the State.

8. Policy Contact

Enquiries relating to the Policy may be directed to:

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9. Document Control

Version	Published date	Review date	Amendment(s)
MP 0192/25	19 August 2025	August 2027	Original version

Note: Mandatory policies that exceed the scheduled review date will continue to remain in effect.

10. Approval

Approval by	Nicole O'Keefe, Assistant Director General, Strategy and Governance, Department of Health
Approval date	18 August 2025

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