

Fact Sheet 1: Getting started with information sharing

Part 5.1A of the *Care and Protection of Children Act* and the Information Sharing Guidelines set out how information can be shared.

What is information sharing?

Information sharing helps people and organisations work together for child safety and wellbeing.

Part 5.1A of the *Care and Protection of Children Act* makes it clear how people and organisations can provide and receive information from others who are helping a child and the child's family.

The information sharing provisions in the Act provides the legal basis for the "information sharing framework".

Who may share information?

The name in the legislation for those who are authorised to share information relating to child safety or wellbeing is "Information Sharing Authorities" however they are also commonly referred to in the Information Sharing Guidelines and other supporting material as Authorised Information Sharers (AIS).

Generally, the person who does the sharing will be authorised because of the job she/he holds or because they are a member of a certain profession. Information sharing authorities may share information only with other AIS.

See page 2 of this fact sheet for more information on who is an AIS.

When may I share information?

An AIS must share information which she/he "reasonably believes" will assist a requesting AIS to:

- make a decision, assessment or plan;
- initiate or conduct an investigation; or
- provide a service or perform a function
- For the safety or wellbeing of a child or group of children.

A "reasonable belief" is an honest belief which is well-founded. The AIS does not have to be certain. See Fact Sheet 2 for more on "reasonable belief".

There does not have to be or have been a child protection notification or court order for information to be shared.

The Information Act does not obstruct information sharing for child safety and wellbeing under the Care and Protection of Children Act.

However, there are some grounds for refusing a request. See clause 12 of the Information Sharing Guidelines.

Requests and responses can be made verbally or in writing.

What types of information may I share?

Any information relevant to child safety or wellbeing may be shared. For example information about:

- any past support provided to the child;
- current care circumstances;
- family members and relationships;
- issues relating to a child's siblings or other family members where relevant;
- health and treatment needs;
- any psychological, behavioural or emotional difficulties the child may have;
- educational, developmental, religious or cultural needs;

- a parent's mental health, substance misuse, disability or history of domestic violence; or
- A person posing a risk to the child.

Consent

The consent of a parent or of a young person themselves is not required by law. However, it is good practice to seek consent before sharing information whenever it is safe to do so.

Who is an Information Sharing Authority?

Information sharers may share information only with another AIS. Each information sharer must satisfy themselves that they are authorised under Part 5.1A of the *Care and Protection of Children Act* to share information about a child.

Information sharers include:

- registered foster carers;
- service providers that receive funding from the Australian or Northern Territory Government to provide a service for children, such as non-government organisations (NGOs) and local government;
- school principals and registered teachers;
- registered child care services;
- doctors, nurses, allied health workers and other health professionals;
- hospitals and approved mental health treatment facilities;
- providers of drug or alcohol treatment services that receive funding from the Northern Territory Government;
- public service frontline staff who provide a service to children or in connection with children;
- police officers; and
- lawyers.

Resources

Information Sharing Guidelines

<https://nt.gov.au/community/child-protection-and-care/sharing-information-to-protect-children>

If you have questions about information sharing, call the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities on 1800 565 935 or go to

<https://territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au/publications-and-policies/guidelines-for-information-sharing>