



Getting started with information sharing

The new 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 is to help people and organisations to work together for child safety and wellbeing.

New legislation 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 new Part 5.1A 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 AISs.

Turn to page 2 for more 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.

SEE ALSO:

*Information Sharing Guidelines,
1 July 2012*

Frequently Asked Questions
Questions about information sharing

FACT SHEET 2
Dealing with information requests

FACT SHEET 3
Best practice in information sharing

FACT SHEET 4
Record keeping

FACT SHEET 5
More for DCF officers (available online)

Letter templates *(available online)*

If you have questions about
information sharing, call the
Department of Children and Families
on **1800 288 424** or go to
www.informationsharing.nt.gov.au