



Bravehearts
Educate Empower Protect
Our Kids

Personal Safety

PARENTS' GUIDE

Helping to empower parents and keep kids safe

Bravehearts dedicates this resource to all survivors of child sexual assault and their supporting families, carers and friends.



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About Bravehearts

Bravehearts has been actively contributing to the provision of child sexual assault services throughout Australia since 1997. As the first and largest registered charity specifically and holistically dedicated to addressing this issue in Australia, Bravehearts exists to protect Australian children against sexual harm.

Our Mission

To prevent child sexual assault in our society.

Our Vision

To make Australia the safest place in the world to raise a child.

Our Guiding Principles

To at all times tenaciously pursue our Mission without fear, favour, or compromise and to continually ensure that the best interests, human rights, and protection of the child are placed before all other considerations.

Our Guiding Values

To at all times, act to serve our Mission with uncompromising integrity, respect, energy, and empathy, ensuring fairness, justice, and hope for all children and those who protect them.

The 3 Piers to Prevention

The work of Bravehearts is based on *The 3 Piers to Prevention: Educate, Empower, Protect* - solid foundations to make Australia the safest place in the world to raise a child.

The 3 Piers are:

Educate	Personal safety education for children and young people
Empower	Specialist counselling and support Child protection training for professionals, business, and community Risk management services for organisations Community engagement and awareness
Protect	Lobbying, legislative reform, and research

‘Nothing is more
important than
protecting our kids.’

Hetty Johnston AM
Founder & Executive Chair, Bravehearts Foundation



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Introduction

As parents, carers, and trusted adults in children's lives, the most important role we have is to keep our kids safe.

Teaching kids simple strategies that through regular revision and practice become second nature, can help them build confidence and resilience to empower them to be safe in a variety of situations.

As protectors, we want to be there to catch our children before they fall, to shield them from the bad guys and bullies, and to give them a childhood that is free from hurt and pain. The reality is that we cannot be with our children 24/7, but one of the most important things we can do is to empower them to identify when something doesn't feel right, and to talk to and tell a trusted adult without fear of consequences.

Your role in this education, as their first teacher, is so important and understandably, parents often feel overwhelmed and unsure as to where to start.

This guide aims to provide you with information that will empower you to have what you may think now are difficult conversations with your children.

You will see that teaching age appropriate personal safety is not difficult. All it takes is the willingness to start, some help with content, and time to speak with your children to open the dialogue around personal safety, critical to protecting your children and helping them stay safe.

Thank you for taking the first step.



Statistics about child sexual assault



It is important to understand that child sexual assault is a crime that can potentially affect any family, regardless of race, religion, gender, and economic status. Child sexual assault does not discriminate. Below are some alarming but very real statistics that highlight the prevalence and nature of this crime.

1 in 3 adults in Australia would not believe a child if they disclosed they were being abused.

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011)



A child is 33 times more likely to be the victim of sexual assault than abduction.

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011)



1 in 5 children will be sexually harmed in some way before their 18th birthday.¹

Yet, 98% of child sexual assault cases reported by children are found to be TRUE.



34% of Australian children have had contact online with someone they have not met face to face.

(Green, Brady, et al. 2011)



The median age for sexual abuse to begin is age nine.

((Daugherty, 2007)

4 in 5 child sex offenders would not have been detected through working with children checks.

(Leclerc & Cale, 2015)



In 70-90% of cases, the offender is known to the child and the child's family.



¹ James, 2000; Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006; Collin-Vézina, Daigneault, and Hébert, 2013; Dube et al., 2015. / ² NSW Child Protection Council, 2000

Child sexual assault: Myths and facts

As parents, we all know that child sexual assault is wrong, but what else do we know about it? There is so much silence, secrecy, and shame attached to child sexual assault that the stigma often stands in the way of understanding its insidious nature.

Below are some common myths and facts that exist around child sexual assault that may help to understand why it is so important that we create opportunities for conversations with our kids and provide opportunities for them to express how they are feeling and what is going on for them. Fostering this environment with our children helps them feel safe to share and validates that what they are feeling is normal.

MYTH 1 The parents are at fault for the sexual assault. They should protect their child.

FACT Parents often feel guilt and blame themselves for not protecting their child. However, this attitude shifts blame and enables offenders to avoid responsibility for the actions. The offender is always the person who is responsible for child sexual assault.

MYTH 2 Child sex offenders are mostly strangers.

FACT It is estimated that in 70-90% of cases, the offender is someone the child knows.

MYTH 3 People who sexually assault their own children are not a danger to other children.

FACT Child sex offenders rarely engage in a single offence. A person who offends against their own child/ren may offend against other children.

MYTH 4 Children 'invite' sexual assault by acting seductively.

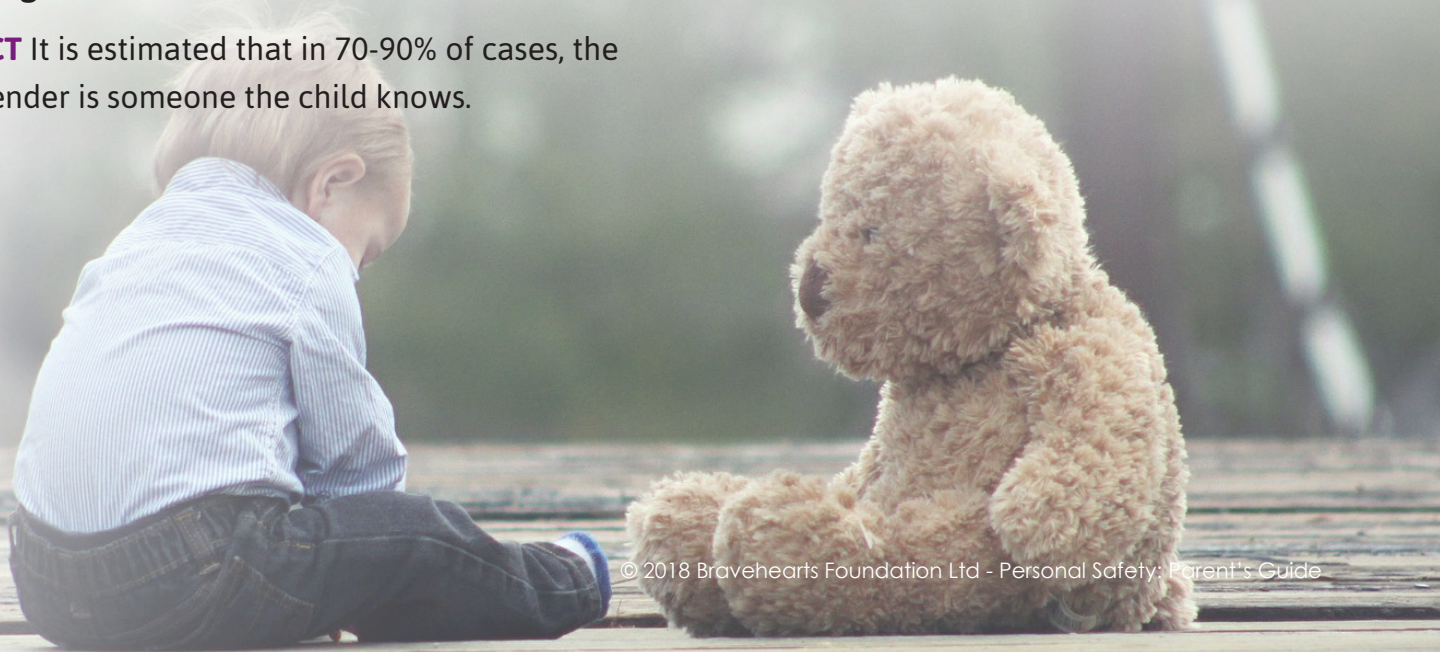
FACT No child wants to be sexually assaulted. Adults have power over children, and they must not manipulate this power.

MYTH 5 Incest and sexual assault only occurs in poor families.

FACT Incest and sexual assault can occur in all kinds of families, rich or poor, large or small, well-educated or not well-educated.

MYTH 6 Some children enjoy sexual attention from adults and this will not harm them.

FACT Sexual assault has many harmful effects on children, and survivors often require support regarding these. Sexual assault can result in children experiencing fear, confusion, guilt, shame, and sadness.



MYTH 7 The child did not say no or try to stop the sexual assault, so it is the child's fault if they are assaulted.

FACT A common stress response is to freeze, and this may prevent a child from responding or saying 'no.' Furthermore, children are often not in a position to stop the assault from happening due to a power imbalance between the offender and the child or the offender is someone the child loves and trusts. No matter what, adult offenders are always responsible, as children are unable to consent.

MYTH 8 Children and young people lie about sexual assault.

FACT 98% of child sexual assault reports by children are found to be true.

MYTH 9 Children can misinterpret and wrongly accuse an adult of sexual assault.

FACT Children often disclose long after their assault has started. The offender often uses behaviours such as 'accidental touching' or tickling to defend their behaviour and blame the child. A child's disclosure should always be acknowledged.

MYTH 10 Incest or child sexual assault is quite acceptable in some cultures.

FACT There is no evidence to support this. The cultural significance of incest and child sexual assault can vary between cultures. Both incest and child sexual assault are illegal in Australia.

MYTH 11 Sexual assault is not harmful. It is the fuss that adults and child protection and legal authorities make that is the problem.



FACT In some cases, intervention by legal, medical, and welfare personnel can be distressing, however this shouldn't be used as an excuse by people to not speak out and to allow sexual assault to continue. In surveys of survivors, most children describe negative effects during and after the time they were sexually assaulted.

MYTH 12 If a child discloses sexual assault and then retracts their statement, they must be lying.

FACT Pressure is mounted on a child following disclosure. Consequences of disclosures can include family breakdown, parent distress, and other effects. Retracting a statement may be a child's attempt to return their situation to normal.

Personal safety education for children

Why teaching your child personal safety is so important

Research shows that teaching children about personal safety:

- Reduces the likelihood of a child entering into an unsafe situation.
- Clearly demonstrates how to respond to an unsafe situation.
- Increases a child's sense of confidence and in doing so increases their resiliency.
- Increases a child's knowledge of their personal rights i.e. "I have the right to feel safe with people."
- Increases the likelihood that the child will speak out if they feel unsafe and tell someone they trust.

Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure Show

Teaching kids personal safety can start at any age and age appropriate education can include the use of resources such as songs, posters, worksheets, and suggested language.

Using resources such as Bravehearts' CD of songs, which you can play at home, in the car, or wherever you may be, is a great way to start introducing the concept of staying safe with your little ones.

At the age of around three, your child will start to understand concepts such as feeling safe and feeling yucky i.e. having 'yes' feelings and 'no' feelings. Bravehearts developed Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure Show (DKSA), a 35-minute, live, interactive performance for children aged 3-8 that teaches them how to stay safe, using music, dance, and actions delivered by Ditto, the friendly lion cub, and an education facilitator.

DKSA was developed by Bravehearts' team of psychologists, teachers, counsellors, and criminologists and informed by our work and experience that show that children are at risk from a young age.

Working with schools and childcare centres, DKSA has been educating children since 2006, providing kids with personal safety tools and strategies while supporting positive self-esteem and resilience building to help keep them safe.

Teaching your child personal safety using Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure Show DVD

The DKSA DVD provides a wonderful opportunity for you to sit with your child, sing the songs, join in with the actions, and interact with Ditto in the comfort of your home.

The show consists of six components that each explore an individual element of personal safety. These components are:

- Differentiating 'yes' and 'no' feelings;
- Recognising the body's 'warning signs';
- Identifying 'private parts' and 'privacy';
- Helping children identify language and feelings associated with secrets;
- Reinforcing that there is no secret that children cannot tell someone;
- What to do if you feel unsafe or unsure.

The show uses language that is age appropriate, non-confrontational, and easy to remember.

We often have teachers, parents, and children thanking Ditto for providing words that can be used and understood at home, and at school in both the classroom and playground.

Although Bravehearts recommends and supports the use of anatomical names, you will notice that we do not use anatomical names

throughout the show, instead referring only to private parts. Reasons for this include that it is very difficult to sing and rhyme using anatomical names, we want to eliminate any objections parents/schools may have in teaching this program and excluding their child from this vital personal safety education. It also allows parents to introduce anatomical names to their children at a time they see fit.

Ditto's 3 Rules

Encapsulating all the components of the show are *Ditto's 3 Rules*:

1. We all have the right to feel safe with people.
2. It's OK to say 'NO' if you feel unsafe or unsure.
3. Nothing is so yucky that you can't tell someone about it.



When young children are learning something new, they need repetition to help consolidate the learning, make meaning and to apply it to their particular situation. Therefore, going over Ditto's 3 Rules together regularly and singing the songs from the show will make it easier for them to learn and retain the information.

Reflected in Ditto's Rule #3 and explored throughout DKSA is the very important personal safety element of identifying trusted adults, people that the child feels safe to talk to if they ever feel unsafe or unsure.

We have provided Ditto's Helper Plan as an activity as part of this guide for you to work through with your child. This will help them identify several trusted adults in different locations that they can talk to. It is very important that this helper plan is revisited regularly, as it is very common for adults to come and go in children's lives for varying reasons.

Revisiting Ditto's rules and the helper plan are great places for you to initiate conversation with your child and strike up a discussion around keeping safe. Regularly checking in and asking how your child is feeling and what is going on for them helps to keep open the lines of communication and build on your positive relationship with your child. It is also a great opportunity to discuss any concerns you may have with them including any changes in behaviour that you may have noticed.

Watching the DVD and working together at home with your child on the following activities will make teaching your child personal safety enjoyable and much less challenging.



QUICK TIPS

- Watch the DKSA DVD on your own before watching with your child. This will give you a clear understanding of the content and the way it is delivered.
- If you have personally experienced child sexual assault, this may be triggering. The best thing you can do for your child and yourself is to seek help and heal yourself. Please call Bravehearts' Intake and Support Line on 1800 272 831 for information and advice.
- We never want to scare or alarm children. Speak calmly and confidently, keeping a neutral, natural tone, ensuring that you have time to allow your child to process the information and ask questions.
- Never make a child feel ashamed or embarrassed about sexuality or body parts.
- Remember that speaking with your child about personal safety should not be a one-off conversation. Rather, create opportunities that allow talking about personal safety to be part of an ongoing dialogue between you and your child. Always let your child know you are there for them and keeping them safe and protecting them is your number one priority.

ACTIVITY: Ditto's 3 Rules



Work with your child while they colour in the three activity worksheets and write the names of or draw people that give them a 'yes' (safe) feeling.

Then, recap Ditto's Rules 1, 2, and 3 together and discuss each rule with your child:

1. We all have the right to feel safe with

people: Kids have the right to feel safe and secure where they live, play, and learn with the people that surround them. This means not feeling unsafe or feeling that someone could hurt them at anytime.

2. It's OK to say 'NO' if you feel unsafe or

unsure: It can be difficult for some children to speak up confidently and say 'no' if someone is making them feel unsafe or uncomfortable. This rule teaches kids that it is OK to stand up for themselves and to be assertive if something doesn't feel right.

3. Nothing is so yucky that you can't tell

someone about it: Encourage your child to speak to a trusted adult, even if something seems scary or terrible. This rule also leads well into the Helper Plan activity and the safety support network.

Display the rules when they have been coloured in a place at home where they can be seen and recalled together.

Ditto's Rule 1

Everyone has the right
to feel safe with people.



Can you
say this?

Ditto's Rule 2

It's ok to say 'NO'
if you feel unsafe or unsure.



Can you
say this?

Ditto's Rule 3

Nothing is so yucky that you
can't tell someone about it.



Can you
say this?

ACTIVITY: The Helper Plan



The Helper Plan is an activity sheet (on next page) to work through with your child to help them identify their support network. This activity should be revisited regularly in case a person on the plan has a change of circumstance. In addition, it is a good idea to revisit the details to help the child remember.

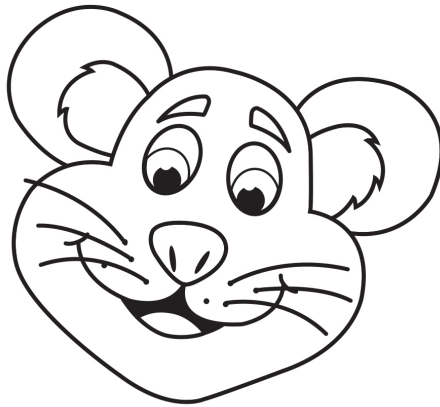
Support networks are important to establish who the child feels comfortable with, trusts, and is happy to speak to, but it also provides contacts of official organisations that can help.

Children need time to speak about 'trust' and who they trust with their special or private information. In our education program, we have used the following definition for trust as an example: ***Trust is generally something we feel when we know somebody will do the right thing to protect us, help us, support us, or care for us and we feel safe.***

During this activity, allow the child time to think about who they would like to nominate and who they trust. Encourage them to find a safe place to keep Ditto's Helper Plan.



Ditto's Helper Plan



To fill in this Helper Plan, use the names of people that make you feel safe.

School

Safe Adult

Family

Safe Adult

Who can help?

Bravehearts
1800 272 831

Kids Helpline
1800 55 1800

FOR EMERGENCY ONLY
Police
000

Keeping kids safe online

Today more than ever, our kids are learning, interacting, and communicating in an online world.

It is just as important to talk about online personal safety with your children as it is offline personal safety.

There are so many positives for children online, and we do not want to scare them. We do however want them to know that just like in the face-to-face world, the online world does require them to take care.

Below are tips for keeping children of all ages safe online.

Tips for keeping kids safe online

Preschool aged children

This age group is just beginning to learn how computers work and the joy they can bring. This includes visiting children's websites and helping them compose friendly emails to family and friends.

Be sure to sit with your child during this learning stage on the computer and choose websites that are suitable for your child's age group.

Primary school aged children

Children of this age feel more confident using the internet and may start to use social media. Some kids at this age may also try to search for prohibited material. Children at this stage will also notice marketing material and may want to purchase products online.

Ensure the computer is kept in an open family space (such as the lounge room) and not in the child's bedroom, which will allow you to maintain close supervision.



High school aged children

Teenagers will want more independence and freedom while using the internet. Their use of social media will grow as will their network of online 'friends'.

This age group may also try to explore prohibited material. While it is more difficult to keep tight supervision on what teenagers are doing online, it is vital that you stay in touch with them and discuss any issues that may occur. Again, keeping the computer in a public area in your home can assist with this.

Steps to making your computer kid-safe

- Install safety and security software - be sure to keep it updated.
- Use internet and spam filters and pop-up stoppers.
- Install monitoring software and monitor downloads to your computer.
- Enable internet browser security and check the internet usage history.
- Use a family-friendly internet service provider.

Kids and social media

On social media, kids tend to interact with more confidence than they normally would in a face-to-face situation.

This can make children susceptible to cyber stalkers who can skilfully pretend to be someone they are not.

In this space more than ever, kids need to know they should never give out personal information such as name, address, phone number, or bank details.

Kids and smartphones

Most smart phones have access to the internet, just like a computer. This creates the same internet safety issues, making it impossible to supervise at all times.

When buying a child a mobile phone, make sure the device you purchase is appropriate for their age and experience. There are blocks you can put on the phone to stop the user accessing the internet and bluetooth. This action will protect the child against hackers who can track their location via the phone.



Teach your children these essential tips for keeping safe online:

- **Never** tell anyone your full name, address, number, or school.
- **Never** send a photo of yourself to anyone.
- **Never** tell anyone your credit card or bank details.
- **Never** make plans to meet in real life anyone you meet online.
- **Never** talk to anyone who makes you feel uncomfortable.
- **Always** be careful who you talk to on social media.
- **Always** tell your parents or carer if someone says something to you online that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe.
- **Always** stay away from websites that are not meant for children.
- **Always** remember that people are not always WHO or WHAT they seem online.



QUICK TIPS

- Educate yourself: check out different sites and apps for yourself. The more familiar you are with them, the easier it is for you to talk to your kids. Ask your kids questions - encourage them to teach you.
- Talk with your kids: have conversations with your kids about the importance of safety online and show them how to implement this. You can do this without frightening them. For example, let them know that you have been hearing about online safety and ask what they think the risks are and what they do to keep safe.
- Teach your kids to think about online behaviour: teach your children about how much they should be sharing online and what happens to information once posted or shared, talk about respectful interactions and responsible behaviour, and encourage them to critically think about what they read and see online (remind them that not everything they read may be true).
- Come up with a plan around safety: with your child, talk about ways to not only stay safe, but also how to respond to anything that happens that may concern them. Let them know they can talk to you or another adult they can trust. Encourage them to be proactive by accessing information on safety, for example, through Bravehearts or the eSafety Commission website.
- Remember, the positive aspects of young people engaging online outweigh the negatives.

Additional helpful resources

Storybooks about personal safety

For extra assistance helping your child with personal safety strategies, feeling safe, and privacy, there are two storybooks available from our [online shop](#) - *Ben and the Babysitter* and *Becky and the Doctor* (pictured on the right).

To purchase, visit: bravehearts.org.au/shop/resources/



Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure songs (CDs)

The music that accompanies and supports *Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure Show* is available in two different CDs with adapted musical styles for younger children in their early years (0-4 years) and older children in lower primary (5-8 years). These songs can be played again and again to communicate key personal safety messages. Lyrics are provided in the CD sleeves to present the content of each song as well as a written reminder of Ditto's 3 Rules. Both CD's are available to purchase from bravehearts.org.au/shop/resources/



Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure Activity Booklet

A personal safety activity book for young children that reinforces key messages found in the *Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure* program. This book works well with adult support and guided discussion on how young children should begin to make safe choices and who to talk to when they feel unsafe or unsure. Available to purchase from bravehearts.org.au/shop/resources/



Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure Parent Packs (0-4 years & 5-8 years)

Our parent/carer packs contain resources to assist parents or carers with educating their children about personal safety.

The packs contains:

- > Parents' Guide (A5 printed booklet)
- > Ditto Keep Safe Adventure Show DVD
- > x 3 full colour posters displaying Ditto's 3 Keep Safe Rules (A3 size)
- > Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure Activity Book
- > Ditto Keep Safe Adventure Music CD

Available to purchase from bravehearts.org.au/shop/resources/



Parent information and advice

Bravehearts' website - bravehearts.org.au - has a wealth of information and tip sheets on issues surrounding child sexual assault and keeping children safe.

Responding to disclosures

Below is a brief overview of how to react and what to do if a child or young person discloses a sexual assault, abuse or harm to you. Whether it is your own child or a child in your care, your response to any disclosure of harm (or potential harm) can be the first important step in protecting the child from further harm.

This initial response can vary depending on circumstances and needs. Responses may consist of implementing protective strategies, engaging appropriate support services or making reports to relevant authorities.

Remember: Disclosing is difficult and brave

It is important to understand how difficult it can be for a child to disclose abuse or sexual harm. Offenders put a great deal of time and effort into ensuring the child remains silent. Some of the reasons a child may have trouble disclosing include;

- They think they will get into trouble.
- They feel guilty or ashamed.
- They feel that no one will believe them.
- The offender may be someone they heavily rely on (such as a parent or caregiver).
- They don't want the offender to get into trouble.

Do's and Don'ts

DO NOT force the child to talk about it - you are there to listen to what they want to tell you.

DO NOT use direct or leading questions.

DO what you need to make the child feel safe.

DO follow your obligation to report as soon as practically possible (if applicable).

DO document the conversation, using the child's exact words as best you can.

What to do if a child or young person discloses a sexual assault or harm to you

If a child or young person discloses to you, try to follow these steps:

- Listen carefully to all they say.
- Tell them you believe them and it's not their fault.
- Let them know you will do everything in your power to help them, but do not make promises.
- Let the child know that you will need to tell someone to help keep them safe. Though this may upset the child, it is very important that you act protectively and in the child's best interest.

What if you suspect a child or young person is being harmed?

Sometimes a child or young person's behaviour or words may lead you to suspect that child is unsafe or being harmed. In this situation, it is important to:

- Not frighten the child or young person by asking confronting questions.
- Let the child or young person know that you are there for them if they ever need to talk.
- Record your concerns including any behavioural observations or conversations you may have had with the child or young person.
- Importantly: follow your obligation to report as soon as practically possible (if applicable).
- If at ANY time you feel a child is under threat or in need of immediate protection, call 000.

Child Protection Services contact list

Australian Capital Territory

Office for Children, Youth and Family
(Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services) *mandated reporters
Phone: 1300 556 729 or 1300 556 728
dhcs.act.gov.au/ocyfs

Department of Education and Training
Phone: 02 6207 5111
det.act.gov.au

New South Wales

Department of Community Services
Phone: 132 111
community.nsw.gov.au

Department of Education and Training
Phone: 02 9561 8000
det.nsw.edu.au

Northern Territory

Department of Health and Families
Phone: 1800 700 250
childrenandfamilies.nt.gov.au/Agency/index.aspx

Department of Education and Training
Phone: 08 8999 5659
deet.nt.gov.au/education

Queensland

Department of Child Safety
Phone: 1800 811 810 (b/h)
or 1800 177 135 (a/h)
childsafety.qld.gov.au

Department of Education, Training and the Arts
Phone: 07 3237 0111
education.qld.gov.au

South Australia

Families SA (Department for Families and Communities)
Phone: 131 478
familiesandcommunities.sa.gov.au

Department of Education and Children's Services
Phone: 08 8226 1000 or 1800 088 158
decs.sa.gov.au

Tasmania

Child Protection Services (Department of Health and Human Services)
Phone: 1300 737 639
dhhs.tas.gov.au

Department of Education
Phone: 1300 135 513
GPO Box 169, Hobart, Tas 7001
education.tas.gov.au

Victoria

Child Protection and Family Services (Office for Children)
Phone: 131 278
office-for-children.vic.gov.au/child-protection-family-services

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Phone: 03 9637 2222 or 1800 809 834
education.vic.gov.au

Western Australia

Department for Child Protection
Phone: 08 9222 2555 (b/h)
or 1800 199 008 (a/h)
community.wa.gov.au/dcp

Department of Education and Early Training
Phone: 08 9264 4111
det.wa.edu.au/education

MY EMERGENCY CONTACTS

MY LOCAL POLICE NUMBER IS:

.....

FOR EMERGENCIES ONLY:

000

Bravehearts INFORMATION & SUPPORT LINE:

1800 272 831

(8:30am - 4:30pm EST, Monday to Friday)





Hi! I'm Ditto the lion cub.
I teach kids about keeping safe.

I have 3 RULES to teach you.
Do you think you can learn
them by heart? Let's see!

Rule 1

We all have the right to
feel safe with people.

Rule 2

It's OK to say "NO!"
if you feel unsafe
or unsure.

Rule 3

Nothing is so
yucky that you
can't tell someone
about it.

Ditto says...

If you ever feel **UNSAFE** or **UNSURE**,
you should **RUN** and **TELL** someone
you can trust.

Bravehearts

Educate Empower Protect Our Kids

bravehearts.org.au

Information & Support Line 1800 272 831 (Mon to Fri 8:30am - 4:30pm)



Bravehearts is Australia's only charity dedicated specifically to preventing child sexual assault and helping survivors heal through holistic counselling and support.

As a not-for-profit, Bravehearts relies on the support of the community to fund our vital work. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation today.



Bravehearts

Educate Empower Protect
Our Kids



bravehearts.org.au