

# The Thogomelo Project

## A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY CAREGIVERS

Responding to child abuse,  
neglect and exploitation



social development

Department:  
Social Development  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



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Health and Wellness Sector  
Education and Training Authority  
**HWSETA**

# Child protection

## What is child protection?

Child protection is:

- Preventing and protecting children from any form of abuse, maltreatment, neglect or degradation
- Responding to children who have been abused or harmed
- Responding to children in need of care and protection

## Why is protecting our children important?

Child protection makes sure that our children are safe and their developmental needs are met. Developmental needs include:

- Physical needs
- Emotional needs
- Spiritual needs
- Economic needs
- Social needs
- Mental needs
- Cultural needs

*Child wellbeing is achieved when the child's developmental potential is met in a caring and supportive environment.*

## What happens when children are not protected?

When our children are not protected they are at risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

### **maltreatment**

violent, cruel  
behaviour

### **degradation**

taking someone's pride  
away; treating people  
with no respect

### **exploitation**

treating  
badly; taking  
advantage of

## What is child abuse?

Child abuse is any type of harm or ill-treatment to a child such as hitting, beating, sexual abuse, bullying, child labour, hurting the child emotionally or psychologically.

## What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. It is abuse whether the child has consented or not. This can be flashing, peeping, fondling, exposure to pornographic material, oral sex, finger penetration of the anus, rape, sodomy or prostitution.

## What is physical abuse?

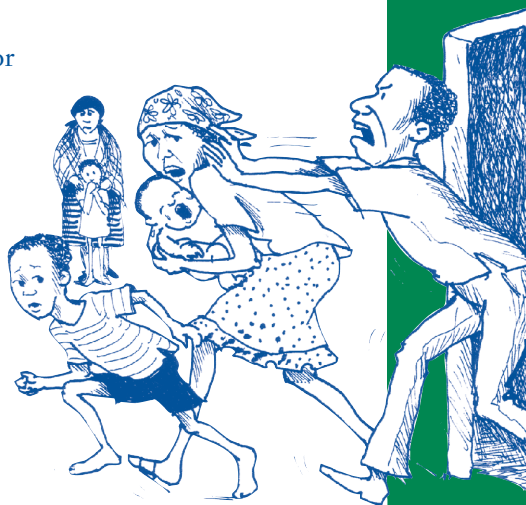
This is any act that results in inflicted injury or death to a child.

This can be bruises and welts, cuts and abrasions, fractures or sprains, poisoning, burns, and any repeated injury for which the explanation is inadequate or inconsistent.

## What is neglect?

Neglect is deliberately not providing for a child's physical needs (such as food, warmth, shelter or protection from danger). It can result in continuous hunger, malnutrition, bad hygiene or poor living conditions. Neglect is also:

- failure to seek, obtain or follow through with medical care
- failure to make provision for the child's education, when the necessary money and resources are available
- leaving children alone



### flashing

exposing one's private parts to a child

### pornographic material

magazines, books or movies that are about sex

### sodomy

sex in the anus

### welts

red, raised areas

## What is emotional and psychological abuse?

This abuse is a pattern of behaviour that harms or limits a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth. It can take the form of:

- criticism, threats or rejection
- ignoring, isolating, taking advantage, corrupting or terrorising a child
- favouring one child over another
- not meeting a child's need for affection or attention
- shouting or swearing at a child
- threatening violence or attempts to frighten the child
- lying to a child

## What is child exploitation?

This is exposure of a child to the following situations:

- child labour
- slavery
- sexual exploitation
- child-pornography
- child-trafficking
- forced removal of body parts

Child labour is work that is inappropriate for the child's age and harms his or her developmental needs.

## What is violence?

Any activity by a person, organisation or context that does not allow a person to reach their human rights. This can be:

- verbal
- physical
- emotional
- armed conflict
- political

**deliberately**  
intentionally;  
on purpose

**rejection**  
not showing a  
child love

**corrupting**  
encouraging a  
child to do bad or  
illegal things

**terrorising**  
scaring;  
frightening

# What can I do about child abuse?

## What are the warning signs that indicate the child might be at risk or vulnerable?

- Physical signs such as bruising, head injuries, broken bones or malnutrition.
- Change in behaviour such as not going to school, withdrawal, poor concentration, fear, anxiety, suicidal or self-harming behaviour.
- Other signs such as obsessions, inappropriate sexual behaviour, inappropriate anger, bed-wetting and difficulty sleeping, or changes in eating.

## How do I respond when a child reports child abuse to me?

### Follow these guidelines from ChildLine South Africa:

- Believe the child.
- Thank the child for having the courage to talk to you.
- Tell the child that it was not his or her fault.
- Explain confidentiality – that although the child has disclosed in confidence, you as the adult need to report to the right authority, like the social worker, so that the child can get help and support. Address the child's concerns. Maybe share with them the understanding of “good and bad secrets”.
- Recognise and be sensitive to the child's feelings. Listen to the child, reflect on their feelings and reassure them that you will find support for them.

**inappropriate**  
not suitable;  
wrong

**obsessions**  
when people or things become  
too important to you and you  
think about them all the time

## What must I NOT do?

- Investigate the abuse.
- Remove the child unless the child is in immediate and serious danger.
- Confront the abuser or the parents.
- Decide if the child is telling the truth or not.
- Over-react when a child tells you of the abuse – listen kindly and calmly.
- Make any promises to the child that you can't keep.
- “Bad-mouth” the abuser.

*Always refer and report to the social worker so that the child can be helped and protected.*

## Why do I need to report child abuse, neglect and exploitation?

As a community caregiver:

- You have a **legal responsibility** according to the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters Amendment Act) to report cases or suspected cases of sexual abuse to the police or a social worker.
- You have a **moral responsibility** (according to the Children's Act) to report cases of abuse or neglect to the police or a social worker. But if you are employed, for example as a child and youth care worker or a social auxiliary worker, you have a legal responsibility as well.

### **bad-mouth**

criticise; to say bad things about someone

### **moral**

having to do with the right or wrong conduct

# Reporting the abuse

## What information do I need to report the abuse?

- Name, surname and age of the child.
- Physical address or contact details of child.
- Name, address and contact details of the parent, guardian or primary caregivers if you know them.
- Type of abuse you suspect has occurred and any other details you have (without investigating the abuse!).
- Name and contact details of anyone who can confirm the abuse.
- Your name and how you can be contacted – anonymous reports will be accepted and investigated.

*If you suspect abuse but don't have all this information, you should still report your concern to a social worker.*



### **anonymous**

nameless; you don't have to identify yourself



## What happens after reporting to the police or a social worker?

- The social worker will investigate the abuse.
- The police will investigate the abuse.
- Both the police and social workers are responsible for the safety of the child. This means possibly removing the child to safe care or removing the perpetrator.
- Remember that the criminal proceedings will take time to go through the Criminal Justice System (the investigation, prosecution, court and correctional system). Criminal proceedings may not always happen.

## What happens to me if I report child abuse, neglect or exploitation?

- The investigating social worker will contact you to discuss your referral and anything that is unclear.
- If you report a case or suspect a case of abuse, neglect or exploitation, you cannot be charged by the parents or primary caregivers if the referral was done in good faith to protect the best interest of the child.

### Who do I report to?

- A social worker
- Phone 0800 60 10 11
- ChildLine 08000 55 555
- A Child Protection Organisation in your area
- For human trafficking 0800 555 999

### prosecution

taking offenders  
to court to get  
punishment for them

### Tips on confidentiality

- Confidentiality is very important when dealing with abuse or possible abuse.
- The information must be reported to a social worker who will take the case further.
- Any information or issues about the abuse or the child must only be discussed with the police or social worker. You can only discuss this if you have the “informed consent of the child”. This means that the situation must be discussed with the child to make sure that he/she knows what to expect.
- When a child discloses abuse, you cannot promise to keep it a secret because you are under a legal or moral obligation to report the abuse. For this reason, it is very important to tell the child that it may not be possible to keep this information completely confidential.

*If a child is missing,  
report this to the  
police immediately or  
as soon as possible.  
It is not necessary  
to wait for 24 hours  
before reporting the  
missing child.*



### informed

the child must understand  
the situation and know  
what to expect



# What do I need to know about referrals?

## What is a referral?

A referral is the process of providing for the complete needs of a child through helping the child or household access a range of services. Referrals also include reasonable follow-up to assist in the feedback from the service and the child.<sup>1</sup>

A referral system is a network to link services in a community. The purpose is to provide a continuum of care for children.

## Why do we need to refer?

Community caregivers and their organisations cannot always provide all the services that children require. Sometimes specialised services are needed to meet a child's specific needs and to provide the best possible care.

*All services in a community  
should work together to share  
the responsibility of care and  
services for each child.*

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<sup>1</sup> Family Health International. January 2005. Establishing referral networks for comprehensive HIV care in low-resource settings.

### **continuum of care**

when a child is cared  
for over time and in a  
range of ways

## Who needs referral?

- Children in need of care and protection.
- Families in need of care and support.
- Children in need of support and early intervention services.
- Community caregivers who need support in building their psychosocial wellbeing.

### Follow these easy steps to set up a referral system:

- Write up a list of all the services and projects that can help children, families in need of care and protection, and community caregivers in your community.
- List the contact people, telephone numbers and addresses of these services. Include what each of these services can offer you, the children and the families.
- Get to know who the people are that provide each of these services. Find out what steps you need to follow to refer children or families to them.
- Make sure that confidentiality is kept when referring children.



What do I need to know about referrals?

**intervention**  
stepping in  
so that a bad  
situation ends



## How do I refer a child?

- Explain to the child and primary caregiver why you are referring them and the kind of help and support they can get.
- Give the child and primary caregiver:
  - the details of the person and organisation
  - where they are
  - how they can access the service
  - if possible, give them a card or referral letter with the details on it (include the details of why you are referring them)
- Give a referral letter to the person you are referring the child to. It must describe the reason for the referral and the service needed. Include the details of the child. Keep a copy of the documents.
- Follow up with the child to check whether he/she went to the appointment. Ask if the child needs any more help.
- Ask the service or person you have referred the child to, to give you feedback so that you can check that the needs of the child have been met. Follow up every week until you are sure that the investigation has begun and the child is safe.
- Make a note of the following:
  - name and contact details of the person that you talk to
  - the date and time
  - how you made the referral, for example in person, face-to-face, by telephone

# What are the roles of the referral services?

## 1. The Department of Social Development (DSD) and Child Protection Organisations.

The social workers role is to:

- Do a risk assessment through consultations. Compile a plan of action according to the needs and circumstances of the child and his or her family.
- Do emergency removal if the wellbeing of the child is at risk. Arrange alternative care for children in need of protection as well as the recruitment, selection, training and support of safe-house parents, foster parents and adoptive parents.
- Prepare the child and family for alternative care where applicable. Develop and make permanent plans for children in these situations.
- Deliver or arrange ongoing counselling for the child, the family and the offender.
- Design and implement preventive and developmental activities to prevent the child abuse.
- Decide if the child is in need of care and support. Provide the necessary support to the child and to his or her family.
- Deliver probation services and diversion programmes to children in conflict with the law and their families.
- Recruit, select, train, support and retain community caregivers.
- Co-ordinate services and link all concerned with the necessary resources and support systems through effective case management.

### **probation services**

the services of a social worker who works with people who are in trouble with the law

### **diversion programmes**

programmes that help improve someone's wellbeing

### Contact details

- National Department of Social Development 0800 60 10 11
- ChildLine 08000 55 555
- Child Welfare South Africa 011 492 2888

## 2. The South Africa Police Service

Their role is to:

- Investigate the allegation of abuse.
- Open a “docket” for reported cases.
- Make sure the child is safe and is not subjected to secondary trauma.
- The police officer will interview the child to get a statement. He/she will take the age and other evidence into account during the interview. He/she will take the child for a medical examination if necessary.<sup>2</sup>
- The prosecutor and investigating police officer are responsible for opposing bail or requesting conditions if bail is granted. Talk to the police about these options, and ask for a copy of the bail conditions.
- Find out whether a criminal offence has been committed. Collect evidence for prosecution and proceed with the charges.
- Bring all reported cases of abuse or crimes against children to the attention of the Department of Social Development or a designated Child Protection Organisation.
- Forward the case to the National Prosecution Agency (NPA) for a decision on whether to prosecute or not. Keep the victim informed of the progress in the case.<sup>3</sup>

2 [http://www.saps.gov.za/org\\_profiles/core\\_function\\_components/fcs/establish.htm](http://www.saps.gov.za/org_profiles/core_function_components/fcs/establish.htm)

3 CHILDREN<http://www.case.org.za>

### **docket**

an official police file with a reference number

### **opposing bail**

saying that a person should not be allowed out of jail for the period before their court case

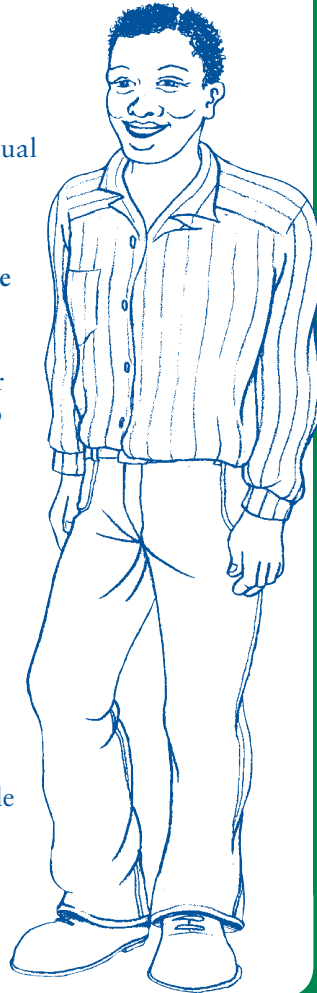
- Any adult can open a case on behalf of the child even if the child is not there.
- The police may also order an abuser to leave the child's home if this will make him or her safe.
- Participate in inter-sectoral child protection teams, including joint investigations with designated social workers.

#### Contact details

- SAPS Emergency Services 10111
- Crime Stop 08600 10111
- Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences (FCS) Unit 012 393 2359 or [childprotect@saps.org.za](mailto:childprotect@saps.org.za)

#### What do I do if the person suspected of abuse intimidates me?

- In a case of domestic intimidation, apply to SAPS or the court for a protection order in terms of the Domestic Violence Act (No 116 of 1998). This tells you what to do to prevent the person threatening you.
- In the case of the suspected abuser being someone outside your home, do one of the following:
  - if the person has been charged, speak to the Investigating Officer at SAPS or the Prosecutor at the court to ask for conditions of bail to be set that will protect you.
  - if a charge has not been laid, it is possible to ask a lawyer to apply for a protection order through the court. This will cost money.



What are the roles of the referral services?

#### **designated**

selected; chosen;  
appointed

#### **intimidates**

threatens or  
frightens

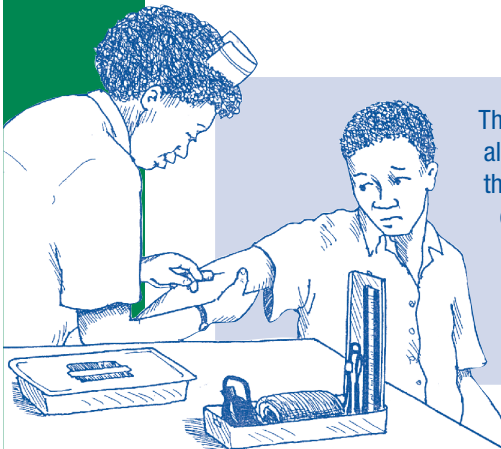
#### **domestic**

a situation in the home  
involving family members  
or relationship partners

### 3. The National Prosecuting Authority and the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development Sexual Offences Court

Their role is to:

- Provide facilities at courts where child witnesses (especially in the case of abuse) can testify in a friendly and secure environment without the risk of being intimidated. This is to prevent and reduce secondary victimisation. This may include providing child-witness rooms which are fitted with one-way glass or closed circuit television next to the courtrooms, or an intermediary (When a child is giving evidence in court, members of the public may not be allowed in the courtroom. This is to help the child feel free to speak).
- Improve prosecution and conviction rates through the education of child victims, caregivers and other witnesses on processes and requirements for the trial in court.
- Provide the complainants and others with skills to manage their stress. Encourage victims and witnesses to testify.



The victim of a sexual offence can apply for the alleged offender to be tested for HIV and have the test results disclosed to him or her<sup>4</sup>. A parent or caregiver may apply on behalf of a child.

However, even when the result of testing is negative, children **MUST** continue taking their preventive medication as prescribed by the doctor.

<sup>4</sup> National Policy Framework and strategic plan for the prevention and management of child abuse, neglect and exploitation. Department of Social Development.

#### **intermediary**

someone who sits in the 'child witness room' and helps the child

#### **complainants**

people who have asked the court to judge their cases

#### 4 The District and Local offices of the Department of Health

Their role is to:

- Conduct a medical examination of a child who has been abused. A special crime kit must be used when a victim of a crime is being examined.
- Collect medico-legal evidence for the successful prosecution of perpetrators in the criminal justice system.
- Refer children to psychiatrists, psychologists or social workers as necessary.
- Co-operate with other sectors involved in child protection.

#### 5. The Department of Correctional Services

Their role is to:

- Provide rehabilitation services for convicted offenders (including child offenders).
- Prevent further abuse and protect children who are in their care and custody.

#### 6. Labour inspectors, particularly around child labour

Their role is to:

- Contact social workers when incidents of child labour are identified.
- Prevent further abuse by referring the perpetrators for prosecution.
- Provide education on the prevention of child labour.

**psychiatrists**  
doctors who  
treat people with  
mental illnesses

**psychologists**  
people who study how  
people's minds work and how  
this affects their behaviour

**custody**  
under  
supervision of



## 7. The Department of Home Affairs

Their role is to:

- Promote and facilitate the registration of all children as soon as possible after birth.
- Support refugee children and reunite them with family, where appropriate.
- Be responsible for implementation of the Films and Publications Act which prohibits the production, use and distribution of child pornography.

## 8. Educators

Their role is to:

- Help in the prevention, identification, management and referral of child abuse and children in need of care and support.
- Support children who have experienced abuse (such as bullying) in the classroom and school environment.

## 9. The South African Social Security Association (SASSA)

Their role is to:

- Accept and process social grant applications.
- Improve the delivery of social grants.
- Deal with fraud and corruption of social grants.

**prohibits**  
bans

## What can I do if there is no follow-up to the referral?

Sometimes gaps occur in the referral system. It is important to take steps to close the gaps.

- Arrange to meet the relevant service providers, or telephone them.
- Ask for clarity on the protocols to refer children.
- Explain to them why you would like feedback on the referred child.

## What can I do to strengthen the referral system?

- Invite the referral services to a meeting to create a more formal referral network and to work out the roles and responsibilities of each partner in the referral system.
- Draw a community map to show how the services are related.
- Discuss the protocols for referral and feedback.
- Encourage all partners to develop personal contacts within the referral network.
- Mobilise the community to use and support the referral network through raising awareness and building demand for services. Encourage your community support network to be involved.



### protocols

sets of rules;  
procedures

# Children with disabilities

## Why are children living with disabilities vulnerable?

Children with disabilities:

- Need more help and take up more time and energy than any other child.
- Need more money for their physical and accessible wellbeing.
- Have very specific needs. This is especially true in the rural areas where the community may not understand all the needs and may isolate that family.
- Some children with intellectual or mental disabilities cannot tell the difference between right and wrong. Perpetrators often know this.
- Some children with physical disabilities cannot defend themselves physically.
- Sometimes there is stigma, discrimination, fear and ignorance that surrounds disability. Families at times do not know how to care for these children. Sometimes they believe myths about disability. This can cause abuse and neglect.

## How can I support the wellbeing of children living with disabilities?

- Make sure that all children with disabilities are safe and in a caring situation that is favourable for the wellbeing of that child.
- Make sure that children with disabilities have access to the necessary hygiene for their physical health

### **isolate**

leave alone; cut off; separate from

### **stigma**

shame; disgrace; embarrassment

### **discrimination**

unfair treatment of someone because of their disabilities (or religion, race, etc)

- Be patient with the child with a disability – it might take this child longer to explain what is happening to him or her due to the disabilities.
- Make sure that the disability grant is used to the advantage of the child with the disability – this grant must only be used to meet the special needs of the child with the disability.
- Form support groups for the parents of children with disabilities to help them with their daily challenges and frustrations. These can also form a basis for people who can prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation in the communities.
- If you suspect that the child with a disability in the community is at risk or has been abused, neglected or exploited, help sensitise the family or the staff at the place of safety where the child is placed to meet the specific needs of that child. Also try to make sure that the child can access and use facilities (universal accessibility) and live safely in this place. For example, a child in a wheelchair must be able to use the bathroom.

## Where can I refer a child living with a disability or a family in need of assistance?

National Council for Persons with Physical Disabilities in South Africa (NCPDSA)

Office: +27 11 726 8040 Mobile: +27 079 516 2467

They also offer sensitivity training in the community.



*Make sure that all children with disabilities are safe and in a caring situation that is favourable for their wellbeing.*

### ignorance

lack of knowledge or facts

### myths

things that people wrongly believe

### sensitise

to make someone understand or be aware of a problem



# Protecting vulnerable children

## Child Care Forums (CCFs) help protect children

- CCFs are locally based, organised groups that work together to support orphans and vulnerable children in their own communities. They aim to respond to the needs of the community and encourage traditional communal life.
- The forum is made up of volunteers from the community and is often led by social workers and community caregivers appointed by government and NGOs<sup>5</sup>.
- The role of the CCF members is to:
  - mobilise communities for early identification of orphans and vulnerable children in the community
  - determine who the primary caregivers of the identified children are
  - conduct assessments on the physical, emotional and social needs of each child
  - help children to access birth certificates, grants, medical treatment and care<sup>6</sup>
  - recruit foster parents for children
  - organise after-school care and holiday programmes

There are other structures in communities in South Africa that you can access. These could be CCFs, or District Child Protection Committees, or be called by another name. Find out what structures exist in your community and district.

### **mobilise**

organise people and  
bring them together to  
achieve something

## What can I do in my everyday community caregiving activities to protect children?

- Talk and listen to children. Take what they say seriously. Encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings.
- Encourage them to participate in community activities such as sport, youth clubs, singing, drama, religious activities and developing food gardens.
- Encourage them to attend school and do their homework.
- Tell children not to talk to strangers. They must also be careful with people they know.
- Teach them not to go to strange places with anyone.
- Teach children not to keep secrets that make them feel uncomfortable.
- Tell them not to allow anybody to touch their private body parts.
- Encourage them to talk to someone when they feel uncomfortable, threatened or are harmed – such as a doctor, teacher, community caregiver or someone they trust.

*Community caregivers have an important role to play in child protection!*



5 Save the Children. What do we do in Africa? [savethechildren.org.uk](http://savethechildren.org.uk).

6 Department of Social Development (Child Care Forums)

**uncomfortable**  
embarrassed;  
uneasy

## What can I do to help make children safer?

- Teach them who to call for help:
  - The South African Police Service on 10111
  - ChildLine on 08000 55 555
- Help them to understand who they can ask for help, such as a trusted family member or friend.

## How can I strengthen families to protect children?

- Encourage families to plan for the future of their children (inheritance).
- Visit homes and encourage family members to talk to each other, to focus on the needs of the child, to spend time together and to develop a supportive and caring environment.
- Remind and support the family to register their children, and to get their children's birth certificates and identity documents.
- Refer the family for a social grant or a disability grant, if applicable.
- Raise awareness in your community that everyone has a responsibility to protect children from harm.
- Share with children that there are “good secrets” and “bad secrets” – good ones make a child feel happy and bad ones make a child feel sad, angry or hurt.
- Encourage families and organisations to make plans with children when they go to community, social or sporting events in case a child gets lost. You could arrange to make a place to meet at a specific time or write a cellphone number on the piece of paper for the child to keep.

### **inheritance**

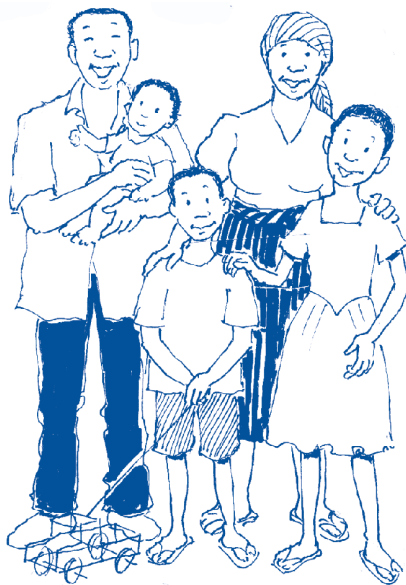
property or money  
you get from  
someone who dies

## How can communities help to protect children?

- Create a sense of belonging for all children and families by;
  - involving them in community activities
  - making sport and recreation facilities available for them
  - encouraging youth development activities
- Spread information to raise awareness about the importance of child protection.
- Provide immediate and accessible help for children who have been abused and for families in need.
- Report cases of child neglect, abuse and exploitation to social workers and police.
- Provide comfort and a sense of hope for all community members.
- Develop circles of support with schools for vulnerable children.
- Get involved in caring schools and school safety projects.

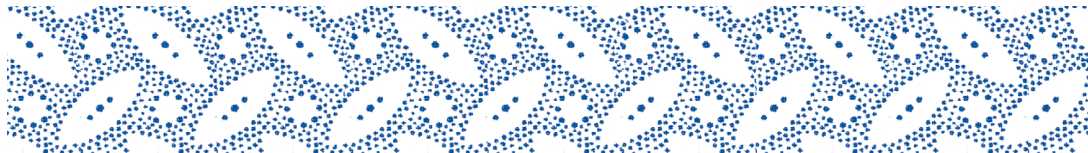
### Where can a child get help?

- *The South African Police Service on 10111*
- *ChildLine on 08000 55 555*



**accessible**  
easy to get

# Community caregivers need to look after themselves too



How do I take care of myself so that I can respond to children in need of care and protection?

*Community caregiving is at times a very stressful and difficult task, especially when responding to children and families in need.*

*Community caregiving can affect our psychosocial wellbeing.*

## Ways to look after yourself

- Develop your caregiving skills.
- Manage your time and making sure you get time off for yourself.
- Maintain a healthy diet and keep good sleeping habits.
- Do physical exercise, such as dancing or walking, and other recreational activities.
- Share your feelings with other community caregivers.
- Know your limits and recognise your need to relax and to deal with your stress.
- Ask for support and help.
- Build a support network around you.
- Develop a Self-Care Plan.

Remember, if you are stressed, threatened or intimidated, seek help and support.



### **intimidated**

to make someone frightened so they will do what you want

Community caregivers need to look after themselves too

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