

Age-appropriate sexual behaviours

Sex play and sexual behaviour is normal in children and young people. Age-appropriate behaviours do not require intervention by carers and professionals. Children can readily be distracted from these behaviours. The accompanying emotions and expressions of age-appropriate sexual play include laughter, spontaneity, curiosity and experimentation.

Concerning sexual behaviours

Some behaviours signal the need to watch for the frequency and persistence of these behaviours. If a child or young person exhibits several of these behaviours, or they continue despite clear requests to stop, seek advice from child protection or your agency.

Very concerning sexual behaviours

There are behaviours that are indicative of very concerning sexual behaviour. Most of these behaviours require immediate professional advice, particularly if they are accompanied by secrecy, anxiety, tension, coercion, force, compulsion and threats. Some of the behaviours listed become criminal offences when the child reaches the age of criminal responsibility (10 years of age in Victoria, Australia). Criminal offences require immediate reporting to the police.

For more information on these behaviours, see the Age appropriate sexual behaviour in children and young people chart on the **South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault** (SECASA) website at <https://www.secasa.org.au/> or contact your local **Centre Against Sexual Assault** (CASA). See the list on page 3 of this factsheet or visit **CASA** for further information at <https://www.casa.org.au/>.

Sexual abuse behaviour treatment services

Sexually Abusive Behaviour Treatment Services (SABTS) operate across Victoria. SABTS are funded by the department to provide therapeutic treatment to children and their families, to address problem sexual behaviour and sexually abusive behaviour. SABTS work with the child or young person, their family, carers, school and community services to provide an assessment and developmentally appropriate therapeutic response. SABTS are funded to provide therapeutic treatment for up to 24 months, either in a voluntary capacity, or via a statutory Therapeutic Treatment Order (TTO). SABTS services are available to young people under the age of 15 years who exhibit problem sexual behaviour or

sexually abusive behaviour. Some agencies also offer treatment programs for young people up to and including 17 years.

The Act enables child protection to receive reports regarding problem sexual behaviour and sexually abusive behaviours of a child aged between 10 years and 14 years. Under the Act, child protection can seek a TTO be granted by the Children's Court, to direct a young person with sexually abusive behaviours to attend an appropriate SABTS treatment program.

(continued overleaf)

Child protection can also support a family to ensure that a child or young person aged 10 years to 14 years attends a SABTS program voluntarily, if appropriate.

SABTS can receive referrals from families, child protection, schools and other community organisations regarding a child exhibiting sexually abusive behaviour, or problem sexual behaviour.

SABTS employ skilled clinicians who use their clinical judgement to develop an effective treatment plan for the child or young person. The plan will consider issues that may impact the family maintaining treatment over a longer period. SABTS may also provide outreach services in some metropolitan and regional areas to ensure treatment accessibility for children with sexually abusive behaviours and their families.

The therapeutic responses provided include a focus on child development, attachment and trauma, and are inclusive of the family. SABTS treatment maximises opportunities for the child or young person to understand their behaviours and the harm caused, to prevent further harm in the future.

For further information and a list of SABTS providers see the Child Protection Manual <https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/specialist-resources/therapeutic-treatment-resources/sexual-abuse-behaviour>.

Centres Against Sexual Assault across Victoria

In Victoria, the Victorian CASA Forum is the peak body of the 15 Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASAs) and the Victorian Sexual Assault Crisis Line (after hours), which are non-profit, government-funded organisations that provide support and intervention to women, children and men who are victims and survivors of sexual assault.

The Victorian Sexual Assault Crisis Line (after hours) offers, free, confidential 24-hour emergency or crisis care for victims and survivors of sexual assault. This includes crisis counselling support and access to medical care and legal services, as well as counselling support for adults who were abused in their childhood.

Useful resources

The Orange Door Services

<https://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/>

Age-Appropriate Sexual Behaviour in Children and Young People chart

<https://www.secasa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/age-appropriate-behaviour.pdf>

Problem sexual behaviours and sexually abusive behaviours in Australian children and young people - Australian Institute of Family Studies, Child Family Community Australia unit policy and practice paper

<https://aifs.gov.au/resources/policy-and-practice-papers/problem-sexual-behaviours-and-sexually-abusive-behaviours>

Children with harmful sexual behaviours

<https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-government-annual-report-2019-royal-commission-institutional-responses-child-sexual-abuse/children-with-harmful-sexual-behaviours>

The information contained in this factsheet is based primarily on information from the Manual for Kinship Carers, published by the former Department of Human Services (now Department of Families, Fairness & Housing) in 2017.

Centres Against Sexual Assault

Name	Address	Contact details
Sexual Assault Crisis Line	Victoria	Phone: 1800 806 292 Website: https://www.sacl.com.au/
1800 RESPECT (Australia)	Australia	Phone: 1800 737 732
Metropolitan CASAs		
CASA House	CASA House 3rd Floor Queen Victoria Women's Centre 210 Lonsdale Street Melbourne, 3000	Phone: (03) 9635 3610 Email: casa@thewomens.org.au Website: https://www.casahouse.com.au/
Eastern CASA (ECASA)	17 Ware Crescent Ringwood East, 3135	Phone: (03) 9870 7330 Email: ecasa@easternhealth.org.au Website: https://www.easternhealth.org.au/service/eastern-centre-against-sexual-assault-ecasa/
Gatehouse Centre	Royal Children's Hospital Level 1 East, Reception C Flemington Road Parkville, 3052	Phone: (03) 9345 6391 Email: gatehouse.centre@rch.org.au Website: https://www.rch.org.au/gatehouse/
Northern CASA (NCASA)	Building 26, Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, 300 Waterdale Road Heidelberg West, 3081 Postal address: PO Box 5444, Heidelberg West, 3081	Phone: (03) 9496 2240 Email: ncasa@austin.org.au Website: https://www.austin.org.au/northerncasa
South Eastern CASA (SECASA)	11 Chester Street East Bentleigh, 3165 Postal address: PO Box 72, East Bentleigh, 3145	Phone: (03) 9928 8741 Email: secasa@monashhealth.org Website: https://www.secasa.org.au/
Western Region CASA (WestCASA)	Women's Health Hub Level 2, 236 Hoppers Lane Werribee, 3030	Phone: (03) 9216 0444 Email: info@westcasa.org.au Website: https://westcasa.org.au/

Name	Address	Contact details
Rural CASAs		
Ballarat CASA	Ballarat Health Services Sebastopol Complex Corner Vale and Edward Streets, Sebastopol, 3356	Phone: (03) 5320 3933 Email: casa@gh.org.au Website: https://ballaratcasa.org.au/
CASA Central Victoria	71 Bridge Street Bendigo, 3550 Postal address: PO Box 764 Bendigo 3552	Phone: (03) 5441 0430 Email: casacv@casacv.org.au Website: https://casacv.org.au
Centre Against Violence (Ovens Murray District)	29 Templeton Street Wangaratta, 3677 Postal address: PO Box 438 Wangaratta 3676	Phone: (03) 5722 2203 Email: admin@cav.org.au Website: https://centreagainstviolence.org.au/
Geelong/Barwon – The Sexual Assault & Family Violence Centre	59-63 Spring Street Geelong West, 3218 Postal address: PO Box 7205, Geelong West VIC 3218	Phone: (03) 5222 4318 Email: reception@safvcentre.org.au Website: https://www.safvcentre.org.au/
Gippsland CASA	31-41 Buckley Street Morwell, 3840 Postal address: PO Box 1124 Morwell, 3840	Phone: (03) 5134 3922 Email: mail@gippscasa.org Website: https://www.gcasa.org.au/
Goulburn Valley CASA	130 Nixon Street Shepparton, 3630 Postal address: PO Box 1453 Shepparton, 3630	Phone: (03) 5858 9300 Email: gvcasa@gvhealth.org.au Website: http://www.gvcasa.com.au/
Mallee Sexual Assault Unit Mallee Domestic Violence Services	Suite 1, 144-146, Lime Avenue Mildura, 3500 Postal address: PO Box 1373 Mildura 3500	Phone: (03) 5025 5400 (03) 5021 2130 Email: info@msau-mdvs.org.au Website: https://msau-mdvs.org.au/
South Western CASA	279 Koroit Street Warnambool, 3280 Postal address: C/- South West Healthcare, Ryot Street, Warnambool, 3280	Phone: (03) 5564 4144 Email: casa@swh.net.au Website: www.swcasa.org.au
Wimmera – The Sexual Assault & Family Violence Centre	25 Roberts Avenue Horsham, 3400	Phone: (03) 5381 1211 Email: wimmera@safvcentre.org.au Website: https://www.safvcentre.org.au/