

## Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program

Information for families during the police investigation

The Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program aims to reduce the stress and trauma experienced by children and young people who are victims and prosecution witnesses in sexual offence cases.

The program involves the early pre-recording of evidence to reduce the time spent in court and addresses their communication needs by providing witness intermediaries.

It operates in Sydney and Newcastle District Courts, and Central Metropolitan, South West Metropolitan and Hunter Child Abuse Units.

### What is a witness intermediary?

A witness intermediary is an accredited professional from one of five primary disciplines - speech pathology, social work, psychology, teaching or occupational therapy.

They are independent and impartial officers of the Court whose role is to assess the communication needs of child complainants and prosecution witnesses - and inform police and the court of the best ways to communicate with them.

### What does a witness intermediary do during a police interview?

Before the police interview, witness intermediaries meet with children to assess how they communicate and identify what might help communication during the police interview.

Witness intermediaries advise police on the best ways to communicate with children during the police interview.

They can be present during the police interview to assist communication.

### When is a witness intermediary required?

Witness intermediaries may be requested by Police to assist with an interview.

A witness intermediary may be required:

- when interviewing children under 16 years of age
- during sexual offence matters
- when the matter is being investigated by Central Metropolitan, South West Metropolitan and Hunter Child Abuse Units.

### What does Victims Services do?

Victims Services maintains the panel of witness intermediaries, including their training and accreditation.

When police request a witness intermediary, we match the request with a witness intermediary who has the right skills and qualifications to assist the child.

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### Who should I contact to find out more?

**Victims Access Line:** 1800 633 063 | **Aboriginal Contact Line:** 1800 019 123

**Business hours:** Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm (excluding public holidays)

**Email:** [csoep@justice.nsw.gov.au](mailto:csoep@justice.nsw.gov.au) **Website:** [www.victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au](http://www.victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au)