

## Information for parents/carers about specialist assessments

Your child has been referred to SECASA by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) - Child Protection, for a "specialist assessment". SECASA is a government funded counselling agency for victims of sexual assault and their non-offending family members. When there have been indicators of sexual assault but no disclosure, DHHS may ask for SECASA to make a specialist assessment.

A specialist assessment aims to assess what is happening for your child, and how your child's needs may be met. The assessment will look at your child's needs within the context of your family and child care or school.

### How will the specialist assessment be done?

First, you will be asked to meet with a counsellor to give information about your child, and his/her history. This may take one or two sessions of one hour.

Then you will be asked to bring your child for the assessment. This may take up to six weekly sessions of one hour. Your child's counsellor will talk to your child about their life, their likes and dislikes, their thoughts and feelings – as well as anything that may be worrying them. This discussion and activities aims to find out what is happening for your child in their own words.

### What will I be told?

During the assessment, your child's counsellor will give general feedback to you about your child. The counsellor's role is to focus on what your child says and does in the sessions. This means you will have only minimal interaction with the counsellor during this time. If you feel that you would like some support during the weeks of the assessment, another counsellor will be allocated to you so that you can discuss any issues or concerns with them.

### What to do if...?

If your child tells you about an experience of sexual assault or other incident of concern during the weeks of the assessment, we recommend that you:

- Respond calmly
- Listen and believe your child
- Validate (support) your child's thoughts and feelings
- Do not ask your child questions about the actual incident as this may be difficult for them.
- Avoid "why?" questions
- Tell your child that he/she could tell their counsellor about this in their next session
- Congratulate your child on finding the courage to tell you
- Make a notification to Child Protection if your child has disclosed sexual or physical assault.

You might like to discuss your response, feelings and thoughts with your counsellor.

If any protective concerns arise, or clear disclosures are made by your child, during the weeks of the assessment, SECASA will notify Child Protection and you will be told. SECASA can provide follow-up counselling, where appropriate, once protective issues have been resolved. If there is no disclosure, SECASA's involvement ends with the writing of a report for DHHS.

Adapted from the Loddon Campaspe CASA information sheet