

Fact Sheet:

Preserving evidence and note-taking

You should NOT try to investigate a disclosure. You can support future legal proceedings by taking notes and, in the case of recent assault, preserving any evidence

If the assault is very recent and has occurred on-site, do not touch or disturb anything in the scene of the assault.

Prevent the immediate area around the scene of the assault from being disturbed, tidied or cleaned.



If the scene is disturbed, for example, by someone walking through it, make a note of what happened, when and who was involved.

If there are witnesses to an assault, they should be separated from each other until the police can interview them.

Encourage the victim NOT to wash or change clothes until the police have interviewed them.



If the person really wants to change clothes, follow this procedure:

- put on a pair of clean disposable gloves
- provide clean, un-used paper bags for the clothing
- ask the person to carefully place each item of worn clothing in its own clean paper bag
- carefully seal the bags and label them.



Anyone who touches these bags should wear clean gloves.

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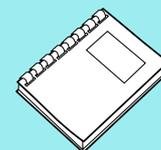
Immediately after the disclosure, it is advisable to write down and date the comments and statements made by the person to you. Write down what you have been told, what you have witnessed, and what you have done.



State what the person said using their exact words: record what the person said (using quotation marks).



When recording information about the person's behaviour, be factual rather than stating a general opinion. For example, rather than saying 'the person was distressed', write what you observed e.g., 'the person cried, shook visibly and had to stop several times to collect herself before answering a question'.



Describe physical injuries, eg. bruising on the person's arms, purple in colour.



If you are writing file notes, follow your organisations protocol. Include the date and time, identity yourself as the author and sign the note.

You should inform the person and their support person/guardian (where present) that you are taking notes/will record notes and that they could be used in an investigation.



This information is informed by 'When she talks to you about the violence'. <https://www.wlsnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/GP-toolkit-updated-Oct2019.pdf>