



Information for Support People



Abuse in Care
Royal Commission of Inquiry



Information for Support People

Thank you for agreeing to support a survivor to share their experience with the Inquiry

The person you are supporting may also want you to read the Information for Survivors and Introduction to the Inquiry.

What does a support person do?

A survivor of abuse may ask a person or people to support them to share their experience of abuse at a private session of the Inquiry.

Survivors will want to be supported in different ways. As a support person your role is to provide the type of support that the survivor would like. The best way to do this is to have a conversation with them about what kind of support they need before, during, and after the session.

As a support person you may be asked by the survivor to:

- help them prepare for their session e.g. by reading information or making notes about what they might like to talk about
- providing emotional support on the day
- talk with them about their feelings in the days and weeks after the session

Some things a survivor may ask you to do on the day of the session include:

- travelling with them to and from the venue
- helping them to feel comfortable and sitting with them during the session
- making sure they have everything they need
- asking for a break if they need one
- waiting outside the room until the session has finished

If you are supporting someone who is currently in prison you will need to be an approved visitor to be able to enter the prison.

What should a support person NOT do?

During a private session a support person should not ask the Commissioner questions or speak for the survivor. This is because the purpose of the session is for Commissioners to hear directly from survivors about their experiences.

It is important to remember that it is not the role of a support person to do what you think is best for the survivor, or to make decisions for them.

If you are also a survivor, or a witness of abuse, and would like to speak to a Commissioner then you can register for your own session by calling 0800 222 727.

Your wellbeing

On the day of the private session there will be a Wellbeing Person available for you to talk to if you need to. There may be parts of the survivor's experience that you had not heard before, or were distressing to listen to. The Wellbeing Person can help you to cope with these emotions.

Confidentiality

Private sessions are confidential unless the person you are supporting agrees to the information being made public e.g. at a public hearing. At the start of the private session the Commissioner will ask you to confirm that you understand this.



They will also ask you to confirm that you agree to keep everything said during the private session confidential and that you will not discuss it with anyone else. This includes other people in the survivor's life e.g. family, support workers, Corrections officers and employers. If you do not agree then you will not be allowed to remain in the session.

Journalists attending Private Sessions

Private sessions at the Abuse in Care Inquiry are an opportunity for survivors to confidentially share their experiences with a Commissioner. Because of the private nature of these individual sessions and the need for survivors to feel comfortable to speak freely and frankly about their experience, the Royal Commission does not permit media to attend.

The Inquiry takes very seriously the need to protect the privacy and confidentiality of this information and has clear policies and information management systems in place to do so. If your support person happens to be a journalist by trade, then they are permitted to attend as your support person but not to report on or record the session.

Journalists are welcome to attend our public hearings which will continue for the duration of the Inquiry. These are an opportunity for survivors to speak publicly with media present.

What is the difference between a support person and an advocate?

An advocate is a person who has been given permission by a survivor to speak on their behalf e.g. to tell their story for them. Advocates may be family members, friends, or people from organisations. If the person you are supporting wants you to be an advocate then you and the survivor must speak to us about this before the day of the session.



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What is the difference between a support person and a meeting assistant?

A meeting assistant is a person who can help a survivor to understand information and make decisions about what to do. However, they are not an advocate and cannot speak on the survivor's behalf. Meeting assistants are very experienced in supporting people with a learning disability or who are neurodiverse. If the person you are supporting is having difficulty understanding information about the Inquiry, or would like extra help to make decisions about whether to take part please contact us before the day of the session.

Further information

- Phone: 0800 222 727
- Website: www.abuseincare.org.nz
- Facebook: Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in Care



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