

How to handle suspected sexual offences

Sexual offences are always investigated by the police

If you have reason to suspect a sexual offence, do not initiate the regular process for dealing with an issue. Independent investigation by instructors may interfere with later criminal investigations. If you suspect an offence, always leave criminal investigations to the police. You can focus on supporting the victim(s). You can consult with the police and ask for advice on the boundaries within which you should take action.

Sexual offences are defined in [Chapter 20 of the Criminal Code of Finland](#). If you are unsure of whether to suspect a sexual offence, always consult the police or ask an expert for advice. You can ask for advice without disclosing the victim's name from

- Your local police
- Victim Support Finland (RIKU): <https://www.riku.fi/en/contact-information/>
- The Et ole yksin (*You are not alone*) service: www.etoleyksin.fi

Encountering a victim of a sexual offence

If a child or young person tells you that they have been the victim of a sexual offence, believe them and thank them for putting their trust in you. Explain that what happened wasn't their fault. Do not lead them or pressure them into telling you more.

For example, you can ask

"So, what happened?"

"Tell me about what happened." or *"Can you tell me more about it?"* and *"Tell me what you remember from start to finish."*

You can also use utterances to support what they say, such as *"aha, mhm, okay"* or by repeating what the child says, *"I saw a car – you saw a car"*. Remain neutral and avoid prompting questions (*"it was probably dark"* or *"you probably felt..."*).

Record what the child or young person says using the same expressions they do. Also write down the questions you've asked. Explain to the child what happens next, like your obligation to report the matter further. Do not expose the child to adult investigations into the matter. Inform the child's parents or guardians. If the situation is acute, call the emergency services on 112.

Even if you didn't hear about the sexual offence directly from the victim, you may also have suspicions arising from another person's account or other questionable behaviour. Always ask the victim directly where possible.

Reporting an offence

When you report an offence, the police will consider whether there are grounds to suspect an offence and, if necessary, launch preliminary investigations. Anyone can report an offence, but it is best if it is reported by the person in whom an underage victim confided. If the victim is an adult and refuses to report the offence, their wish must be respected, even if they were a minor at the time of the incident.

You are always obligated to report an offence if you suspect that someone is planning rape, aggravated rape, rape of a child, aggravated rape of a child, or aggravated sexual abuse of a child ([Criminal Code of Finland 15:10](#)).

The person reporting an offence will not receive information about the progress of criminal investigations, nor will any decision be received if a case is dismissed. Only the injured party will be informed.

Reports that contain very little information will not necessarily progress to preliminary investigations. A good rule of thumb is that if you know who the victim is, there is enough information to report an offence. You do not need to know the perpetrator.

If you suspect a sexual offence, it should be reported to your local police department.

Do not hesitate to call the police and explain what you know about the incident, even if the matter feels trivial or uncertain. You can leave an online tip-off for the police at: poliisi.fi/en/net-tip

Child welfare notification

It is also recommended to submit a child welfare notification if you suspect that a minor has been the victim of a sexual offence. Anyone can submit a child welfare notification and report an offence, but the persons specified in [the Child Welfare Act](#) have a duty to do so.

Child welfare notifications are submitted to the child's wellbeing services county or municipal social services. In urgent cases, a notification can be submitted via the emergency services or emergency social services.

Private individuals can submit notifications anonymously, but officials must always disclose their name when submitting a notification. You can always contact the duty child welfare social worker in your area to ask for advice.

Contact information for child welfare services in wellbeing services counties (updated 26.10.2025):

- South Karelia [Ilmoita huolesta \(Report a concern\) - South Karelia wellbeing services county](#)
- South Ostrobothnia [Lastensuojelu \(Child welfare\) - South Ostrobothnia wellbeing services county](#)
- South Savo [Child welfare services - Eloisa](#)
- Helsinki [Child welfare services | City of Helsinki](#)
- East Uusimaa [Lastensuojelu \(Child welfare\) - East Uusimaa wellbeing services county](#)
- Kainuu [Huoli lapsesta \(Concern about a child\) | Kainuu wellbeing services county](#)
- Kanta-Häme [Lastensuojelu \(Child welfare\) - Oma Häme](#)
- Central Ostrobothnia [Lastensuojelu \(Child welfare\) - Soite](#)

- Central Finland [Ota yhteyttä lapsiperheen tuen tarpeesta tai tee lastensuojeluilmoitus \(Contact us about the need for support for a family with children or submit a child welfare notification\) | Central Finland wellbeing services county](#)
- Central Uusimaa [Lastensuojelu \(Child welfare\) - Central Uusimaa wellbeing services county](#)
- Kymenlaakso [Lapsen ja perheen tilanteen arviointi \(Assessing situations concerning children and families\) - Kymenlaakso wellbeing services county](#)
- Lapland [Lastensuojelun sosiaalityö ja -ohjaus \(Child welfare social work and guidance\) - Lapland wellbeing services county](#)
- West Uusimaa [Child welfare - West Uusimaa wellbeing services county](#)
- Pirkanmaa [Lapsiperheiden sosiaalityö ja lastensuojelu \(Family social work and child welfare\) - pirha.fi](#)
- Ostrobothnia [Child Welfare Notification - Ostrobothnia wellbeing services county Barnskyddsanmälan - Österbottens välfärdsområde](#)
- North Karelia [Lastensuojelu \(Child welfare\) - Siun sote](#)
- North Ostrobothnia [Lastensuojelu \(Child welfare\) - North Ostrobothnia wellbeing services county Pohde](#)
- North Savo [Lastensuojeluilmoitus \(Child welfare notification\) - North Savo](#)
- Päijät-Häme [Lastensuojelu ja perhesosiaalityö \(Child welfare and family social work\) - Päijät-Häme wellbeing services county](#)
- Satakunta [Huolen ilmoittaminen sosiaalihuoltoon \(Reporting a concern to social services\) - Satakunta wellbeing services county](#)
- Vantaa-Kerava [Emergency services for families with children and child welfare | Wellbeing services county of Vantaa and Kerava](#)
- Southwest Finland [Lastensuojeluilmoitus \(Child welfare notification\) | Varha](#)

Do not disclose that an investigation is ongoing, but intervene in inappropriate behaviour

If the inappropriate behaviour is communicated outwardly, such as to parents or employees, you must not discuss the report of an offence or police investigation; stick to the facts. Intervene in inappropriate behaviour, but do not call it an offence if no one has been charged with an offence. You may be found guilty of defamation of another person.

- For example, if an instructor is suspected of a sexual offence on a child, this information must not be disclosed until charges have been brought against the instructor. The work community should follow its own rules. The instructor in the example should be removed from groups working with children and young people while preliminary investigations are carried out.
- If, for example, the instructor is proven to have invited an individual minor to their house, or has slept in the same room as the minor, the work community's predetermined disciplinary measures can be applied to such rule breaking without taking a stand on the suspicion of a criminal offence.

If a person has been sentenced to imprisonment for sexual offences on a minor and the sentence is made public/the name is published during sentencing, the community or activity has the right to share this information further. However, it is not usually advisable to publicly say much about the matter in order to protect the victim. In such situations it is recommended to consult jointly agreed communication guidelines or crisis communication guidelines.

Once the suspect has been charged

A sexual offence affects the entire community. It is important to openly discuss the matter with parents, young people, and coaches.

The activity or recreational group must take responsibility for the incident, apologise for it, and communicate how it will take action to prevent similar situations from happening again in the future. Young people must be offered the opportunity to discuss the matter with their peers and be signposted to additional assistance if necessary. Instructors can support young people in these discussions.

Signpost young people to:

- a school psychologist
- a school social worker
- the municipal/wellbeing services county's health services/health centre
- *Tyttöjen talo* or *Poikien talo* services
- various phone and chat services, like the Et ole yksin service, Mieli ry's Crisis helpline, Nuorten Exit, the Family Federation of Finland's sexual advice line, Boys' Phone, the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare's online and phone services, Victim Support Finland (RIKU), Suojellaan Lapsia ry (Protect Children), and Save the Children Finland's Nettivihje hotline.

More advice and support is available from:

Victim Support Finland: <https://www.riku.fi/en/>

The Et ole yksin (*You are not alone*) service: <https://etoleyksin.fi/>

Suojellaan Lapsia ry (*Protect Children*): <https://www.suojellaanlapsia.fi/>

Save the Children Finland's Nettivihje hotline:

<https://www.pelastakalapset.fi/kehittamis-ja-asiantuntijatyo/nettivihje-ja-seksuaalivakivallan-ennaltaehkaisy/asiantuntijatyo/nettivihje-ja-seksuaalivakivallan-ennaltaehkaisy/>

The Finnish Olympic Committee's *Allowed to care, Allowed to intervene* guide:

<https://www.olympiakomitea.fi/uploads/2019/10/64dcb932-lupa-valittaa-lupa-puuttua.pdf>

Police of Finland: <https://poliisi.fi/en/sex-offences>,

<https://www.nuoretjarikollisuus.fi/>

Sources:

Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare's (THL) Child welfare handbook (in Finnish): <https://thl.fi/fi/web/lastensuojelun-kasikirja>

Current Care Guidelines: <https://www.kaypahoito.fi/hoi34040#readmore>

Eikö se kuulu kenellekään? Rohkene kohdata seksuaalisesti kaltoinkohdeltu nuori. (*No one's business? Dare to face young people who have experienced sexual abuse.*) The Family Federation of Finland's publications, 2009.

Discussions from consultations with the Helsinki Police and prosecutors.

Barnahus. [Käsikirja lapsiin kohdistuvien väkivalta- ja seksuaalirikosten tutkintaan](#) (*Handbook for investigating violence and sexual offences against children*)