

## Talking About Sniffing

### How to respond to information about young people sniffing

Perhaps a local person alerts the youth program that there has been some sniffing, often this is a young person. Non-local youth workers are in a good position to fulfil the mandatory reporting (ie. this is a legal responsibility), so local people who prioritise family relationships are not compromised. For more info see the NT gov [mandatory reporting](#).

### How to approach a young person and their family

We aim to always approach sniffing incidents with compassion and to be helpful, never blaming or getting young people into trouble. We also work to ensure inclusive practice, deescalating possible situations where the youth at risk gets in trouble with family, youth program, school or police etc. and subsequently excluded.



### Are you leading a conversation about a sniffing incident?

Here is an example of how you might do that:

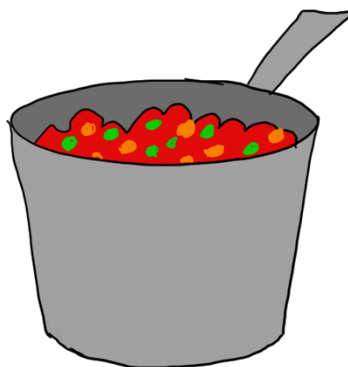
- introduce yourself if need be
- explain "I've heard some stories about some young people sniffing, I'm a bit worried"
- ask "who are the best people to speak to about person X"
- "it's my job to help families if there is sniffing"

- “I heard young person X might have been sniffing”
- “Is he okay?”
- “how old is person X, what is their date of birth?”
- “no one is in trouble, it’s just that sniffing can make you really sick, so I’m worried, and I can help”
  - *This may lead to a discussion about the sniffing, ie. what was sniffed, where it came from, who else was sniffing. It is also a good opportunity to assist with accessing the clinic, if the young person needs medical support.*
- “what sort of things would you like to do at youth program?”
- “okay, let’s try going for a bush trip tomorrow, what sort of food shall we cook? Kangaroo tail, sure. Where can I pick you up?”
  - On bush trip/other activity day Invite a mix of other young people, ie. not a group where everyone there is involved in VSA, mix it up, and include a new mix of participants next time.
- ask the family if they want more information on what sniffing actually does to the brain, harm minimisation, rehab possibilities, or if they have any other suggestions about what they might find helpful.

**Please let the family know that you will be letting CAYLUS and ADSCA know, they are both organisations that help young people if they sniff. Let them know if arrangements have been made for a CAYLUS/ADSCA visit. Reassure them that no one is in trouble.**

Include this young person often but don’t push them. Find some ways to show you are a person with positive, gentle offers of support, this builds trust. Bringing some food and a drink can be helpful, maybe they want to borrow hair clippers, also likely to happily accept a usb with favourite songs on it.

**If you are finding it difficult to engage with this young person, please call CAYLUS 08 8951 4236 for extra support.**



### **If there is strong evidence and cause for concern someone is sniffing**

- You will notice the sniffer smells overwhelmingly of substance sniffed.
- Glue and paint unlikely to be sniffed, however nothing is impossible - people experiment.
- Colour on clothes and skin is possible if someone has been sniffing glue or paint, spray paint (n.b. unlikely here in Central Australia).
- A sniffing high doesn't last long - only 2-5 minutes, so sniffers may engage in sniffing continuously.
- Symptoms can include headaches, nausea, dizziness, shortness of breath - kind of like a hangover - vomiting is possible.
- Evidence of sniffing also includes evidence of the materials used to sniff - eg. sock or clothing used as a filter for sniffing deodorant and cans of deodorant without the button top.
- Regardless of whether you find this kind of evidence or not, if you think someone has been sniffing, you need to report it.

### **Do**

- Find out from local youth workers who the best person/people is to talk to about the young person sniffing.
- Only discuss volatile substance abuse with those involved - individuals and their families (especially do not discuss or show images of specific products to other young people).
- If you see used products you think were sniffed, collect them, photograph the products on all sides, so you have a clear record of details such as brand name of the product, and report to CAYLUS.
- You are responsible for securing volatile substances in community and dispose of them outside of the community. You may empty contents of spray cans etc. so they may not be found/used. Do not dispose of used products within the community, even be careful dumping them at the tip consider burying them or taking to town with you for safe disposal.

### **Don't**

- Try not to be an alarmist or get wrapped up in hype or gossip, simply make a note of what people are saying and stay calm.
- Engage if you feel like the young person, you or anyone else is at risk of getting hurt.
- Do not discuss or show images of specific products that may be abused to people not involved in the incident - this may give people ideas.
- Education about sniffing is not recommended, as this can backfire and work in the way of informing kids of fun ways to sniff.
- Do not take products that might be sniffed into communities - youth programs should not use these products at any time.