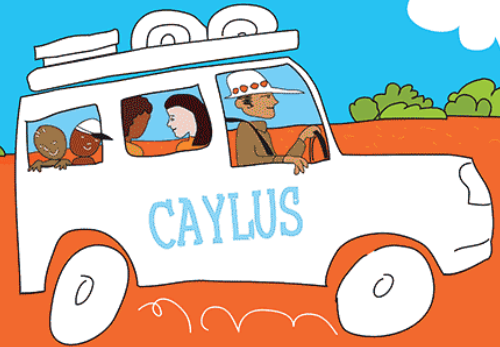


Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service

CAYLUS



Tangentyere Council

## **Volatile Substance Abuse**

### **Step 1 - What you need to do now**

**Reporting Flow Chart**

**Talking About Sniffing**

**Harm Reduction - Key messages for people who sniff**

**Effects of Sniffing**

### **Step 2 - How to support the young person and their family**

### **Step 3 - Long Term Support**

### **Additional Resources**

## Step 1 - What you need to do now

**In the NT it is mandatory to report people who are sniffing if they are under the age of 18**

Try to find out three things:

- **Who was involved** Including ages.
- **What substance was sniffed** If possible locate, photograph and discard of sniffed substance and container responsibly.
- **Where the substance came from.**

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.

***Never chase anyone who you think has been sniffing, this can be dangerous for the person's health.***

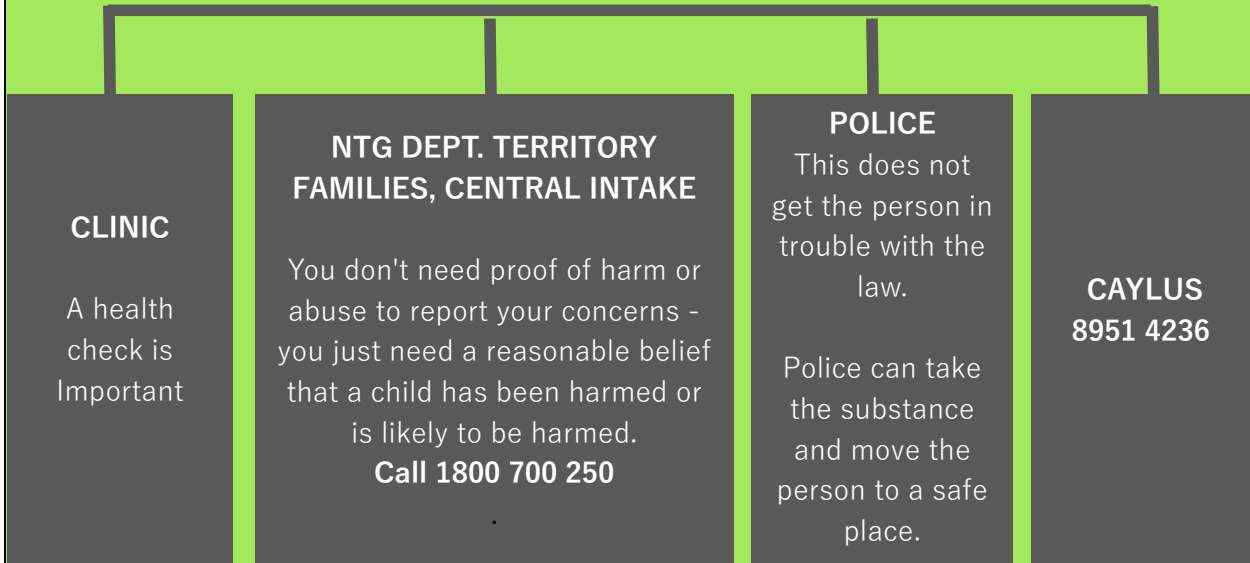
See the flowchart on the following page.

# REPORT SNIFFING IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

IT IS **MANDATORY** TO REPORT PEOPLE WHO ARE SNIFFING IF THEY ARE UNDER 18  
S15 and 24 – Care and Protection of Children Act NT

## IF YOU THINK ANYONE IS SNIFFING

### You must report to



### They will report to



<p><b>ADSCA</b></p> <p>Can support treatment and rehabilitation options</p>	<p><b>NTG DEPT. TERRITORY FAMILIES, CENTRAL INTAKE</b></p> <p>Will investigate concerns If person sniffing is under 18 years</p>	<p><b>CAYLUS 8951 4236</b></p> <p>Can work with the community to reduce harm, supply and demand</p>
<p><b><u>REACTIVE</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>PROTECTIVE</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>PREVENTATIVE</u></b></p>

# 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:

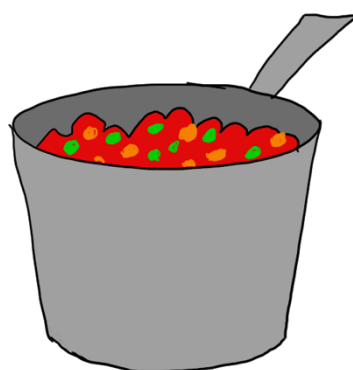
- introduce yourself if need be
- explain "I've heard some stories about some young people sniffing, I'm a bit worried"
- ask "who are the best people to speak to about person X"
- "it's my job to help families if there is sniffing"
- "I heard young person X might have been sniffing"
- "Is he okay?"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

# Harm Reduction

## Key messages for people who sniff

### Never sniff:

- in an enclosed space;
- when you are alone;
- with a bag over your head so that air can't get in;
- if you have drunk alcohol or used any other drugs or before you exercise;
- when you are smoking or near a lit cigarette or fire;
- Do not spray a substance directly into your mouth.

### If someone is sniffing, huffing, bagging or chroming:

- make sure there is fresh air in the place;
- open windows and doors;
- never fall asleep (or let someone else fall asleep) with a bag over their face;
- don't chase them or try to hold them if they are struggling - this could be dangerous for their heart;
- keep other people away from them if they are acting aggressively;
- get help if there is danger to the person or other people- call the police, someone responsible for safety in your community, or an older person who will know what to do.

### If you are looking after someone who has been sniffing, huffing, bagging or chroming:

- if you can smell fumes (e.g. from the person or their clothing), let fresh air into the room and keep them away from flames (e.g. lighters, fires);
- make sure someone watches the person for at least six hours to make sure they are recovering.

### Call an ambulance or contact local emergency medical services if the person:

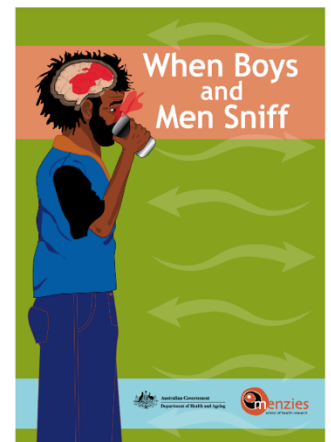
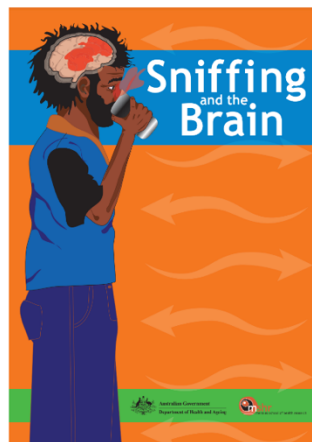
- is getting more anxious or agitated;
- is acting or talking strangely;
- has collapsed or 'blacked out' and you cannot wake them;
- the person is losing consciousness or their thinking is becoming less clear. (You may have to gently wake the person to check);
- has turned an unhealthy-looking colour in their face, fingertips or lips (looks pale, blue or darker than normal), or has cold or sweaty fingers. (Any of these signs could mean their blood is not flowing properly and they are not getting enough oxygen);
- has a seizure (convulsion, fit).

# Effects of Sniffing

[Brain Story](#) A resource using Central Australian iconography, designed for use in Aboriginal Communities in Central Australia. It illustrates the potential brain damage caused by sniffing, and disruption that can be caused to family relationships, connection to country etc.

Flip the resources and tell it from the end to the beginning, as guide to helping people who are damaged by sniffing to recover, potentially a story of hope and motivation to people and families affected by sniffing.

Menzies flip charts to raise awareness of the adverse effects of petrol sniffing. [Sniffing and the Brain](#), [When Girls and Women Sniff](#) and [When Boys and Men Sniff](#).





## Step 2 - How to Support the Young Person and their Family

### Youth programs and Harm Minimisation

If there is sniffing happening in your community, CAYLUS suggests having a meeting with the team of youth workers to discuss [Youth programs and harm minimisation](#) and [harm reduction strategies](#) (see page 7 and 8). *Visual guide coming soon.*

### Rehab Options and Logistics

CAYLUS and ADSCA will work together and can support the family and the young person, with referrals, enrolment, transport, as well as essential items and needs.

Contact CAYLUS (08) 89 51 42 36 to discuss rehab options on a case by case basis.

[CAAPS](#) is located just outside of Darwin, for young people between 12-25 years of age.

This fun short film [Viva Deadly Clever Program](#) is a great watch for young people and their families when thinking about the possibility of going to rehab.

[CAAPS FAQs](#) is a good place to start when discussing this rehab option.

[BushMob](#) is located in Alice Springs, for young people between 12-25 years of age.

When discussing this rehab option, check out [what is available](#) for young people at BushMob alongside these [photos](#).

[CAAAPU](#) is located on a 5 acre property on the outskirts of Alice Springs, and is an option for persons over the age of 18.

### Youth Program Support Whilst at Rehab

Youth workers can be a vital link between families and a rehab service. Supporting families with access to a phone, or organising video calls so they can keep in touch, and speak to rehab staff, advocating for any specific needs of the young person.

## Step 3 - Long Term Support

Alongside supply reduction, the presence of local, regular and consistent youth programs have been a vital part of addressing sniffing in Central Australia. See the Additional Resources below for the work that has been done over the years to ensure safer communities for young people in Central Australia.

CAYLUS can provide case work support to individuals who suffer from long term and families in Central Australia .

## Additional Resources

The **National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC)** is a good source of up to date information about the health effects of Inhalants, treatment and support options and recent research. The content here will be of use to families, teachers, alcohol and other drug (AOD) workers and other professionals assisting users of inhalants.

**Volatile Substance Misuse- A Review of Interventions 2008** by Peter d'Abbs and Sarah McLean is an excellent source of information about the various ways communities, governments, families and other stakeholders have tried to reduce the damage caused by sniffing. The paper looks at the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches, in a variety of contexts including remote Indigenous Communities.

**The Northern Territory Volatile Substance Abuse Prevention Act 2005** provides a range of powers to families, police and health service agencies to help individuals, families and communities deal with sniffing.

This **VSAP ACT Fact Sheet** contains information about the key powers of the act and how to use these.

One useful aspect of the NTVSAP Act is that it enables remote communities to become 'Management Areas' and designate specific controls, rules and regulations around the use of volatile substances. A full list of **NT Management Areas** and details of the controls that they have put in place.

This **CAYLUS discussion paper** outlines the potential for and implications of implementing similar laws in other states.

Opal Low Aromatic Fuel (LAF) has been in use in Central Australia Since 2006. It has proven a very effective tool and had been linked to a significant reduction in prevalence of sniffing. This **LAF Factsheet** provides some good information about it's use, and dispels myths.

