

A GUIDE TO RESPONSIBLE SOCIAL MEDIA COVERAGE OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE CASES

**FOR JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA
PROFESSIONALS**





Media plays a crucial role in how society understands and addresses child sexual abuse, and therefore requires extreme care, compassion, and adherence to ethical and legal standards. Below are guidelines on reporting on sensitive topics like child sexual abuse, while protecting child victims/perpetrators/witnesses:

Protect identities at all costs:

- Avoid naming or identifying underage victims, directly or indirectly, to protect their identity- even if they've shared this information themselves on social media.
- Refrain from publishing details that could lead to the identification of the victim, such as family names, school, neighbourhood, or photographs.

Remember: A child's right to privacy doesn't disappear because of social media exposure

Focus on what matters:

- Instead of sensationalising individual cases, focus on the broader issue of sexual violence and systemic problems, such as the failure of protective measures.
- Include helpful resources for readers who may be triggered or need support

For Parents, Teachers, and Social Media Users

MMA understands the importance of sharing stories of child abuse to raise awareness and seek justice. However, we must prioritise protecting vulnerable child victim/perpetrator/witness:

Here's how, before you post anything, ask yourself these questions:

- Could this post help someone identify the child victim/perpetrator/witness, either directly or indirectly?
- Am I sharing family names, neighbourhood, school details, or unblurred photos?
- Have I considered how this post might affect the child's healing process? Especially because consent hasn't been sought.



A decorative graphic consisting of several red teardrop-shaped elements scattered around the text.

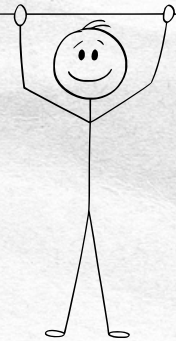
Remember: Sharing identifying details of minors involved in criminal cases – whether as a child victim/perpetrator/witness – isn't just ethically wrong, it's illegal under the Criminal Procedure Act.

Better Ways to Make a Difference Online: Instead of sharing specific cases, you can:

- Create awareness posts about child protection without mentioning individual cases.
- Share statistics and information about preventing abuse.
- Post about available support services and resources.
- Report inappropriate content to the platform immediately.
- Learn to recognise warning signs of online predatory behavior.
- Verify information before sharing and only use trusted sources.

Need to report abuse?

SAFETY FIRST



- South African Police Service (SAPS): 10111
- Childline South Africa: 116 (toll-free)
- Crime Stop: 08600 10111
- Gender-Based Violence Command Centre: 0800 428 428

- Gender-Based Violence Command Centre: “please call me” facility: *120*7867#.
- An SMS Based Line 31531 for persons with disabilities (SMS ‘help’ to 31531)
- A Skype Line ‘Helpme GBV’ for members of the deaf community also exists. (Add ‘Helpme GBV’ to your Skype contacts).

For more information, please contact:

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About Media Monitoring Africa:

Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) is a non-profit organisation that has been promoting democracy, human rights, and media freedom in Africa for over 30 years. MMA aims to promote the development of a free, fair, ethical, and critical media culture in South Africa and the rest of the continent.

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