

School Internal Process for Mandatory Reporting



Our Holy Redeemer internal school process for mandatory reporting

The following internal procedures are consistent with PROTECT and the Four Critical Actions referenced in the Policy.

Teachers will be informed annually of their legal obligations and responsibilities to report child abuse and neglect to the Department of Human Services and will be provided with information on how to recognise and respond to child abuse.

During Term One of each school year, teachers are required to successfully complete *Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations* eLearning modules.

If a teacher suspects that a child is in need of protection from physical and/or sexual abuse it is essential that he/she adhere to the **Four Critical Actions for Schools** poster and confidentially document any concerns and observations in **PROTECT Recording Your Actions: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse (A template for Victorian schools)**. In all cases, teachers are advised to inform the Principal of his/her concerns as early as possible. Teachers may in time form a belief the child is being abused or neglected and therefore there are reasonable grounds on which to lodge a report to Child Protection.

Following a discussion with the Principal or Principal's nominee about his/her concerns and observations:

- The teacher may form the belief that it is necessary to make a report. In this case the teacher must make a report to the Department of Human Services as soon as practicable. It is the responsibility of the individual teacher to ensure that this notification has occurred and that all reasonable grounds supporting the belief have been reported.
- The teacher may continue to suspect that a child is in need of protection. In this case the teacher should continue to monitor and support the child.
- Those involved in any process of consultation around mandatory reporting must maintain confidentiality regarding the child, the family, the notifier and any alleged perpetrator.
- The teacher does not have to seek permission from parents or caregivers to notify. In most cases it is not advisable to do this owing to the nature of some disclosures. If a parent asks for the identity of the notifier, confidentiality must be maintained and the teacher is not obliged to tell the parent or guardian.
- A teacher may notify the Department of Human Services Victoria of his/her belief without the prior knowledge of the Principal, however the teacher must inform the Principal or Principal's nominee of his/her action as soon as practicable.
- It may be necessary for the Department of Human Services to interview a child at school when a notification of abuse has been made. Such requests may be directed to the Principal or the Principal's nominee.

- It is important to advise children or young people of their right to have a supportive adult present at such an interview. This may be the Principal or a teacher.
- When Officers of Child Protection Victoria or the Police seek an interview with a child, the Principal should cooperate with the authorised agency.

The Principal Should:

- Arrange for the child to choose a supportive adult to be present.
- Follow the recommended procedures from the Department of Human Services and the DET.
- Ensure that arrangements are in order for any interview which is to take place at the school.
- Seek or offer appropriate pastoral support for the reporting staff member.
- Observe confidentiality at all times in the management of a mandatory reporting case.

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION As a school staff member, you play a **critical role** in protecting children in your care.

- You **must** act, by following the Four Critical Actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief* that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
- You **must** act if you form a suspicion/ reasonable belief, even if you witness and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).
- It is strongly recommended that you use the **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template** to keep clear and comprehensive notes, even if you make a decision not to report.

*A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to **Action 2**.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you **must** ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid
- calling **000 for urgent medical and/ or police assistance** to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES / REFERRING TO SERVICES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

Q: Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?

WITHIN THE SCHOOL

VICTORIA POLICE
You **must** report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor, volunteer or visitor to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report internally to:

- **GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - Employee Conduct Branch
 - DET Security Services Unit
- **CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - Diocesan education office.
- **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or school chairperson
 - Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

All allegations of 'reportable conduct' **must** be reported as soon as possible to:

- **GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
 - Employee Conduct Branch
- **CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
 - Diocesan education office
- **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
 - Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION
You **must** report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:

- in need of protection from child abuse
- at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

VICTORIA POLICE
You **must also** report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report internally to:

- **GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - DET Security Services Unit.
- **CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - Diocesan education office.
- **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or chairperson.

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your principal **must** consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- **not to contact** the parents/carer (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parent/carer to be contacted)
- **to contact** the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion)
- **how to communicate** with all relevant parties with consideration for their safety.

4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your school **must** provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a **Student Support Plan** in consultation with wellbeing professionals. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements. Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals and support.

You **must** follow the **Four Critical Actions** every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

OTHER CONCERNS

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold **significant concerns** for their wellbeing you **must** still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from:

- Child FIRST/The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support)
- DHHS Child Protection
- Victoria Police.

CONTACT

<p>DHHS CHILD PROTECTION AREA</p> <p>North Division 1300 664 9777 South Division 1300 655 795 East Division 1300 360 391 West Division (Rural) 1800 075 599 West Division (Metrol) 1300 664 9777</p> <p>AFTER HOURS After hours, weekends, public holidays: 13 13 78</p> <p>CHILD FIRST https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/family-and-support/teams</p> <p>ORANGE DOOR https://orange.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/the-orange-door.html</p>	<p>VICTORIA POLICE 000 or your local police station SECURITY SERVICES UNIT (03) 9589 6266</p> <p>STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT (03) 9451 3622</p> <p>EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH (03) 9637 2695</p> <p>DIOCESAN OFFICE Melbourne (03) 6067 0288 Ballarat (03) 5337 7135 Sale (03) 5622 6600 Sandhurst (03) 5443 2377</p>	<p>INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA (03) 9625 7200</p> <p>THE LOOKOUT The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence: http://www.lookout.org.au. Family violence victims/survivors can be referred to 1800 Respect for counselling information and a referral service: 1800 737 732</p>
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