

What to do when an allegation of child abuse is made.



If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you:

- Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, or the police.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Provide them with an incident form to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to the Principal or a member of the leadership team, police or Child Protection.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately and that the record is stored securely.

If a parent/carer says their child has been abused in your organisation or raises a concern:

- Explain that your organisation has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the organisation's management or Child Safety Officer, the police or Child Protection.
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together.
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

You need to be aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse. For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking with police, and communicating in English may be a barrier for some. You need to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a friend or family member).

If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal child, you will need to ensure a culturally appropriate response. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal children, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisations to review policies and procedures.

Some children with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, children with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters. Advice on communicating with people with a disability can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/communicate-and-consult-with-people-with-a-disability/communication-with-people-with-disabilities .

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Legal Responsibilities

While the child safe standards focus on organisations, every adult who reasonably believes that a child has been abused, whether in their organisation or not, has an obligation to report that belief to authorities.

The **failure to disclose** criminal offence requires all adults (aged 18 and over) who hold a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 to disclose that information to police (unless they have a reasonable excuse not to, for example because they fear for their safety or the safety of another).

More information about failure to disclose is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence

While failure to disclose only covers child sexual abuse, all adults should report other forms of child abuse to authorities. Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting responsibilities.

More information about mandatory reporting is available in the *Child protection manual* www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/intake/mandatory-reporting .

Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about [how to make a report to child protection www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first) .

The **failure to protect** criminal offence (commenced on 1 July 2015) applies where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

Further information about failure to protect can be found on the Department of Justice and Regulation website www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence, and the [Department of Health and Human Services website](#) .

A step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child FIRST

Protective concerns

You are concerned about a child because you have:

- received a disclosure from a child about abuse or neglect
- observed indicators of abuse or neglect
- been made aware of possible harm via your involvement in the community external to your professional role.

At all times remember to:

- record your observations
- follow appropriate protocols
- consult notes and records
- consult with appropriate colleagues if necessary
- consult with other support agencies if necessary

| STEP 1 | RESPONDING TO CONCERNS | STEP 2 | FORMING A BELIEF ON REASONABLE GROUNDS | STEP 3 | MAKING A REFERRAL TO Child FIRST | STEP 4 | MAKE A REPORT TO CHILD PROTECTION |
|--------|---|--------|--|--------|--|--------|---|
| | <p>1. If your concerns relate to a child in need of immediate protection; or you have formed a belief that a child is at significant risk of harm*.</p> <p>Go to Step 4</p> <p>2. If you have significant concerns that a child and their family need a referral to Child FIRST for family services.</p> <p>Go to Step 3</p> <p>3. In all other situations</p> <p>Go to Step 2.</p> <p>* Refer to Appendix 2: Definitions of child abuse and indicators of harm in the Protocol – Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people</p> | | <p>1. Consider the level of immediate danger to the child.</p> <p>Ask yourself:</p> <p>a) Have I formed a belief that the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm? YES / NO and</p> <p>b) Am I in doubt about the child's safety and the parent's ability to protect the child? YES / NO</p> <p>2. If you answered yes to a) or b) Go to Step 4</p> <p>3. If you have significant concerns that a child and their family need a referral to Child FIRST for family services. Go to Step 3</p> | | <p>Child Wellbeing Referral</p> <p>1. Contact your local Child FIRST provider.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See over for contact list for local Child FIRST phone numbers. <p>2. Have notes ready with your observations and child and family details.</p> | | <p>Mandatory/Protective Report*</p> <p>1. Contact your local Child Protection Intake provider immediately.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See over for contact list for local Child Protection phone numbers. • For After Hours Child Protection Emergency Services, call 131 278. <p>2. Have notes ready with your observations and child and family details.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-mandated staff members who believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection are able to report their concerns to Child Protection |

For further information refer to Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people – A joint protocol of the Department of Human Services Child Protection, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Licensed Children's Services and Victorian Schools

Contact Numbers

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

| METROPOLITAN REGIONS | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Eastern | (03) 9265 2400 |
| Northern | (03) 9488 9488 |
| Western | (03) 9291 6500 |
| Southern | (03) 9794 3555 |
| RURAL REGIONS | |
| Barwon South Western | 5225 1000 |
| Gippsland | 5127 0400 |
| Grampians | 5337 8444 |
| Hume | 5761 2100 |
| Loddon Mallee | 5440 3111 |

Office for Children and Licensed Children's Services

| METROPOLITAN REGIONS | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Eastern | (03) 9265 2400 |
| Northern | (03) 9412 5333 |
| Western | (03) 9275 7000 |
| Southern | (03) 9096 9555 |
| RURAL REGIONS | |
| Barwon South Western | 5225 1000 |
| Gippsland | 5127 0400 |
| Grampians | 5337 8444 |
| Hume | 5761 2100 |
| Loddon Mallee | 5440 3111 |

Important information for government schools

Principals of Victorian Government schools must report all incidents to the Emergency and Security Management Unit on **03 95 89 6266**.

Victorian Government schools should contact the Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit (SCIAU), Student Wellbeing Division, for advice and support when responding to allegations of student sexual assault or inappropriate sexual behaviours.

The SCIAU can be contacted on

03 9637 2934 or 03 9637 2487.

Victorian Government School Principals should refer to the flowchart – Responding to Allegations of Student Sexual Assault Compulsory Actions for Principals at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/childprotection/childprotection.htm>

Department of Human Services Child Protection

| METROPOLITAN REGIONS | | METROPOLITAN REGIONS | |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Intake Unit | Regional Office | Regional Office | Regional Office |
| Eastern | 1300 360 391 | Box Hill | (03) 9843 6000 |
| North and West | 1300 664 977 | Freston | 1300 664 977 |
| | | Footscray | 1300 360 462 |
| Southern | 1300 655 795 | Dandenong | (03) 9213 2111 |
| RURAL REGIONS | | Regional Office | |
| Intake Unit | Regional Office | | |
| Barwon South Western | 1800 07 5 599 | Geelong | (03) 5226 4540 |
| Gippsland | 1800 020 202 | Traralgon | (03) 5177 2500 |
| Grampians | 1800 000 551 | Ballarat | (03) 5333 6530 |
| Hume | 1800 650 227 | Wangaratta | (03) 5722 0555 |
| | | Wodonga | (02) 6055 7777 |
| Loddon Mallee | 1800 675 598 | Bendigo | (03) 5434 5555 |

After hours Child Protection Emergency Services (AHCRES)

Statewide number for all emergency child protection matters outside of normal business hours (24 hours, 7 days a week):

13 1 278

Victoria Police

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Catholic Education Offices

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Catholic Education Office, Melbourne | (03) 9267 0228 |
| Catholic Education Office, Ballarat Diocese | 5337 7135 |
| Catholic Education Office, Sale Diocese | 5622 6600 |
| Catholic Education Office, Sandhurst Diocese | 5443 2377 |

Independent Schools Victoria

(03) 9825 7200

Other

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Victorian Aboriginal Education Association, Inc. | (03) 9481 0800 |
| Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Unit | (03) 9247 6666 |
| Centre Against Sexual Assault | 1800 806 292 |
| Gatehouse Centre, Royal Children's Hospital | (03) 9345 6391 |
| (for specialist counselling and medical assistance) | |
| Child Safety Commissioner | (03) 8601 5884 |
| Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency | (03) 8388 1855 |

CHILD FIRST

| Local Catchment Area | Contact |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Barwon South Western | Greater Geelong, Queenscliff, Surf Coast 13 00 551 948 |
| Western | Colac – Otway, Corangamite 5232 5500 |
| | Warramboul, Moyne, Glenelg, southern Grampians 13 00 889 713 |
| Gippsland | East Gippsland 5152 0052 |
| | Wellington 5144 7777 |
| | La Trobe, Baw Baw 1800 339 100 |
| Grampians | South Gippsland, Bass Coast 5662 5150 |
| | Northern Grampians, West Wimmera, Hindmarsh, Yarrambat, Horsham 1800 195 114 |
| Hume | Ararat, Pyrenees, Hepburn, Ballarat, Golden Plains, Moorabool 13 00 783 341 |
| | Wodonga, Towong, Indigo 1800 705 211 |
| | Alpine, Benalla, Mansfield, Wangaratta 1800 705 211 |
| | Greater Shepparton, Strathbogie, Moira 13 00 854 944 |
| Loddon Mallee | Mitchell, Murrindindi 1800 663 107 |
| | Greater Bendigo, Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Mount Alexander 1800 260 338 |
| Eastern Metropolitan | Buloke, Goornawarra, Swan Hill, Mildura 1800 625 533 1800 MALLEE |
| | Yarra Ranges, Knox, Maroondeah 13 00 369 146 |
| | Monash, Whitehorse, Manningham, Boroondarra 13 00 762 125 |
| North and West Metropolitan | Nilumbik, Whittlesea, Bayside, Yarra and Darebin (03) 9450 0955 |
| | Brimbank, Melton 13 00 138 180 |
| | Hume, Moreland 13 00 786 433 |
| | Hobson's Bay, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Wyndham 13 00 786 433 |
| Southern Metropolitan | Casey, Cardinia, Greater Dandenong (03) 97 05 3939 |
| | Aboriginal children and families (Casey, Cardinia and Great Dandenong) (03) 97 94 5973 |
| | Frankston, Mornington Peninsula, Kingston, Bayside, Glen Eira, Stonnington, Port Phillip 13 00 721 383 13 00 367 441 |

Incident Report – Newtown Primary School



All incident reports must be stored securely.

Incident details:

| | | | | |
|---|---------|--------|-------|-------|
| Date of incident: | | | | |
| Time of incident: | | | | |
| Location of incident: | | | | |
| Name(s) of child/children involved: | | | | |
| Name(s) of staff / volunteer involved: | | | | |
| Reported by: (circle) | Teacher | Parent | Child | Carer |

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000

Does the child identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

No Yes, Aboriginal Yes, Torres Strait Islander

Please categorise the incident

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Physical violence | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sexual offence | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Serious emotional or psychological abuse | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Serious neglect | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Inappropriate disclosure of personal information. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please describe the incident

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| When did it take place? | |
| Who was involved? | |
| What did you see? | |
| Were there any witnesses? | |

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Other information | |
|--------------------------|--|

Office use:

| | |
|--|--|
| Date incident report received: | |
| Staff member managing incident: | |
| Follow-up date: | |
| Incident ref. number: | |

Has the incident been reported?

| | |
|--|--|
| Child protection | |
| Police | |
| Another third party (please specify): | |

Incident reporter wishes to remain anonymous?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

Yes

No

Follow-up

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