

4 STEPS TO RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS, DISCLOSURES AND SUSPICIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

As a teacher or school staff member you play a critical role in protecting children in your care

- You **MUST** act by following the 4 steps below, 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 are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse)

For more details please refer to the School Child Abuse Reporting Policy

Please refer to the Colleges' *Child Protection Policy and Procedure* and *Child Abuse Allegation Reporting Policy* for more information

STEP 1

RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to Step 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

STEP 2

RESPONDING 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 do so may amount to a criminal offence

For suspected student to student sexual assault, please refer to the 4 Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending

REPORTABLE CONDUCT

IS THE SOURCE OF SUSPECTED ABUSE AN EMPLOYEE?

You **MUST** report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor, volunteer or visitor to the relevant Senior Staff Member or School Welfare Committee Member, who will then notify the Principal.

The Principal must then report (as per CCYP guidelines) to Police and CCYP. If the Principal is unavailable, the CEO takes on this responsibility.

MANDATORY REPORTING

Note: Teachers are legally obliged to report matters relating to child abuse. All other staff/adults, whilst not legally obliged, should follow the same procedures as outlined below.

IS THE SOURCE OF SUSPECTED ABUSE WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY?

If you believe a child is in need of protection from child abuse or harm within the family or community, you must report to the relevant Senior Staff Member or School Welfare Committee Member, who will then notify the Principal.

The Principal will then report to relevant Government Agencies (DHHS and VIC Police) as appropriate. If the Principal is unavailable, the CEO takes on this responsibility.

WELFARE CONCERNS OTHER THAN ABUSE:

If you believe a child is not subject to abuse but you still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing, you must report to the relevant Senior Staff Member or School Welfare Committee Member, and/or Principal who will then notify the relevant Government Agency to make a referral or seek advice (Child First, DHHS or Police)

STEP 3

CONTACTING PARENTS / CARERS

Your Principal/Senior Staff/Welfare Committee Member 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.

If the matter involves the Principal, or there is a conflict of interest, the matter must be reported to the Board Chair or CEO, or their delegate, who will then become the 'Head of the School' for the purposes of responding to and reporting the reportable allegation.

Adapted from:

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5_SchoolsGuide.pdf

STEP 4

PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

In addition to reporting and referral to relevant authorities, the school will ensure that students feel safe and supported. This will be done in partnership and with the consent of parents, carers or guardians (where appropriate) Support in the form of debriefing will also be provided to any impacted staff members.