

Child Safety Support Resource 1



St George Preca Catholic Primary School internal school process for mandatory reporting

As professionals who work with children, all St George Preca Catholic Primary School staff play a vital and legislated role in protecting children from abuse by responding to and reporting any incidents, disclosures or suspicions.

There are certain classes of professionals who are classified as “mandatory reporters”. Within a school mandatory reporters include all: Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered teachers, including Principals and staff who have been granted permission to teach by the VIT.

All staff, whether they are registered teachers or not, are required to complete the mandatory reporting eLearning modules annually which alerts them to their responsibilities for protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and enable them to

- identify indicators that a child or young person may be in need of protection,
- make a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection, and
- comply with reporting obligations under child protection law and criminal law and fulfil their duty of care.

Staff must make a report to Victoria Police and/or DHHS Child Protection as soon as practicable if, during the course of carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that:

- a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer,
- significant harm as a result of physical abuse and/ or sexual abuse,
- the child’s parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

Mandatory reporters must also follow the Four Critical Actions to ensure they fulfil all their legal obligations.

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

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

PROTECT

It is strongly recommended that **ALL** early childhood services staff follow these **Four Critical Actions** as soon as they witness an incident, or form a reasonable belief that a child has, or is at risk of being abused. This means acting even when you're not sure and have not directly witnessed the abuse. A reasonable belief is a judgement, not a diagnosis. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

Following these actions will support you to:

- meet your obligations in your role
- meet your legal obligations and duty of care
- It is also strongly recommended that you use the **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse Template** to keep clear and comprehensive notes. Staff can use the template to use this form, but **must** still follow their existing information management systems.

1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is an risk of immediate harm go to **Action 2**

If the child is in immediate risk of harm you **must** ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victim and alleged perpetrator
- 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 service for future health with police

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

In Victoria there are a range of legal obligations which put the welfare of **every** child at risk of being abused. Some of these obligations apply differently across the range of licensed, approved and other early child services and can vary depending on your role within the service. For further information on how these obligations apply to you, see the **Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Early Childhood Services**.

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

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 SERVICE

VICTORIA POLICE
You **must** report all instances of child abuse which are likely to be a staff member, contractor or volunteer, or child* to Victoria Police.

REPORT TO MANAGEMENT
You **must** report to your approved provider or licensee.

NOTIFY THE REGULATOR
Licensed or approved early childhood services **must** also report to their Quality Assessment and Regulation Division.
Notifications may be made at www.qar.vic.gov.au/notifications or by contacting **1300 307 415**.

*Sexual offending involving children 16 years and over.
*Licensed services operate under the Children's Services Act 2010 and approved services operate under the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010.

WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

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

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

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

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold **significant concerns** for their wellbeing you **must** report. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from Child FIRST in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support, or to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police.

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

You **must** contact with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/ carers. They may include:

- **not to contact** parents/carers (e.g. circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a refugee minor and does not seek for their parent/carer to be contacted)
- **to contact** the parent/carer and provide agreed information as soon as possible (for licensed and approved services this is implemented when the parent/carer are notified within 24 hours of the incident/abuse occurred at the service)

4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your service **should** take reasonable steps to make a child feel safe and supported when they are attending the service.

Your service should also consider providing support for children impacted by abuse. E.g. referrals to wellbeing professionals. MCH teams should follow the MCH Service Practice Guidelines to determine appropriate 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.

CONTACT

<p>DHHS CHILD PROTECTION AREA</p> <p>North Division 1300 864 8777</p> <p>South Division 1300 665 715</p> <p>East Division 1300 361 395</p> <p>West Division (Rural) 1300 075 589</p> <p>West Division (Metro) 1300 075 8977</p>	<p>QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND REGULATION DIVISION</p> <p>NORTH WESTERN</p> <p>Loddon Valley 03 5466 298</p> <p>North Western 03 9387 0372</p> <p>SOUTH EASTERN</p> <p>Geelong Area 03 5127 5400</p> <p>Southern Metropolitan 03 8765 5763</p> <p>NORTH EASTERN</p> <p>Alba, Inverclyde, public facilities 03 527 78</p> <p>SOUTH WESTERN</p> <p>Barwon South West 03 5225 5001</p> <p>Western Metropolitan 03 9371 0244</p> <p>Ozempark 03 5337 8444</p>
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CHILD FIRST
www.childfirst.vic.gov.au

VICTORIA POLICE
1300 or your local police station

While it is recommended that any concerns regard a child should initially directed towards the Principal / Deputy Principal, staff, alternatively must follow the process outlined in the Mandatory Reporting Flowchart outlined above if there is a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection or a criminal offence has been committed.

Following a report to the Police or DHHS start will:

- Complete internal paper work
- Debrief with a member of the Leadership Team (Usually the Principal or Deputy Principal)
- Leadership will follow up/check in with the person who has made the report

All processes are consistent with PROTECT and the Four Critical Actions referenced in the Child Safety Policy. Staff at St George Preca Catholic Primary School are familiar with PROTECT ~ Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools. PROTECT resource reference:

<https://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Melb/Document-File/Students-Support/Protect/PROTECT-Identifying-and-Responding-to-All-Forms-of.pdf>

Flowchart – Responding to a possible mandatory reporting concern

