



RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED AND REPORTED CHILD ABUSE PROCEDURE

Rationale

This procedure supports the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy outlining the actions required of all Staff of the College in relation to responding to suspected child abuse.

All Staff are to conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner consistent with their role as College representatives, be positive role models for students, and act to support the safety and wellbeing of those in their care.

The College is committed to student safety and to providing an environment in which students feel safe, happy and empowered.

Responsibilities

- Staff will ensure they are aware of and follow the mandatory reporting requirements for child abuse.
- Child Safety Champions (Deputy Principal, Head of Secondary School, Head of Primary School, Head of Learning Support, ELC Director) will:
 - ensure compliance with child abuse reporting requirements.
 - coordinate the reporting process within this procedure when they become aware of an incidence of child abuse or a reasonable belief or suspicion of child abuse and keep the Principal and relevant staff informed of progress.
 - take in-house action to ensure appropriate staff or student conduct in relation to children. This includes investigating and acting on inappropriate conduct.
 - coordinate the mitigation of any risks to child safety that they become aware of including as a result of a complaint.
 - ensure full and accurate records relating to incidents of inappropriate behaviour or allegations of child abuse and any subsequent investigations are recorded and retained in confidence.
- The Principal will:
 - Ensure that all the support and resources are provided to the Child Safety Champions.
 - Ensure reporting to the relevant authorities, such as the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People is completed as appropriate.

Where a Child Safety Champion is part of the allegation, they must relinquish their position as a Child Safety Champion. Another Child Safety Champion must be nominated by the Principal.

Procedures and Actions

Student safety is everyone's responsibility.

If a student discloses an incident of abuse to you:

- Try to separate them discreetly from the other students and carefully listen to them.
- Let the student use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the student that you take what they are saying seriously that it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Do not make promises to the student such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe. Explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/carer, Class/Form Teacher, Head of School, or the Police; however, the priority is their safety and wellbeing.
- Do not leave the student in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Provide them with the Incident Report form within this procedure to complete Part A, or complete it together, if you feel the student is unable to do this or if they request assistance.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the student's words and report the disclosure to one of the College's Child Safety Champions, if that is not you. The Child Safety Champion will follow Mandatory Reporting guidelines and their legal obligations.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

If a parent/carer discloses an incident of abuse or raises a concern of suspected abuse to you:

- Explain that Bayside Christian College has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the student.
- 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 using the Incident Report form within this procedure.
- Explain to them that the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as to one of the College's Child Safety Champions, the Police or child protection and that it is the College's legal obligation to report the allegation to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP).
- Do not make promises, except that you will do your best to keep the student safe.
- Provide them with an Incident Report form to complete Part A, or complete it together.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be. If you are not a Child Safety Champion, then let them know that you will be passing on this information for follow up as per the College's mandatory reporting and legal obligations.

Completing an Incident Report

Any incident, disclosure or suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused needs to be documented using the Incident Report form within this procedure.

Part A of the form needs to be completed in conjunction with reading Appendix 1, the Four Critical Actions for School: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse.

When completing an Incident Report form aim to obtain as much information as possible. This information will be critical to any report and may be referenced later if the matter is the subject to Court proceedings.

Once Part A of the Incident Report form is complete, it is to be forwarded to one of the College's Child Safety Champions.

Completing the Incident Report form is to be done promptly so as not to impact on reporting timelines.

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

Note: It is a legal requirement under Child Safe Standards to keep clear and comprehensive notes on all observations, disclosures and other details that led them to suspect the abuse.

Things to consider when someone is disclosing information

Cultural diversity

Be aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers when reporting allegations of abuse. For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking about such matters and communicating in English may be a barrier for some. 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).

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students

If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student, ensure a culturally appropriate response. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students, or a local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander leader.

Students with a disability

Some students with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, students with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters. Advice on communicating with those with a disability can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website.

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

Legal Responsibilities

Whilst there is a need to gather information to make a report, it is not the role of College staff to investigate abuse - leave this to Victoria Police and/or DHHS Child Protection.

Remember - forwarding any concerns does not absolve College staff members of their legal responsibilities. Refer to the College's Mandatory Reporting Policy for more information.

Every adult who reasonably believes that a child has been abused or has substantial evidence that a child may be at risk of abuse, whether at the College 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 protect and failure to disclose](#) is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website.

While failure to disclose only covers child sexual abuse, other forms of child abuse should also be reported to authorities. Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting responsibilities. Please refer to the College's Mandatory Reporting Policy or the DHHS website for [mandatory reporting advice](#).

Related Documents

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Child Safety Officer Role Description

Mandatory Reporting Policy

Approver College Executive

Authoriser College Board

Bayside Christian College Incident Report Form

PLEASE NOTE:

If you are making a report to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police you must seek their advice before contacting parents/carers so as not to compromise any investigation or place a child at further risk.

The College needs to report the allegation to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) within 3 business days after becoming aware of the allegation.

PART A

(To be completed by the first point of contact member of staff, parent, student or member of the community)

General Information
Please select from the following who is reporting the allegation: <input type="checkbox"/> parent <input type="checkbox"/> student <input type="checkbox"/> volunteer/contractor <input type="checkbox"/> alumni <input type="checkbox"/> member of the public

If anyone is in immediate danger, staff should report immediately to Victoria Police on 000.

CRITICAL ACTION 1 – RESPONDING

Refer to Action 1 - *Four Critical Actions For Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*

Personal Details	
Full Name:	Gender:
Year Level / Class:	Date of Birth:
Residential Address:	
Parent/Carer Name/s:	Parent/Carer Contact:
Language(s) spoken by child:	Disabilities, Mental or Physical Health Issues:

Is an interpreter required?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	If yes, for which language?
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	
Please note If you require an interpreter to help you to get more information please call the interpreter service on 131 450. Tell the operator which language you need and the phone number of the person you want to contact. The operator will get an interpreter on the line to assist you with your conversation. You will not be charged for this service.			

Grounds for your belief that a child has been, or is at risk of abuse

INDICATORS OR INSTANCES WHICH LED YOU TO BELIEVE THAT A CHILD/CHILDREN IS/ARE SUBJECT TO CHILD ABUSE, OR AT RISK OF ABUSE:

Detail any disclosures or incidents or suspicions (including names, times and dates documenting a child's exact words as far as possible). Include specific detail here on what led you to form a reasonable belief that a child has been, or is at risk of being, abused.

ANY PHYSICAL INDICATORS OF ABUSE:

ANY BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS OF ABUSE:

ANY PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOUR OR PRIOR CONCERNS LEADING UP TO AN INCIDENT, DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION:

ANY KNOWN PREVIOUS HISTORY OR SUSPECTED ABUSE: *(prior to this incident, disclosure or suspicion or involvement with agencies)*

Family background

FAMILY COMPOSITION (IF KNOWN): *(listing parenting or care arrangements and sibling's names and ages)*

ANY OTHER PEOPLE LIVING WITH THE CHILD (IF KNOWN):

DISABILITY, MENTAL OR PHYSICAL HEALTH ISSUES AN FAMILY (IF KNOWN):

LIKELY REACTION TO A REPORT BEING MADE (IF KNOWN):

Staff member leading the response (Child Safety Champion)

Title:	First name:	Family name:
Position:		
College Address: 97 & 120 Robinsons Rd Langwarrin, Vic, 3911	Telephone: (during business hours) (03) 5971 6700	

PART B

(To be completed by the Child Safety Champion)

CRITICAL ACTION 2 – REPORTING

Refer to Action 2 - *Four Critical Actions For Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*

Reporting to authorities									
TICK THE AUTHORITIES YOU HAVE REPORTED TO:									
<input type="checkbox"/>	Victoria Police	<input type="checkbox"/>	DHHS Child Protection	<input type="checkbox"/>	Child FIRST	<input type="checkbox"/>	Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Decision not to proceed
<p>If you decide not to report, list your reasons here. Also, include any follow up actions undertaken by you below: Please note that the College has a legal obligation to report all allegations to CCYP within 3 business days of becoming aware of the allegation.</p>									
OUTCOMES FROM THE REPORT/DETAILS OF ANY CONVERSATIONS WITH AUTHORITIES:									

Reporting internally (if you are not a Child Safety Champion)	
PROVIDE DETAILS OF YOUR DISCUSSION WITH ONE OF THE CHILD SAFETY CHAMPIONS:	
TIME:	DATE:
NAMES:	
DISCUSSION OUTCOMES:	

CRITICAL ACTION 3 – CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Refer to Action 3 - *Four Critical Actions For Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*

Actions Taken (Child Safety Champion/Principal)		
PROVIDE DETAILS OF YOUR DISCUSSION WITH PARENTS/CARERS (IF APPROPRIATE): College Principal must consult with Victoria Police and/or DHHS Child Protection to determine if it is appropriate to contact parents. If it is, parents must be contacted as soon as possible (preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion).		
HAVE YOU SOUGHT ADVICE FROM DHHS CHILD PROTECTION OR VICTORIA POLICE?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
IS IT APPROPRIATE TO CONTACT PARENT/CARER?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
LIST REASONS IF IT IS NOT APPROPRIATE TO CONTACT PARENT/CARER:		
IF CONTACTING PARENT/CARER, PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING DETAILS:		
NAME OF STAFF MEMBER MAKING THE CALL:	NAME OF PARENT/CARER RECEIVING THE CALL:	
DISCUSSION OUTCOMES:		

CRITICAL ACTION 4 – PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Refer to Action 4 - *Four Critical Actions For Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*

Planning Actions (Child Safety Champion/Principal)
INCLUDE DETAIL ON WHAT FOLLOW UP ACTIONS HAVE OCCURRED TO SUPPORT THE STUDENT: <i>(for example, referral to wellbeing professionals and other specialised services, the convening of a student support group and development of support plans)</i>
FOLLOW UP ACTIONS:
SUPPORT:
REFERRAL(S):

PROCESS OF REVIEW

The Child Safety Champion must complete this section within 30 days of the incident, suspicion or disclosure of abuse being reported. If appropriate, assistance may be sought from within the College Leadership Team. This review will support the College to continue to protect children in our care and to reflect on our processes and the need for any follow-up actions.

Current Safety and Wellbeing of the Child		
IS THE CHILD SAFE FROM ABUSE AND HARM? If not, consider the need to make a further report immediately.	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
DOES THE CHILD HAVE ANY WELLBEING ISSUES THAT ARE NOT CURRENTLY BEING ADDRESSED? If yes, consider how these can be addressed and captured within a student support plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
Current wellbeing of other children who may be impacted by the abuse		
ARE THERE ANY OTHER CHILDREN WHO MAY BE IMPACTED BY THE ABUSE?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
IF SO, HAVE THEIR WELLBEING NEEDS BEEN MET? If so, consider how these can be addressed and captured within a student support plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
Current wellbeing of impacted staff members		
DOES THE STAFF MEMBER WHO MADE THE REPORT/WITNESSED THE INCIDENT, FORMED A SUSPICION OR RECEIVED A DISCLOSURE REQUIRE ANY SUPPORT?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
IF SO, HAS THIS BEEN PROVIDED?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO

Review or actions taken		
WAS AN APPROPRIATE DECISION MADE IN RELATION TO WHEN TO ACT?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
COULD THE SUSPECTED ABUSE HAVE BEEN DETECTED EARLIER?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
Action 1 DID THE COLLEGE TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION IN AN EMERGENCY?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
Action 2 WAS A REPORT MADE TO THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES AND INTERNALLY?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
WERE SUBSEQUENT REPORTS MADE IF NECESSARY?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
Action 3 DID THE COLLEGE CONTACT THE PARENTS/CARERS ASAP?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
HAVE THE PARENTS CONTINUED TO BE ENGAGED IF APPROPRIATE?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
Action 4 HAS THE COLLEGE PROVIDED ADEQUATE SUPPORT FOR THE STUDENT?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
HAS A STUDENT SUPPORT PLAN BEEN ESTABLISHED, IMPLEMENTED AND REVIEWED?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES

Review or actions taken		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
HAS A STUDENT SUPPORT GROUP BEEN ESTABLISHED?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
WAS THE STUDENT APPROPRIATELY SUPPORTED IN ANY INTERVIEWS?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
HAVE ANY COMPLAINTS BEEN RECEIVED?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
HAVE THE COMPLAINTS BEEN RESOLVED?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
	Date	

APPENDIX 1:

The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), CCYP, the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority and the Quality Assessment and Regulation Division of the Victorian Department of Education and Training work with each other as co-regulators who are committed to child safety. The [VIT Conduct Reporting Guide](#) should be referenced in addition to the following table.

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

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 Incident Support and Operations Centre
- CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - Diocesan education office.
- INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS
 - School principal and/or school chaplain
 - 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 at risk of protection from child abuse or if risk of being harmed for 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 Incident Support and Operations Centre
- 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 (eg. 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.

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 are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (eg. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).

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

CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

AREA

- North Division 1300 664 977
- South Division 1300 665 795
- East Division 1300 360 391
- West Division (Rural) 1800 075 599
- West Division (Metro) 1300 664 977

AFTER HOURS

After hours, weekends, public holidays: 13 12 78

CHILD FIRST

<https://services.offices.vic.gov.au/inferral-and-support-teams/>

ORANGE DOOR

<https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/the-orange-door.html>

CONTACT

VICTORIA POLICE

000 or your local police station

DET INCIDENT SUPPORT AND OPERATIONS CENTRE

1800 126 126

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT UNIT

1800 126 126

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH

(03) 9637 2585

DIOCESAN OFFICE

Melbourne (03) 9687 0228
Ballarat (03) 5337 7195
Sale (03) 5622 6600
Sandhurst (03) 5443 2377

