

Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending Procedures

Purpose

The purpose of our procedures is to ensure the safety, protection, and well-being of all students within our Catholic school community inclusive of boarding.

This framework is designed to provide clear guidelines and protocols for identifying, addressing, and responding to instances of sexual offending involving students, in alignment with our commitment to upholding Catholic values of compassion, justice, and respect for human dignity.

By implementing these procedures, we aim to create a safe and supportive environment where students can thrive academically, emotionally, and spiritually, free from the harm and trauma of sexual misconduct.

Additionally, these procedures emphasise the importance of providing support and assistance to both victims and perpetrators, fostering accountability, rehabilitation, and healing within our school community.

Through proactive prevention efforts, robust reporting mechanisms, and compassionate intervention strategies, we seek to uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct and safeguard the integrity of our Catholic school environment.

Scope

This procedure encompasses all aspects of addressing incidents of sexual misconduct involving students, both within the traditional school setting and the boarding environment. This includes, but is not limited to, incidents of harassment, abuse, assault, or any other form of sexual misconduct perpetrated by students.

These procedures apply to all students enrolled in our school, including day students and those residing in the boarding facilities.

The scope further extends to cover the roles and responsibilities of staff, administrators, boarding supervisors, counsellors, and other relevant personnel in identifying, reporting, investigating, and responding to allegations of student sexual offending.

Additionally, the procedures outline protocols for providing support and assistance to both survivors and alleged perpetrators, ensuring the protection of victims while upholding the principles of fairness, due process, and accountability.

Becoming Aware of Student Sexual Offending

There are four main ways in which a staff member may become aware that a child is a victim of a student sexual offending and/or a student has engaged in student sexual offending:

1. Witnessing an incident

If a staff member witnesses an incident where they believe a child has been subjected to, or may be at risk of, abuse, including exposure to family violence, immediate action must be taken to protect the safety of the child or children involved (Action 1: Responding to an Emergency). Next, they must refer to [Action 2: Reporting to Authorities. Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending.](#)

2. Forming a suspicion or reasonable belief

All suspicions that a child is a victim of a student sexual offending and/or a student has engaged in student sexual must be taken seriously. This includes an offence that is suspected to have occurred outside of school premises and/or outside school hours including in Boarding. If a suspicion is formed that a student is victim of student sexual offending and/or a student has committed student sexual offending, action must be taken, even if the student sexual offending has not been directly witnessed. In some circumstances, it may be surmised that a student's sexual behaviour is indicative of their own experience of child abuse.

Physical or behavioural signs may be the only indication that a child is impacted by abuse. If reasonable belief can be formed that a student is engaged in student sexual offending and may have also been impacted by child abuse the following must be observed :[Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#) AND the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#)

1. Receiving a disclosure about or from a current student if:

- a current student discloses that they have been, or are in danger of becoming a victim of student sexual offending, or
- a person (child or adult) discloses that they believe a current student has been, or is at risk of being a victim of student sexual offending, or
- a person (child or adult), discloses that they believe that a current student has engaged, or is at risk of engaging in student sexual offending, the disclosure must be treated seriously, and take immediate action by following these [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending.](#)

2. Receiving a disclosure about or from a former student

- If disclosure is received that a former student of the school is a victim of historical student sexual offending, action must be taken.
- If any student involved in the alleged historical student sexual offending is currently of school age and attending a Victorian school the following must be observed: [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending.](#)
- If all impacted students are no longer of school age or attending a Victorian school, action must be taken. Contact Victoria Police to report the matter and advise DOBCEL Manager Safeguarding and Standards.

Notes and Records

Staff members are to keep clear and comprehensive notes relating to incidents, disclosures and allegations of Student Sexual Offending using [Protect: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools.](#)

Even if a staff member decides not to make a report, they must still accurately document their notes relating to the incident, disclosure or allegation of Student Sexual Offending [Protect: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools.](#)

Notes and records must be kept securely on school grounds and must not be destroyed as they may be needed at a later time.

Disclosures

It is the role of staff members to reassure and support a child or young person who makes a disclosure of student sexual offending. However, staff members should never promise to keep any disclosures confidential as all disclosures of abuse must be reported.

The role of staff remains the same if disclosures are made from a parent/carer or a sibling, or if disclosures involve family violence.

Strategies on how to manage a disclosure, can be found in [PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)

Responding and Reporting

There are [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#) which must be taken when responding to and reporting a child protection incident, disclosure or suspicion:

1. Responding to an Emergency
2. Reporting to Authorities/Referring to Services
3. Contacting Parents/Carers
4. Providing Ongoing Support.

Critical Action 1: Responding to an Emergency

If there is no risk of immediate harm Critical Action 2 is to be observed

If a child is at immediate risk of harm their safety must be ensured by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved, ensuring that if the parties involved are all present at the school, they are supervised separately by a staff member
- 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.

If the alleged Student Sexual Offending has occurred at the school, staff should also ensure that reasonable steps are taken to preserve the environment, the clothing and other items and to prevent any potential witnesses (including staff members, volunteers and contractors) from discussing the incident until Victoria Police or relevant authorities arrive on the premises.

Critical Action 2: Reporting to Authorities

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed incidents, suspicions, and disclosures of student sexual offending must be reported to:

- VICTORIA POLICE: All instances on 000
- DHHS Child Protection, If it is believed that:
 - the victim's parent/carers are unable or unwilling to protect the child
 - the student who is alleged to have engaged in the student sexual offending is:
 - aged over 10 and under 15 years and may need therapeutic treatment to address these behaviours
 - may be displaying physical and behavioural indicators of being the victim of child abuse.
- Internally
Internal Reports are to be made to:
 - The Principal
 - Director of MSC Education
 - Board Chair

A contact person at the school must be nominated for future liaison with Victoria Police and/or Child Protection and advice sought about contacting parents/carers (see **Action 3**)

Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse contains further guidance in reporting to authorities.

Critical Action 3: Contacting Parents/Carers

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

- not to contact the parents/carers (e.g. in circumstances where contacting the parents/carers is likely to affect adversely a Victoria Police investigation or where the student is a mature minor and has requested that their parent/carer not be notified.
- 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).

Critical Action 4: Providing Continued Support

The school must provide support for students who are victims of a student sexual offence AND students who have engaged in a sexual offence. This is an essential part of duty of care requirements.

This support should include the development of a student support plan in consultation with wellbeing professionals and which outlines support strategies.

Strategies may include the development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals.

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Student Sexual Offending



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 4 critical actions as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a suspicion that a student is a victim of a student sexual offending and/or a student has engaged in sexual offending.
- You must act even if you are unsure and have not directly observed student sexual offending (eg. If a victim or another person tells you about the offence).
- You must use the Responding to Student Sexual Offending template to keep clear and comprehensive notes.

1 IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO AN INCIDENT

- 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

- As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you must report incidents, suspicions and disclosures of student sexual offending as soon as possible:
- ### VICTORIA POLICE

All instances on 000
- ### DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

If you believe that:

 - the victim's parent/carer are unable or unwilling to protect the child
 - the student who is alleged to have engaged in the student sexual offending is:
 - aged over 10 and under 15 years and may be in need of therapeutic treatment to address these behaviours
 - may be displaying physical and behavioural indicators of being the victim of child abuse*.

You must identify a contact person at the school for future liaison with Victoria Police and/or Child Protection and seek advice about contacting parents/carers (see Action 3).

*See the Four Critical Steps for Schools: Responding Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse for further guidance in these circumstances.

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your Principal must consult with Victoria Police or DHHS Child Protection to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers of all impacted students. They may advise:

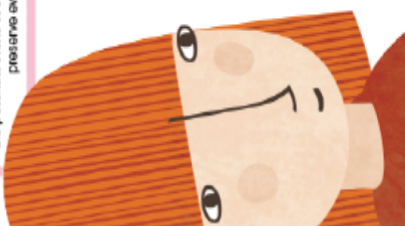
- not to contact the parents/carers (eg. in circumstances where contacting the parents/carers is likely to adversely affect a Victoria Police investigation or where the student is a mature minor and has requested that their parent/carer not be notified)
- to contact the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion).

4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your school must provide support for students who are victims AND students who have engaged in a sexual offence. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements. This support should include the development of a Student Support Plan in consultation with wellbeing professionals, outlining support strategies. Strategies may include the development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals.

CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION AREA	CHILD FIRST www.dhs.vic.gov.au	EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH (03) 9637 2595
North Division 1300 664 977	VICTORIA POLICE 000 or contact your local police station	DIOCESAN OFFICE Melbourne (03) 9267 0228 Ballarat (03) 5337 7135 Shepparton (03) 5622 6600 Sandhurst (03) 5445 2377
South Division 1300 655 795	DET SECURITY SERVICES UNIT (03) 9639 6286	INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA (03) 9825 7200
East Division 1300 390 391	STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT (03) 9651 3622	
West Division (Rural) 1800 075 599		
West Division (Metro) 1800 864 977		
AFTER HOURS After hours, weekends, public holidays 13 1278		



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 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 8978**.

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 8978**.

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
- in need of protection from child abuse
- 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

For suspected student sexual assault, please follow the **Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending**.

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 FOST/The Orange Door
- In circumstances where the family is unable to access support
- DHHS Child Protection
- Victoria Police.

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.

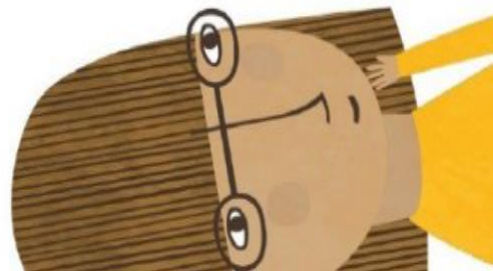
YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

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.

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

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

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.



CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION AREA
North Division **1300 664 6777**
South Division **1300 655 795**
East Division **1300 380 391**
West Division (Metro) **1800 075 599**
West Division (Metro) **1300 664 8777**

AFTER HOURS
After hours, weekends, public holidays **13 12 78**

CHILD FIRST
<https://www.childfirst.vic.gov.au/>
information@childfirst.vic.gov.au

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

VICTORIA POLICE
000 or your local police station
SECURITY SERVICES UNIT
(03) 9589 6256

STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT
(03) 9651 3622

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH
(03) 9637 2595

DIOCESAN OFFICE
Melbourne **(03) 9287 0028**
Ballarat **(03) 5337 7115**
Sale **(03) 5622 6600**
Sunshine **(03) 5443 2377**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA
(03) 9625 7200

THE LOOKOUT
The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence. <https://www.lookout.org.au>

Family violence victims/survivors can be referred to **1800 Respect** for counselling, information and a referral service: **1800 737 732**.



CECV
Child Education and Care Victoria

VICTORIA
Department of Education and Training

THE EDUCATION STATE

PROTECT

August 2018 Edition