

# Moonee Ponds West Primary School



## Mandatory Reporting Policy

### PURPOSE

To ensure school staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and are able to:

- understand their various legal obligations to report and take other reasonable steps to discharge the duty of care that may be owed to the child or young person
- identify indicators that a child or young person has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused
- make a report about a child or young person who has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused.

For information on how to make a report, see attachment 1.

### POLICY STATEMENT

Staff at Moonee Ponds West Primary School all have duty of care obligations and obligations arising out of the Child Safe Standards. Any person who has a significant concern for the wellbeing of a child should report these concerns to DHHS Child Protection, or refer the child and their family to Child FIRST

### IMPLEMENTATION

Mandatory reporters must make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) (Child Protection) as soon as practicable if, in the course of practising their profession or carrying out their duties, they form reasonable belief that a child or young person is in need of protection, as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse, and the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child from that abuse. A mandatory reporter who fails to comply with these reporting obligations may be committing a criminal offence.

The following professionals are considered mandatory reporters

- Teachers registered to teach or who have permission to teach pursuant to the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
- Principals of government and non-government schools
- Registered medical practitioners, nurses and all members of the police force

Any person can make a report to DHHS Child Protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection for any of the following reasons:

- the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of:
  - physical injury and their parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child
  - sexual abuse and their parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child
  - emotional or psychological harm and their parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.
- the child has been abandoned and there is no other suitable person who is willing and able to care for the child.
- the child's parents are dead or incapacitated and there is no other suitable person who is willing and able to care for the child.
- the child's physical development or health has been, or is likely to be significantly harmed and the parents are unable or unwilling to provide basic care, or effective medical or other remedial care.

Department policy requires all staff who form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection to report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police. In the case of school staff, they must also discuss their concerns with the principal or a member of the school leadership team.

Follow the four critical actions when responding to an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse:

[Action 1: Respond to an emergency](#)

[Action 2: Report to authorities](#)

[Action 3: Contact parents or carers](#)

[Action 4: Provide on-going support](#)

### **Document your actions**

As a school staff member, you must keep clear and comprehensive notes relating to incidents, disclosures and allegations of child abuse. It is strongly recommended that you use the responding to child abuse template:

 [Responding to suspected child abuse: template \(docx - 193.56kb\)](#)

 [Responding to suspected child abuse: template](#)

If the incident, disclosure or allegation is related to student sexual offending use the following template:

 [Responding to student sexual offending: template](#)

 [Responding to student sexual offending: template](#)

This information may be sought at a later date if the matter is the subject of court proceedings. These notes may also later assist you if you are required to provide evidence to support their decisions.

### **Strategies for managing a disclosure**

When managing a disclosure of abuse or student sexual offending, it is important that you respond in an appropriate and supportive manner.

All disclosures of abuse must be taken seriously and addressed immediately by following the four critical actions above.

### **Confidentiality**

When a disclosure of abuse is made and/or you are concerned that a child has been abused or is at risk of being abused, you must inform the student that their confidentiality cannot be maintained.

This should be done in language appropriate to the student's age and stage of development. For example:

To a younger student:

'I am not going to be able to keep your story a secret. I really have to tell someone who is going to be able to help you.'

To an older student:

'The information you have given me has made me very concerned for your welfare and I need to tell you that it is my responsibility to report this information to help you get some assistance.'

#### **When managing a disclosure you should:**

- listen to the child and allow them to speak
- stay calm and not display expressions of panic or shock
- use a neutral tone with no urgency and where possible use the child's language and vocabulary
- be patient and non-judgmental throughout
- highlight to the child that they are doing the right thing in telling you about what has happened and that it is not their fault
- do not ask leading questions, but instead, gently ask, 'What happened next?' rather than 'Why?'
- be patient and allow the child to talk at their own pace and in their own words
- not pressure the child into telling you more than they want to
- reassure the child that you believe them and that disclosing the matter was the right thing to do use verbal facilitators such as, 'Okay, I see', restate the child's previous statement, and use non-suggestive words of encouragement, designed to keep the child talking in an open-ended way
- tell the child you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop the abuse, and explain the role of these authorities if appropriate.

#### **When managing a disclosure you should not:**

- ask questions that are investigative and potentially invasive. This may make the child feel uncomfortable and cause the child to withdraw
- go over the information time and time again (you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need to make a report to the relevant authority).

#### **Training obligations**

School staff play a vital role in protecting children from harm and are well placed to observe signs or behaviours that may indicate risks of child abuse, neglect or exploitation.

The [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations eLearning module](#) (the module) is an essential professional learning resource that assists schools to protect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

The module provides detailed information for identifying and responding to child abuse, and includes case studies and practical scenarios to assist staff fulfil their reporting obligations.

#### **Requirements - school staff**

Staff in schools who are:

- mandated reporters must undertake the training once per calendar year
- not mandated reporters are strongly encouraged to undertake the training once per calendar year.

## References

This policy must be read in conjunction with:

[Child Protection - Making a Report](#)

[Department of Justice and Regulation – Failure to disclose offence](#)

[PROTECT - Responding to other concerns about the wellbeing of a child](#)

PROTECT: [Four Critical Actions](#)

School Policy & Advisory Guide - [Child Safe Standards](#)

# 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	STEP 4	MAKE A REPORT TO CHILD PROTECTION
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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*. <b>Go to Step 4</b></li> <li>2. If you have significant concerns that a child and their family need a referral to Child FIRST for family services. <b>Go to Step 3</b></li> <li>3. In all other situations <b>Go to Step 2.</b></li> </ol> <p>* Refer to Appendix 2: Definitions of child abuse and indicators of harm in the Protocol – <i>Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider the level of immediate danger to the child. Ask yourself:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Have I formed a belief that the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm? <b>YES / NO</b> and</li> <li>b) Am I in doubt about the child's safety and the parent's ability to protect the child? <b>YES / NO</b></li> </ol> </li> <li>2. If you answered yes to a) or b) <b>Go to Step 4</b></li> <li>3. If you have significant concerns that a child and their family need a referral to Child FIRST for family services. <b>Go to Step 3</b></li> </ol>	<h3>Child Wellbeing Referral</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contact your local Child FIRST provider.           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See over for contact list for local Child FIRST phone numbers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Have notes ready with your observations and child and family details.</li> </ol>	<h3>Mandatory/Protective Report*</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contact your local Child Protection Intake provider immediately.           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See over for contact list for local Child Protection phone numbers.</li> <li>• For <b>After Hours Child Protection</b> Emergency Services, call <b>131 278.</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Have notes ready with your observations and child and family details.</li> </ol> <p>* <i>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</i></p>		

## 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 9589 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	
Eastern	1300 360 391	Box Hill	(03) 9843 6000
North and West	1300 664 977	Preston	1300 664 977
		Footscray	1300 360 462
Southern	1300 655 795	Dandenong	(03) 9213 2111
RURAL REGIONS			
Intake Unit		Regional Office	
Barwon South Western			
	1800 075 599	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 (AHCPEs)

Statewide number for all emergency child protection matters outside of normal business hours (24 hours, 7 days a week): **131 278**

Victoria Police **000**

### 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
Galehouse Centre, Royal Children's Hospital (for specialist counselling and medical assistance)	(03) 9345 6391
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	1300 551 948
	Colac – Otway, Corangamite	5232 5500
	Warrnambool, Moyne, Glenelg, Southern Grampians	1300 889 713
Gippsland	East Gippsland	5152 0052
	Wellington	5144 7777
	La Trobe, Baw Baw	1800 339 100
	South Gippsland, Bass Coast	5662 5150
Grampians	Northern Grampians, West Wimmera, Hindmarsh, Yarrambat, Horsham	1800 195 114
	Ararat, Pyrenees, Hepburn, Ballarat, Golden Plains, Moorabool	1300 783 341
Hume	Wodonga, Towong, Indigo	1800 705 211
	Alpine, Benalla, Mansfield, Wangaratta	1800 705 211
	Greater Shepparton, Strathbogie, Moira	1300 854 944
	Mitchell, Murrindindi	1800 663 107
Loddon Mallee	Greater Bendigo, Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Mount Alexander	1800 260 338
	Buloke, Goonawarra, Swan Hill, Mildura	1800 625 533 1800 MALLEE
	Yarra Ranges, Knox, Maroondah	1300 369 146
Eastern Metropolitan	Monash, Whitehorse, Manningham, Boroondarra	1300 762 125
	Nilumbik, Whittlesea, Banyule, Yarra and Darebin	(03) 9450 0955
North and West Metropolitan	Brimbank, Melton	1300 138 180
	Hume, Moreland	1300 786 433
	Hobson's Bay, Maribymong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Wyndham	1300 786 433
	Casey, Cardinia, Greater Dandenong	(03) 9705 3939
Southern Metropolitan	Aboriginal children and families (Casey, Cardinia and Great Dandenong)	(03) 9794 5973
	Frankston, Mornington Peninsula	1300 721 383
	Kingston, Bayside, Glen Eira, Stonington, Port Phillip	1300 367 441

The policy will be reviewed as part of the review cycle, in line with DET policy and directives. Due to be reviewed in 2021.

