

## Child-Safe Environments Policy

### Rationale:

The child safe environments policy sets out the Mac.Robertson Girls' High School's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe; and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

### Aims:

In its planning, decision-making and operations the Mac.Robertson Girls' High School aims to:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers. <sup>1</sup>

### Implementation:

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:

*Child abuse includes*

- *any act committed against a child involving:*
  - *a sexual offence or*
  - *an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)*

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> Adapted from Our Community (2016) Child Protection Toolkit: *What every not-for-profit organisation must do now.*

- *the infliction, on a child, of:*
  - *physical violence or*
  - *serious emotional or psychological harm*
  - *serious neglect of a child.*

*Child-connected work means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.*

*Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.*

*School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:*

- *a campus of the school*
- *online school environments (including email and intranet systems)*
- *other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).*

*School staff being: an individual working in a school environment who is:*

- *directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;*
- *a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary); or*
- *a minister of religion.*

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and contractors; whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people. Policies and procedures outlining school's approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below:

## **Our children**

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds

- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally
- ensure that children who are same sex attracted, gender diverse or other are safe and can participate equally.

## **Our staff and volunteers**

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct, which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

## **Training and supervision**

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children; the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds; the safety of children with a disability and those who are same-sex attracted, gender diverse or other.

New employees and volunteers will be monitored regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter and the age of the child (up to 17 years of age any incident will be referred to DHS; once a student turns 17 it is at the discretion of the young person).

## **Recruitment**

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements, which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with a disability and people who are same-sex attracted, gender diverse or other.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers who regularly volunteer at our school for a program of events, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information. If a volunteer comes into our school for a one off visit, that volunteer must be supervised at all times by the organiser who is employed at the school and has undertaken the appropriate checks (such as WWC).

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people and this process is supported by VIT for our teachers. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

## Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form<sup>2</sup>, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we, as an organisation, take.

## Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

## Legislative responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix IV

<sup>3</sup> A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed.

Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>.

- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.<sup>4</sup>
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.<sup>5</sup>

## Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media for non-educational purposes).

## Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed<sup>6</sup>
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

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<sup>4</sup> Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>.

<sup>5</sup> Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about [how to make a report to child protection](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first) <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first>.

<sup>6</sup> For example behaviour, please see [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/___data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc): <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/\_\_\_data/assets/word\_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards\_overview.doc>



The school's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden

## Resources:

DET Child Safe Standards Resources:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/childsafestandards.aspx>

School Policy Advisory Guide:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childsafestandards.aspx>

## Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute.

This policy was last ratified by School Council: <<date>>

School Council President Signature:

Date:

See Appendices:

- I. Risk Assessment Template
- II. Spotting the Warning Signs of Child Abuse
- III. What do to when an Allegation of Child Abuse is Made
- IV. Sample Incident Report



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## Child Safe Policy Appendix I – Risk Assessment Template

([http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard6\\_RiskAssessmentTemplate.pdf](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard6_RiskAssessmentTemplate.pdf))

### CHILD SAFE STANDARD 6: RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

A key part of a risk management strategy is a risk assessment. Risk assessments can take many forms. An example is provided below. Risk assessment resources form part of the School Policy & Advisory Guide: Risk Management Policy. An example is provided below to assist schools in their risk assessment.

Each school will be different and must undertake their school specific assessment.

Risk Event or Environment	Existing risk management strategies or existing controls	Likelihood	Consequence	Current risk rating	New risk management strategies or treatments	Who is responsible?	Target risk rating
No organisational culture of child safety – lack of leadership, public commitment and frequent messaging	Child safety code of conduct Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety	Possible	Severe	Extreme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Strategies to embed organisational culture of child safety are reviewed</li><li>Statement of commitment to child safety is publicly available</li></ul>	Principal, School Council Chair	Low
Inappropriate behaviour is not reported and addressed	Child safety code of conduct Clear child safety reporting procedures Performance management procedures	Unlikely	Severe	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Strategies to embed organisational culture of child safety are reviewed</li><li>Refresher training for staff – see eLearning mandatory reporting module</li></ul>	Principal, School Council Chair	Low

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Outstanding  
*opportunities*

Risk Event or Environment	Existing risk management strategies or existing controls	Likelihood	Consequence	Current risk rating	New risk management strategies or treatments	Who is responsible?	Target risk rating
Unquestioning trust of long term employees and contractors or norms	Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety Clear child safety reporting procedures	Possible	Major	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refresher training for staff – see eLearning mandatory reporting module</li> </ul>	Principal, School Council Chair	Low
Recruitment of an inappropriate person	WWCC or Victorian Institute of Teaching registration	Unlikely	Major	Medium	Processes updated to require: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criminal history search</li> <li>• Pre-employment reference check includes asking about child safety</li> </ul>	Principal, School Council Chair	Low
Engagement with children online	Child safety code of conduct Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety	Possible	Moderate	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train students and staff to detect inappropriate behaviour</li> <li>• Ensure appropriate settings on all student technologies</li> </ul>	Principal, School Council Chair	Low
Unknown people and environments at excursions and camps	Child safety code of conduct Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety Clear child safety reporting procedures	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of new or changed environments for child safety risks</li> <li>• Ensure Code and strategies apply in all school contexts</li> </ul>	Principal, School Council Chair	Low



Risk Event or Environment	Existing risk management strategies or existing controls	Likelihood	Consequence	Current risk rating	New risk management strategies or treatments	Who is responsible?	Target risk rating
Ad-hoc contractors on the premises (eg maintenance)	Child safe environments Information and awareness for visitors, staff, volunteers and contractors Adequate monitoring	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refresher training for frequent contractors</li> </ul>	Principal, School Council Chair	Low

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Outstanding  
*opportunities*

# Child Safe Policy Appendix II - Spotting the Warning Signs of abuse: for school staff

([http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5\\_WarningSignsSchoolStaff.pdf](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5_WarningSignsSchoolStaff.pdf))

# PROTECT



Education  
and Training

## spotting the warning signs of child abuse: for school staff

### A REASONABLE BELIEF

What do I do if I suspect (form a reasonable belief) a child is being abused?

You MUST take action as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or suspect that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused. You MUST act whenever you form a reasonable belief which means acting even if you are unsure and have not directly observed the abuse. Failure to act can be a criminal offence.

You MUST follow the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspensions of Child Abuse](#)

### WHEN SHOULD I ACT?

You MUST act even if you are unsure and have not observed the abuse.

You MUST following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspensions of Child Abuse](#). Failure to act can be a criminal offence.

### WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Child abuse can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, grooming, emotional or psychological harm, neglect or family violence.

It doesn't have to involve physical contact or force. Child abuse can include:

- talking to a child in a sexually explicit way
- grooming a child for future sexual activity
- forcing a child to watch pornography
- being witness to family violence
- failing to provide a child with an adequate standard of nutrition, supervision or medical care to the extent that their development of the child is placed at serious risk, or is significantly impaired.

## WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO BE IMPACTED BY CHILD ABUSE?

Any child can be victim to child abuse, however children who are vulnerable, isolated and/or have a disability are disproportionately abused.

Abuse is often committed by someone the child knows well such as a family member or someone within the school setting. In fact, child abuse can be committed by any member of the community.

Regardless of who the perpetrator or victim is the trauma of child abuse can have devastating impacts upon a child's wellbeing and development that can last for the rest of their life.

This is why it is critical that we respond immediately to any form of suspected abuse within our school communities.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS THAT A CHILD HAS BEEN ABUSED?

The most common physical and behavioural indicators of child abuse are outlined below. This is not an exhaustive list.

If you feel uncomfortable about a child's physical presentation or behaviour, but have not directly witnessed or been told about abuse, or risk of abuse, you should still act.

You can seek further advice contact and if you form a reasonable belief that a child has been abused, is being abused, or is at risk of abuse then you **MUST** follow the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse](#).

### COMMON PHYSICAL INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE

- bruises, welts, cuts/grazes or burns (especially those on back, bottom, legs, arms and inner thighs or in unusual configurations and may resemble an object)
- internal injuries and bone fractures not consistent with the explanation offered
- any injury to the genital or rectal area (e.g. bruising, bleeding, infection or anything causing pain to go to the toilet)
- wearing clothes unsuitable for weather conditions to hide injuries
- sexually-transmitted diseases and/or frequent urinary tract infections
- appearing consistently dirty and unwashed and/or inappropriately dressed for weather conditions
- being consistently hungry, tired and listless
- having unattended health problems and lack of routine medical care
- internal injuries

### COMMON BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE

- disclosure of abuse and/or drawings or writing which depicts violence and abuse
- habitual absences from school without reasonable explanation
- significant and unexplained delays in emotional, mental or physical development

- regressive or unusual changes to behaviour (e.g. sudden decline in academic performance, nervousness, depression, withdrawal, hyperactivity, aggression, bedwetting)
- drug or alcohol misuse, suicide or self-harm, harm to others or animals
- an inconsistent or unlikely explanation for an injury, or inability to remember the cause
- reluctance to go home and/or a wariness or fear of a parent/carer
- unusual fear of physical contact with adults
- persistent and age-inappropriate sexual activity (e.g. excessive masturbation or rubbing genitals against adults, promiscuity)
- poor self-care or personal hygiene
- an unusually close connection with an older person
- possessing expensive gifts or money (e.g. a new mobile phone given to them by a “friend”)
- taking on a caretaker role prematurely, trying to protect other family members

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS THAT AN ADULT IS PERPETRATING ABUSE?

The most common indicators that an adult is abusing a child are outlined below. This is not an exhaustive list.

If you feel uncomfortable in any way about a relationship between an adult and a child (or inappropriate relationships between children such as siblings) you MUST still act by following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse](#).

### COMMON BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS OF ADULTS ABUSING CHILDREN

#### FAMILY MEMBERS (PARENTS, SIBLINGS, EXTENDED FAMILY)

- attempts by one parent to alienate their child from the other parent
- overprotective or volatile relationships
- reluctance by the child to be alone with one or more of their family members
- a child and a sibling behaving like boyfriend and girlfriend (embarrassment if they are found alone together)

#### OTHER ADULTS (EG. SCHOOL STAFF MEMBER, VOLUNTEERS, COACHES)

- touching a child inappropriately
- bringing up sexual material or personal disclosures into conversations with a child
- inappropriate contact with the child (e.g. calls, emails, texts, social media)
- obvious or inappropriate preferential treatment of the child (making them feel “special”)
- giving inappropriate / expensive gifts to a child
- having inappropriate social boundaries (e.g. telling the child about their own personal problems).
- offering to drive a child to or from school
- inviting themselves over to their homes, calling them at night
- befriending the parents/carers of the child and making visits to their home
- undermining the child's reputation (so that the child won't be believed)

### WHERE TO GO FOR FURTHER ADVICE?

- Your Principal or a member of the leadership team
- DHHS Child Protection on 131 278.
- Your local police station

### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

The advice contained within this factsheet is drawn from Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools this can be found at: [www.education.vic.gov.au/protect](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/protect)

You must refer to this guidance to ensure you meet your obligations to protect children.

To familiarise yourself with this policy and to consider how it applies in different scenarios, visit [www.education.vic.gov.au/protect](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/protect)

## Child Safe Policy Appendix III – What to do when an allegation of child abuse is made

(<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards-resources> - Resource 7)

### What to do when an allegation of child abuse is made

#### Child safe standards toolkit: resource six

The child safe standards require organisations that provide services for children<sup>7</sup> to have processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.<sup>8</sup> Your organisation may have existing processes. This resource is designed to provide guidance on what to do if a child discloses an incident of abuse, or if a parent/carers raises a concern or allegation of abuse which may have taken place in your organisation.

#### If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you

- Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/carers, specific people in your organisation, or the police.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to your manager or your organisation's child safety officer/champion,<sup>9</sup> police or child protection.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

#### If a parent/carers says their child has been abused in your organisation or raises a concern

- Explain that your organisation has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.

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<sup>7</sup> For a [list of the organisations in scope](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/in-scope-organisations-for-child-safe-standards) for the child safe standards, please see the Department of Health and Human Services website: <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/in-scope-organisations-for-child-safe-standards](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/in-scope-organisations-for-child-safe-standards)>

<sup>8</sup> The child safe standards aim to protect children from abuse in organisations, including physical violence, sexual offences, serious emotional or psychological abuse and serious neglect. For further explanation of the different types of child abuse, please see [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc): <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/word\\_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards\\_overview.doc](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc)>.

<sup>9</sup> A child safety officer/champion is a person in your organisation who has knowledge of child safety issues, and could be a point of contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of child abuse. You could consider including child safety officer/champion duties in the person's job description.

- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- 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.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the organisation's management or Child Safety Officer, the police or child protection.
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together.
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

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

If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal child, you will need to ensure a culturally appropriate response. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal children, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisations to review policies and procedures.

Some children with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, children with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters. Advice on [communicating with people with a disability](#) can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/communicate-and-consult-with-people-with-a-disability/communication-with-people-with-disabilities](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/communicate-and-consult-with-people-with-a-disability/communication-with-people-with-disabilities)>.

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

## Legal responsibilities

While the child safe standards focus on organisations, every adult who reasonably believes that a child has been abused, whether in their organisation 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 disclose](#) is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence)>

While failure to disclose only covers child sexual abuse, all adults should report other forms of child abuse to authorities. Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting responsibilities.

More information about [mandatory reporting](#) is available in the *Child protection manual* <[www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/intake/mandatory-reporting](http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/intake/mandatory-reporting)>.

**Mandatory reporters** (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about [how to make a report to child protection](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first) <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first>.

The **failure to protect** criminal offence (commenced on 1 July 2015) applies where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

Further information about [failure to protect](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence) can be found on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence, and the Department of Health and Human Services website>.

## Further information

Further information on [child safe standards](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/children,-youth-and-family-services/creating-child-safe-organisations) can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services' website <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/children,-youth-and-family-services/creating-child-safe-organisations>.

Additional resources for organisations in the child safe standards toolkit can be found on the [Department of Health and Human Services website](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards): <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards>. In particular, [An Overview to the Victorian child safe standards](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc), has information to help organisations understand the requirements of each of the child safe standards, including examples of measures organisations can put in place, a self-audit tool and a glossary of key terms: <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/\_\_data/assets/word\_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards\_overview.doc>

**Note for registered schools:** a forthcoming Ministerial Order under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* will contain the minimum actions that schools must take to meet each of the child safe standards. There will be a lead in time before regulation will commence to allow schools time to prepare. The Department of Education and Training and the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority will provide information and materials specifically for schools to assist with capacity building and compliance.

**Registered schools** can contact the Department of Education and Training: [child.safe.schools@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:child.safe.schools@edumail.vic.gov.au)

Early childhood services operating under the *National Quality Framework* or *Children's Services Act 1996* should contact: [licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au)

Licensed children's services enquiry line: 1300 307 415

## Disclaimer

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## Child Safe Policy Appendix IV – Reporting Obligations and Sample Report

### Sample incident report

#### Child safe standards toolkit: resource seven

The child safe standards require organisations that provide services for children<sup>10</sup> to have processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.<sup>11</sup> You can provide this resource to a child or their family if they disclose an allegation of abuse or safety concern in your organisation. Your staff can also use this resource to record disclosures.

All incident reports must be stored securely.

#### Incident details

Date of incident:	
Time of incident:	
Location of incident:	
Name(s) of child/children involved:	
Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved:	

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

#### Does the child identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

No ☐ Yes, Aboriginal ☐ Yes, Torres Strait Islander ☐

#### Please categorise the incident

Physical violence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual offence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Serious emotional or psychological abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Serious neglect	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Please describe the incident

When did it take place?	
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<sup>10</sup> For a [list of the organisations in scope](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/in-scope-organisations-for-child-safe-standards) for the child safe standards, please see the Department of Health and Human Services website: <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/in-scope-organisations-for-child-safe-standards](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/in-scope-organisations-for-child-safe-standards)>.

<sup>11</sup> The child safe standards aim to protect children from abuse in organisations, including physical violence, sexual offences, serious emotional or psychological abuse and serious neglect. For further explanation of the different types of child abuse, please see see [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc): <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/word\\_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards\\_overview.doc](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc)>.

<b>Who was involved?</b>	
<b>What did you see?</b>	
<b>Other information</b>	

## Parent/carer/child use

<b>Date of incident:</b>	
<b>Time of incident:</b>	
<b>Location of incident:</b>	
<b>Name(s) of child/children involved:</b>	
<b>Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved:</b>	

## Office use:

<b>Date incident report received:</b>	
<b>Staff member managing incident:</b>	
<b>Follow-up date:</b>	
<b>Incident ref. number:</b>	

## Has the incident been reported?

<b>Child protection</b>	
<b>Police</b>	
<b>Another third party (please specify):</b>	

## Incident reporter wishes to remain anonymous?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

Yes ☐ No ☐

## Further information

Further information on [child safe standards](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/children,-youth-and-family-services/creating-child-safe-organisations) can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services' website <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/children,-youth-and-family-services/creating-child-safe-organisations](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/children,-youth-and-family-services/creating-child-safe-organisations)>.

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terms: <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/word\\_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards\\_overview.doc](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc)>

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**Registered schools** can contact the Department of Education and Training:

[child.safe.schools@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:child.safe.schools@edumail.vic.gov.au)

Early childhood services operating under the *National Quality Framework* or *Children's Services Act 1996* should contact: [licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au)

Licensed children's services enquiry line: 1300 307 415

Child protection – Reporting Obligations:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/childprotection.aspx>

Responding to Student Sexual Assault:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/sexualassault.aspx>

Protecting Children – PD Online: Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations – eLearning Module:

<http://www.elearn.com.au/det/protectingchildren/>

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