

# Child Safety Support

## Internal Process for Response



## St Joseph the Worker Primary School internal school process for mandatory reporting

As professionals who work with children, all St Joseph the Worker staff play a vital and legislated role in protecting children from abuse by responding to and reporting any incidents, disclosures or suspicions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

[https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/EarlyChildhood\\_FourCriticalActions.pdf](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/EarlyChildhood_FourCriticalActions.pdf)

**FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES**  
Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

**PROTECT**

It is strongly recommended that **ALL** early childhood service staff follow these **Four Critical Actions** as soon as they witness an incident or form a reasonable belief that a child has, or is at risk of being abused. This means acting even when you are not sure and have not directly witnessed the abuse. A reasonable belief is a well-founded fear. The evidence authorises you to investigate and take action.

Following these actions will support you to:

- best protect children in your care
- meet your legal obligations and Duty of Care.

It is also strongly recommended that you use the **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse Template** to ensure clear and comprehensive notes. MCH services may call to use the form for **most** (not all) other existing information management systems.

As soon as immediate health 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.

Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?

**1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY**

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

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

- separating alleged victim and alleged perpetrator
- administering first aid
- calling **000** for urgent medical and/or police assistance
- responding to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the service for future liaison with police

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

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

**2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES**

**WITHIN THE SERVICE**

**VICTORIA POLICE**  
You **must** report all instances of child abuse which are not by a staff member, contractor or volunteer other than Victoria Police.

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

**NOTIFY THE REGULATOR**  
Licensed or approved early childhood services **must** also report to their Quality Assessment and Regulatory Division.

Notifications may be made at any time, including out of hours, by contacting **000 537 415**.

**WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY**

**DHHS CHILD PROTECTION**  
You **must** report all instances of child abuse which are not by a staff member, contractor or volunteer other than Victoria Police.

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

**NOTIFY THE REGULATOR**  
Approved and licensed early childhood services **must** also report to their Quality Assessment and Regulatory Division if any serious incident, circumstance, or complaint which impacts on the safety, health, and wellbeing of a child being educated and cared for by a service.

Notifications may be made at any time, including out of hours, by contacting **000 537 415**.

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

**3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS**

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

- **not to contact** parents/carers in circumstances where the parents are angry or have expressed a risk of violence to the child or a serious injury and does not wish for their personal details to be contacted.
- **contact** the parents/carers and provide support as soon as possible for licensed and approved services. It is a requirement that parents/carers are notified within 24 hours if the suspected abuse occurred at the service.

**CONTACT**

**DHHS CHILD PROTECTION**  
ALBA  
North Division **100 664 977**  
South Division **100 665 795**  
East Division **100 360 399**  
West Division **100 875 599**  
West Division (Macedo) **100 884 977**

**CHILD FIRST**  
www.childfirst.vic.gov.au  
Victoria Police **000** or your local police station

**QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND REGULATION DIVISION**  
NORTH-WESTERN  
Loddon/Mallee **03 548 210**  
Northern **03 855 839 072**  
SOUTH-EASTERN  
Geelong **03 527 860**  
Southern Metropolitan **03 876 576**  
NORTH-EASTERN  
Artesian/Deakin  
After hours, weekends, public holidays **03 9278**  
Hume **03 852 9000**  
SOUTH-WESTERN  
Barron/South West **03 525 1001**  
Western Metropolitan **03 937 024**  
Ozampara **03 537 844**

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

Following a report to the Police or DHHS staff will:

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

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

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

Flowchart – Responding to a possible mandatory reporting concern

