

St Paul's Kealba internal school process for mandatory reporting

A Staff Member 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 (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse). 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.

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

Step One: Responding to an emergency

- 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.

Step Two: 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.

Within the School:

You must report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor, volunteer or visitor to Victoria Police, the Principal, leadership team, Regional Office or head office (Goold House).

All allegations of 'reportable conduct' must be reported as soon as possible to head office (Goold House).

Within the family or community:

You must report to DFFH Child Protection if a child is considered to be: in need of protection from child abuse at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

You must also report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police, the Principal, leadership team, Regional Office or head office (Goold House).

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 FIRST/The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support) DFFH Child Protection and Victoria Police.

Step Three: Contacting Parents/Guardians/Carers

Your principal must consult with DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise: **not to contact** the parents/carer (e.g. 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.

Step Four: Provide 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.

CONTACTS:

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

AREA

North Division **1300 664 977**

South Division **1300 655 795**

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.dhhs.vic.gov.au/referral-and-support-teams>

ORANGE DOOR

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

VICTORIA POLICE

000 or your local police station

GOOLD HOUSE

Melbourne **(03) 9267 0228**

THE LOOKOUT

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

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