

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

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 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).
- You **must** use the **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse Template** to keep clear and comprehensive notes.
- Form located in the Staff Drive - 'Responding to Suspected Child Abuse Template'

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

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 potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

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.

Refer to **Responding to and Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse Procedures**

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 or volunteer to Victoria Police.

All reports relating to sexual abuse must be reported to VIC Police and if this report involves an employee the Principal will action The Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) requirements.

You must also report internally to:

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

School Principal, and/or school chairperson

WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

DFFS CHILD PROTECTION

You **must** report to DFFS 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.

VICTORIA POLICE

You must also report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

You **must** also report to:

School Principal

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Your Principal **must** consult with DFFS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/guardians.

Staff are NOT to make contact with Parents/Guardians

The Principal will guide you through the SPLS Child Safe process including making contact with parents/guardians.

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 SPLS Student Care Team. 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.

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.

CONTACT

SCHOOL

Principal- Tim Reimann
(03) 5389 1626

DFFS CHILD PROTECTION

West Division (Rural) 1800 075 599

DFFS AFTER HOURS

After hours, weekends, public holidays 13 12 78

CHILD FIRST/ ORANGE DOOR

Horsham 1800 195 114
<https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/referral-and-support-teams>

VICTORIA POLICE

000 or 03 5389 1470 (Dimboola Police Station)

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 (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support), or to DFFS Child Protection or Victoria Police



PROTECT

