



Hughesdale Primary School

Mandatory Reporting

Last Review Date;

Due for Next Review; February 2021

Included on Website;
 Yes No

Authorised (Principal);

PURPOSE:

To define roles and responsibilities for protecting the safety and wellbeing of children while enabling school staff 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.
- comply with reporting obligations under child protection law and criminal law and fulfil their duty of care.

GUIDELINES:

All school staff members who form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse, must report their concerns to Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection.

In cases where staff have concerns about a child or young person, they should also discuss their concerns with the principal or a member of the school leadership team.

Reporting criminal child sexual abuse - failure to disclose offence.

Any staff member who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult, against a child under 16 must disclose that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence, except in limited circumstances such as where the information has already been reported to DHHS Child Protection.

The offence applies to **all adults** in Victoria, not just professionals who work with children. To read more information about the 'failure to disclose' offence, see: Department of Justice and Regulation – Failure to disclose offence.

The following table sets out when to report a concern that a child or a young person has been abused, or is in need of protection

Reasonable excuses for failing to comply with the requirement include:

- a reasonable belief that the information has already been reported to police or DHHS Child

Protection disclosing all of the information

- a reasonable fear that the disclosure will place someone (other than the alleged perpetrator) at risk of harm

Forming a 'reasonable belief'.

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumors or speculation.

A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

- a child states that they have been physically or sexually abused.
- a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves).
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused.
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused.
- signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Types of child abuse.

Child abuse can have a significant effect on a child's physical or emotional health, development and wellbeing.

Types of child abuse include:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- neglect
- medical neglect
- family violence
- human trafficking (including forced marriage)
- sexual exploitation (including pornography and prostitution).

When to Report

Type of Reporting By Whom To Whom Mandatory Reporting - DHHS Child Protection

Mandatory reporters Mandatory reporters must make a report as soon as practicable if, in the course of practising their profession or carrying out their duties, they form a belief on reasonable grounds 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.

- 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
- All members of the police force
- DHHS Child Protection

Any person may make a report if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of

- DHHS Child Protection
- Victoria Police protection for any of the following reasons:
- 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 has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury and the parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.
- The child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of sexual abuse and their parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.
- The child has suffered or is likely to suffer emotional or psychological harm and the parents are unable or unwilling to protect 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.

Child displaying sexually abusive behaviours and in need of therapeutic treatment

- Any person may make a report if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child who is 10 years of age or over, but under 15 years of age, is in need of therapeutic treatment because he or she has exhibited sexually-abusive behaviours.
- Any person DHHS Child Protection

Significant concerns about wellbeing of a child

- Any person may make a report if they have significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child.
- Any person DHHS Child Protection Child FIRST

Reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16.

- Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 must report that information to police. **It is a criminal offence not to make a report**, except in the following circumstances:
 - The victim is 16 years of age or older and does not have an intellectual disability that limits his/her capacity to make an informed decision; and he/she does not want the information reported to the police.
 - The victim has disclosed the information in confidence in the course of a therapeutic relationship with you as a registered medical practitioner or counsellor.
 - Any person aged 18 or Victoria Police

Making A Report

This describes how to make a mandatory report, to report child abuse or child protection concerns.

Step Description

- 1. In case of emergency or if a child is in immediate danger contact Triple Zero (000) or the local police station.** Alternatively, to report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit to DHHS Child Protection, call the Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78 (24 hours 7 days)
- 2. Keep comprehensive notes that are dated and include the following information:**
 - information that has led to concerns about the child's safety (e.g. physical injuries, student behaviour)

- the source of this information (e.g. observation of behaviour, report from child or another person)
- the actions taken as a result of the concerns (e.g. consultation with principal, report to DHHS Child Protection etc.).

3. Discuss any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of students with the principal or a member of the school leadership team.

The individual staff member should then make their own assessment about whether they should make a report about the child or young person and to whom the report should be made.

4. Gather the relevant information necessary to make the report. This should include the following information:

- full name, date of birth, and residential address of the child or young person.
- the details of the concerns and the reasons for those concerns.
- the individual staff member's involvement with the child and young person.
- details of any other agencies who may be involved with the child or young person, if known.

5. Make a report to the relevant agency.

- To report concerns that are life threatening phone 000 or the local police station. To find the nearest Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team contact your local police station.
- To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit to DHS Child Protection, call the Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78 (24 hrs 7 days, toll free)
- To report concerns to DHHS Child Protection, contact your local child protection office on 1300 360 391.

6. Make a written record of the report which includes the following information:

- the date and time of the report and a summary of what was reported.
- the name and position of the person who made the report and the person who received the report.

7. Notify relevant school staff and/or Department staff of a report

- to DHHS Child Protection or Child FIRST. For Victorian government schools, the allegations must be reported to the:
 - principal or member of the school leadership team
 - Department's Security Services Unit on (03) 9589 6266
 - relevant Regional Office
 - Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit on (03) 9637 2934 or (03) 9637 2487.

In the case of international students, the principal must notify the International Education Division on (03) 9637 2990 to ensure that appropriate support is arranged for the student. In the case of Koorie students, the principal must notify the Regional Office to ensure that the regional Koorie support officer can arrange appropriate support for the student.

Confidentiality

The identity of a reporter must remain confidential unless:

- the reporter chooses to inform the child, young person or parent of the report.
- the reporter consents in writing to their identity being disclosed.
- a Court or Tribunal decides that it is necessary for the identity of the reporter to be disclosed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child.
- a Court or Tribunal decides that, in the interests of justice, the reporter is required to provide evidence.

Professional Protection

If a report is made in good faith:

- it does not constitute unprofessional conduct or a breach of professional ethics on the part of the reporter.
- the reporter cannot be held legally liable in respect of the report.

Interviews

DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police may conduct interviews of children and young people at the school without the parent's knowledge or consent.

DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police will notify the principal or a member of the leadership team of their intention to interview the child or young person on the school premises.

When officers from DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police come to the school premises, the principal or a member of the leadership team should request to see identification before permitting them to have access to the child or young person.

When a child or young person is being interviewed by DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police, school staff must arrange to have a supportive adult present with the child or young person.

Support for the Child or Young Person

The roles and responsibilities of staff members in supporting children who are involved with DHHS Child Protection may include the following:

- acting as a support person for the child or young person.
- attending DHHS Child Protection case planning meetings.
- observing and monitoring the child's behaviour.
- liaising with professionals.

Requests for Information

In certain circumstances, DHHS Child Protection can direct school staff and Department staff to provide information or documents about the protection or development of the child. Such directions should be in writing and only be made by authorised persons within DHHS Child Protection.

RELATED LEGISLATION:

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
- *Crimes Act 1958*
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
- *Victorian Institute of Teaching Act 2001*

Key CONTACTS

To make a report to the relevant agency.

- To report concerns that are life threatening phone 000.
- To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit to DHS Child Protection, call the Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78 (24 hrs 7 days, toll free)
- To report concerns to DHHS Child Protection, contact your local child protection office which is the Eastern Suburban Office (Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Monash, Whitehorse, Yarra Ranges) on 1300 360 391.

Related Policies:

Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy
Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures

Review Cycle:

This policy was last updated on June 2020 and is scheduled for review on June 2021.