



CHILD PROTECTION-REPORTING OBLIGATIONS POLICY

Rationale

Copperfield College upholds the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority Child Safe Standards as listed in Ministerial Order No. 870 in order to prevent and respond to child abuse in our community.

Statement

The aim of this policy is to create and maintain a school environment with an organizational culture committed to the safety of all students and staff.

Implementation

- A mandatory report is warranted if we form a reasonable belief that the abuse has occurred and there is current/ongoing risk of the young person not being safe.
- “Child abuse” refers to physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, or neglect by primary caregivers
- As individual teachers and adults working in a school we have a mandatory legal responsibility to report child sexual and physical abuse to the appropriate authorities: the Department of Health and Human Services 1300 664 977, or Victoria Police.
- Neglect is to be reported to Child First 1300 138 180.
- Despite a young person being older than the 17 years reporting is mandated, police and DHS still wish to be notified of any reasonable belief that a student is being abused/is not safe.
- Wellbeing Team staff will annually remind teaching staff of their mandatory reporting obligations.

- The College's employment procedures ensure employees and all those engaged in child-connected work have a Working with Children check, proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications, and have investigated a prospective worker's work history involving children including references addressing that applicant's suitability for the job and working with children.
- Allegations of child abuse will be taken seriously and acted on expeditiously.
- The Leadership Team and Wellbeing Staff will monitor College compliance with this policy.
- The College will make, secure, and retain records of allegations of child abuse and its responses to it.
- Children connected with allegations of child abuse will be protected by the College until the allegation is resolved.
- The College will ensure that the children develop the necessary knowledge to identify abuse, are clear about how to report it, and feel safe to report it and any concerns about child safety.
- Staff will complete the eLearning module on Mandatory Reporting every two years.

Evaluation and Review

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's 2020 Strategic Plan review cycle.

Definitions

- **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.
- **Child abuse** includes`
 - (a) Any act committed against a child involving –
 - (i) a sexual offence; or
 - (ii) an offence under Section 49B (2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (grooming); and
 - (b) The infliction, on a child, of –
 - (i) physical violence; or
 - (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm; and
 - (c) Serious neglect of a child.
- **School environment** means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:
 - (a) A campus of the school;
 - (b) Online environments of the school (including email and intranet systems); and

(c) Other locations provided by the school for the child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

- **School staff** means an individual working in a school environment who is:
 - (i) employed under Part 2.4 of the ETR Act in the Government Teaching Service
 - (ii) employed under a contract of service by the School Council under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act; or
 - (iii) a volunteer or a contracted service provider.

Appendix: Attached to this policy is the poster supporting staff:

Four Critical Actions For Schools – Responding To Incidents, Disclosures And Suspicions Of Child Abuse.

Link =

file:///C:/Users/02248004/Documents/Documents/Child%20safe/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf

References

- *Working With Children Act 2005*
- *VRQA Child Safe Standards*
- *Child Safe Standards School Guide*
- *Protect: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools*
- *Copperfield College Child Safety Policy*
- *Copperfield College Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct*
- *Copperfield College Child Protection – Reporting Obligations*

Policy Version

This policy was updated 10 December 2019.

Appendix: Four Critical Actions For Schools – Responding To Incidents, Disclosures And Suspicions Of Child Abuse.

Link = file:///C:/Users/02248004/Documents/Documents/Child%20safe/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf

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 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.

1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

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 the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

2 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.

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, volunteer or visitor to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report internally to:

- GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - Employee Conduct Branch
 - DET Incident Support and Operations Centre
- CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or school chairperson
- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

All allegations of 'reportable conduct' **must** be reported as soon as possible to:

- GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
 - Employee Conduct Branch
- CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
 - Diocesan education office
- INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
 - Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

You **must** report to DHHS 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.

You **must also** report internally to:

- GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - DET Incident Support and Operations Centre
- CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - Diocesan education office.
- INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or chairperson.

For suspected student sexual assault, please follow the **Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending**.

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)
- DHHS Child Protection
- Victoria Police.

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your principal **must** consult with DHHS 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.

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 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.

CONTACT

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/family-violence/the-orange-door.html>

VICTORIA POLICE

000 or your local police station

DET INCIDENT SUPPORT AND OPERATIONS CENTRE
1800 126 126

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT UNIT
1800 126 126

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH
(03) 9637 2595

DIOCESAN OFFICE
Melbourne (03) 9267 0228
Ballarat (03) 5337 7135
Sale (03) 5622 6600
Sandhurst (03) 5443 2377

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA

(03) 9825 7200

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**.



PROTECT

THE EDUCATION STATE

VICTORIA Government Education and Training

CECV catholic education commission of victoria inc

Department of Education and Training