



# Mandatory Reporting – Child Reporting Obligations

Child abuse can have a significant effect on a child's physical or emotional health, development and wellbeing. There are many indicators of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single indicator, or even several indicators, does not prove that abuse or neglect has occurred. However, the repeated occurrence of an indicator, or the occurrence of several indicators together, should alert staff to the possibility of child abuse and neglect. 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).

## PURPOSE

To ensure school staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and are able to:

- understand their various legal obligations to report and take other reasonable steps to discharge the duty of care that may be owed to the child or young person
- identify indicators that a child or young person has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused
- make a report about a child or young person who has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused.

For information on how to make a report, see: [Child Protection - Making a Report](#)

## SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- **all staff, including casual relief staff and volunteers**

## POLICY

All staff who are Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered teachers including principal class as well as school nursing staff are 'mandatory reporters'. This means that in the course of undertaking their professional duties, they must report to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from significant harm as a result of sexual abuse or physical injury and the child's family are unwilling or unable to protect the child. They must report as soon as practicable after forming the belief.

There may be times when two or more mandated staff members have formed a belief about a child. It is only necessary for one of these staff members to report to Child Protection. The other member must ensure that all of the grounds for their belief are included in the report by the person making the report.

If a staff member has a view that differs from another staff member, the person holding the belief is still obliged to make the report.

Any staff member in a position of authority, who becomes aware that an adult associated with their organisation (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the care, authority or supervision of the organisation, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk. This may include, for example, removing the adult from child-related work pending investigation. If a staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence.

The offence applies only to adults in a position of authority within an organisation. In a school context, this includes Principals and Assistant Principals.

For more information about managing and responding to the risk of abuse see: Responding to Student Sexual Offending and Risk Management under Department resources below. See also, the Four Critical Actions on the PROTECT portal

Department policy requires all staff who form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection to report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police. In the case of school staff, they must also discuss their concerns with the principal or a member of the school leadership team.

#### Making a report

There are Four Critical Actions that schools should take where a staff members forms a reasonable belief that a child is a victim of child abuse, see: [The Four Critical Actions: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse.](#)

To ensure you have clear and comprehensive notes, and to assist you in making the report, you may wish to use the Reporting Template which can be found on the Department's web portal - [PROTECT](#)

This policy was reviewed in August 2018 and will be reviewed in August 2022, or as required.