

# CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

## PURPOSE

The Tecoma Primary School Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our school's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our school's approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) (PDF, 363KB) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

## SCOPE

This policy:

- applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school council members where indicated.
- applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies section below.

## DEFINITIONS

The following terms in this policy have [specific definitions](#):

- child
- child safety
- child abuse
- child-connected work
- child-related work
- school environment
- school boarding environment
- school staff
- school boarding premises staff
- school governing authority
- school boarding premises governing authority
- student
- volunteer

## CHILD SAFETY STANDARDS

There are 7 standards plus a principle of inclusion:

- Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety
- Standard 2: A child safety policy or a statement of commitment to child safety
- Standard 3: A child safety code of conduct
- Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse
- Standard 5: Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- Standard 7: Strategies to promote child participation and empowerment
- Principle of inclusion: Schools must take account of and make reasonable efforts to accommodate the diversity of all children in implementing the Child Safe Standards, including (but not limited to) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable.

## STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Tecoma Primary School is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences. Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### School leadership team

Our school leadership team (comprising the Principal, Assistant Principal and members of the School Improvement Team - SIT) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

Our Principal and Assistant Principal will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

### School staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education and Training, and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- will need to have read the Child Safety Policy (this policy) and have read and signed and act in accordance with our school's Child Safety Code of Conduct (Appendix 1)

- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#), including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

### School Council

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, school council members will:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings
- undertake annual training on child safety – by using the Child Safe Standards School Council Training slide presentation available on [PROTECT](#).
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members
- At our school, school council employment duties are delegated to the principal who is bound by this policy. When hiring school council employees, they will ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe.

### Specific staff child safety responsibilities:

Tecoma Primary School has nominated the Assistant Principal/Welfare Coordinator as child safety champion, to support the Principal to implement our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.

The responsibilities of the child safety champion are outlined at [Guidance for child safety champions](#).

Our Principal and child safety champion are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- The Assistant Principal is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our school community should approach the Assistant Principal if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- The Principal is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, and Child Safety Risk Register.

At every staff meeting and School Council meeting Child Safety is addressed on the agenda and we are able to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. The Student Action Team (SAT) provides an opportunity for students to provide input into school strategies.

Our Principal and Assistant Principal monitor the Child Safety Risk Register.

### CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct (Appendix 1) also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

### MANAGING RISKS TO CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING

At our school we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

## **ESTABLISHING A CULTURALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

At Tecoma Primary School we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed a number of strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community. These are outlined in our document, Meeting the Child Safety Standards at Tecoma PS.

## **STUDENT EMPOWERMENT**

To support child safety and wellbeing at Tecoma Primary School, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging through implementing our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships, our student Code of Conduct, and our school values.

We inform students of their rights through our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time. Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns at by approaching the Principal or Assistant Principal/Wellbeing Coordinator for further support, guidance or information.

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the student and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

We have developed a number of strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community. These are outlined in our document, Meeting the Child Safety Standards at Tecoma PS.

## **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

Our families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at Tecoma Primary School we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this:

- through the school newsletters, other communications, school council, subcommittees of school council, student, staff, and Parent Network Meetings, and Parent/Community forums, etc.
- all of our child safety policies and procedures are available for students and parents on the school website, with hard copies available through the school office
- Newsletters and COMPASS will inform families and the school community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school

We have developed a number of strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community. These are outlined in our document, Meeting the Child Safety Standards at Tecoma PS.

### DIVERSITY AND EQUITY

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

We have developed a number of strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community. These are outlined in our document, Meeting the Child Safety Standards at Tecoma PS.

### SUITABLE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

At Tecoma Primary School, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

#### Staff recruitment

When recruiting staff, we follow the Department of Education and Training's recruitment policies and guidelines, available on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) at:

- [Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Suitability for Employment Checks](#)
- [School Council Employment](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management.](#)

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration (VIT)
- collect and record:
  - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
  - the person's history of working with children
  - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

#### Staff induction

All newly appointed staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
- Tecoma Primary School's Child Safety Code of Conduct (which will need to be read and signed by all staff)
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.
- All staff will need to annually complete the Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations online learning

### **Ongoing supervision and management of staff**

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be done by taking part in annual performance reviews.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

### **Suitability of volunteers**

All volunteers are required to comply with our [Volunteers Policy](#) which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

## **CHILD SAFETY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND AWARENESS**

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters. In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) online module annually
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

### **School council training and education**

To ensure our school council is equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment, the council is trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment
- Tecoma Primary School child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices.

## **COMPLAINTS AND REPORTING PROCESSES**

Tecoma Primary School fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our school's [Raising Concerns and Complaints Policy](#)

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including school council employees) must follow our [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#). Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

- the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending

Our [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#) and [Bullying Prevention Policy](#) cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

### COMMUNICATIONS

Tecoma Primary School is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedure
- displaying PROTECT posters around the school
- updates in our school newsletter and on the School website
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings.

### PRIVACY AND INFORMATION SHARING

Tecoma Primary School collects, uses and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information refer to: [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

### RECORD MANAGEMENT

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education and Training's policy: [Records Management – School Records](#)

### REVIEW OF CHILD SAFETY PRACTICES

At Tecoma Primary School we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.

### RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Digital Learning Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Visitors Policy
- Volunteers Policy

#### Related Department of Education and Training policies

- [Bullying Prevention and Response Policy](#)

- [Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management Policy](#)
- [Digital Learning in Schools Policy](#)
- [Family Violence Support](#)
- [Protecting Children: Reporting Obligations Policy](#)
- [Policy and Guidelines for Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Policy](#)
- [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)
- [Supervision of Students Policy](#)
- [Visitors in Schools Policy](#)
- [Volunteers in Schools Policy](#)
- [Working with Children and other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)

#### Other related documents

- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)

### POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

*The Education Subcommittee, led by the Assistant Principal, is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the community.*

***It is mandatory for consultation of this Policy.***

Reviewed by	<i>Di Double, Rohan Thompson, Stuart McLean, Lisa Dell, Matt Ford, Lisa Hoskins-Faul, Chelsey Robins, Neshadi Weeratunga.</i>
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*This policy was approved by school council on **14<sup>th</sup> June, 2022** and is scheduled for review in **June 2024**.*

Approved by	<b><i>Principal – Rohan Thompson</i></b> <b><i>School Council President – Lisa Dell</i></b>
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***After review by the Education Subcommittee and School Council this policy was shared with the school community via the newsletter (dated 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2022) for consultation.***



## Tecoma Primary School Child Safety Code of Conduct

Tecoma Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people and enables them to thrive in their learning and development. This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, Department policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

At Tecoma Primary School we have a commitment to **zero tolerance of child abuse**. This is a commitment which is led by our School Council, School Leadership team, all staff and is shared openly and transparently with all members of our school community.

### Purpose

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets out the expected behaviour of adults with children and young people in our school.

All Tecoma Primary School staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, school council members and any other adult involved in child-connected work must follow the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct applies to all physical and online environments used by students. It also applies during or outside of school hours and in other locations provided by the school for student use (for example, a school camp).

### Acceptable behaviours

As Tecoma Primary School staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of our school community involved in child-connected work, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- upholding our school's commitment to child safety at all times and adhering to our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- treating students and families in our school community with respect in our school environment and outside our school environment as part of normal social and community activities
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they disclose that they or another child or student has been abused or are worried about their safety or the safety of another child or student
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students, students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with a disability, international students, students who are unable to live at home and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTIQ+) students
- ensuring, as far as practicable, that adults are not alone with a student – one-to-one interactions between an adult and a student are to be in an open space or in line of sight of another adult.
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the Principal and/or the Assistant Principal/Welfare Coordinator.
- understanding and complying with all reporting and disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) in line with our child safety responding and reporting policy and procedures, and the [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#).
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.

### Unacceptable behaviours

As Tecoma Primary School staff, volunteers, contractors and member of our school community involved in child-connected work we must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse or harm
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, by offering gifts)

- display behaviours or engage with students in ways that are not justified by the educational or professional context
- ignore an adult's overly familiar or inappropriate behaviour towards a student
- discuss intimate topics or use sexualised language, except when needed to deliver the school curriculum or professional guidance
- treat a child or student unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to schoolwork or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- photograph or video a child or student in a school environment except in accordance with the [Photographing, Filming and Recording Students policy](#) or where required for duty of care purposes
- consume alcohol against school policy or take illicit drugs in the school environment or at school events where students are present
- have contact with any student outside of school hours except when needed to deliver the school curriculum or professional guidance and parental permission has been sought.

### Breaches to the Child Safety Code of Conduct

All Tecoma Primary School staff, volunteers, contractors and any other member of the school community involved in child-connected work who breach this Child Safety Code of Conduct may be subject to disciplinary procedures in accordance with their employment agreement or relevant industrial instrument, professional code or terms of engagement.

In instances where a reportable allegation has been made, the matter will be managed in accordance with the Department of Education and Training Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy and may be subject to referral to Victoria Police.

All breaches and suspected breaches of the Tecoma Primary School Child Safety Code of Conduct must be reported to the Principal, Rohan Thompson, on 9754 2354.

If the breach or suspected breach relates to the principal, contact the Assistant Principal, Di Double, on 9754 2354.

### Approval and review

This policy was approved by school council on **14<sup>th</sup> June, 2022** and is scheduled for review in **June 2024**.

**Reviewed by:** *Di Double, Rohan Thompson, Stuart McLean, Lisa Dell, Matt Ford, Lisa Hoskins-Faul, Travis Cochran, Natalie Leys, Hannah Godlevsky, Kelly Sullivan, Sanjay Singh.*

By observing our school's expectations, you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to the Principal/Assistant Principal or a member of the leadership team.

I agree to adhere to this Code of Conduct:

Name: .....

Signature: .....

Date: .....

# Responding to an Incident, Disclosure or Suspicion of Child Abuse

IF YOU ARE MAKING A REPORT TO DHHS CHILD PROTECTION OR VICTORIA POLICE YOU MUST SEEK ADVICE BEFORE CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS SO AS NOT TO COMPROMISE ANY INVESTIGATION OR PLACE A CHILD AT FURTHER RISK – THIS IS PARTICULARLY CRITICAL IN INSTANCES OF FAMILY VIOLENCE.

**STAFF MEMBER LEADING THE RESPONSE**

NAME:

OCCUPATION:

LOCATION (SCHOOL ADDRESS):

RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD:

## 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/chaplain
- 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 chaplain.

**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**

<p><b>DHHS CHILD PROTECTION</b></p> <p>AREA</p> <p>North Division <b>1300 664 977</b> South Division <b>1300 665 795</b> East Division <b>1300 360 391</b> West Division (Rural) <b>1800 075 598</b> West Division (Metro) <b>1300 664 977</b></p> <p><b>AFTER HOURS</b> After hours, weekends, public holidays <b>13 12 78</b></p> <p><b>CHILD FIRST</b> <a href="https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/referral-and-support-team/">https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/referral-and-support-team/</a></p> <p><b>ORANGE DOOR</b> <a href="https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/orange-door.html">https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/orange-door.html</a></p>	<p><b>VICTORIA POLICE</b></p> <p><b>000</b> or your local police station</p> <p>DET INCIDENT SUPPORT AND OPERATIONS CENTRE <b>1800 126 126</b></p> <p>INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT UNIT <b>1800 126 126</b></p> <p>EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH <b>(03) 9637 2595</b></p> <p>DIOCESAN OFFICE</p> <p>Melbourne <b>(03) 9267 0228</b> Ballarat <b>(03) 5337 7135</b> Sale <b>(03) 5622 6600</b> Sandhurst <b>(03) 5443 2377</b></p>	<p><b>INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA</b></p> <p><b>(03) 9825 7200</b></p> <p><b>THE LOOKOUT</b> The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence: <a href="https://www.lookout.org.au">https://www.lookout.org.au</a> Family violence victims/survivors can be referred to <b>1800 Respect</b> for counselling, information and a referral service: <b>1800 737 732</b>.</p>
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PROTECT THE EDUCATION STATE VICTORIA



Critical action 1: immediate response to an incident

**If anyone is in immediate danger school staff should report immediately to Victoria Police on 000.**

See Action 1 of **Four Critical Actions For Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse.**

### RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

DID THE CHILD REQUIRE FIRST AID? PROVIDE DETAILS IF 'YES'.

WHO ADMINISTERED THIS? (NAME AND TITLE)

DID THE CHILD REQUIRE FURTHER IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE?

CURRENT LOCATION AND SAFETY STATUS:

*E.G. ARE ALL IMPACTED STUDENTS SAFE AND NOT IN ANY IMMEDIATE DANGER?*

*IF A CHILD IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER SCHOOL STAFF SHOULD REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO VICTORIA POLICE ON 000*

### *Child's information*

### PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME:

GENDER:

YEAR LEVEL/CLASS:

DATE OF BIRTH:

RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS:

PARENT/CARER NAME/S:

PARENT/CARER CONTACT:

LANGUAGE(S) SPOKEN BY CHILD:

DISABILITIES, MENTAL OR PHYSICAL HEALTH ISSUES:

**CHILD'S BACKGROUND**

CULTURAL STATUS AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

*IF THE CHILD IS OF ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BACKGROUND, GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS MUST CONTACT THEIR KOORIE ENGAGEMENT SUPPORT OFFICER, AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS MUST CONTACT THE DIOCESAN EDUCATION OFFICE TO ARRANGE CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SUPPORT. IF THE CHILD IS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT YOU MUST NOTIFY THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION DIVISION ON (03) 9637 2990*

ANY KNOWN PREVIOUS HISTORY OF SUSPECTED ABUSE (INCLUDING EXPOSURE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE) PRIOR TO THIS INCIDENT, DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION OR INVOLVEMENT WITH AGENCIES:

**FAMILY BACKGROUND**

FAMILY COMPOSITION (IF KNOWN):

*LIST PARENTING OR CARE ARRANGEMENTS AND SIBLING NAMES AND AGES*

ANY OTHER PEOPLE LIVING WITH THE CHILD (IF KNOWN):

**FAMILY BACKGROUND**

DISABILITY, MENTAL OR PHYSICAL HEALTH ISSUES IN FAMILY (IF KNOWN):

LIKELY REACTION TO A REPORT BEING MADE (IF KNOWN):

*Details of the incident, disclosure or suspicion*

**GROUNDS FOR YOUR BELIEF THAT A CHILD HAS BEEN, OR IS AT RISK OF ABUSE**

INDICATORS OR INSTANCES WHICH LED YOU TO BELIEVE A CHILD/CHILDREN ARE SUBJECT TO CHILD ABUSE, OR AT RISK OF ABUSE INCLUDING EXPOSURE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE:

*DETAIL ANY DISCLOSURES OR INCIDENTS OR SUSPICIONS (INCLUDING NAMES, TIMES AND DATES DOCUMENTING A CHILD'S EXACT WORDS AS FAR AS POSSIBLE). INCLUDE SPECIFIC DETAIL HERE ON WHAT LED YOU TO FORM A REASONABLE BELIEF THAT A CHILD HAS BEEN, OR IS AT RISK OF BEING ABUSED.*

ANY PHYSICAL INDICATORS OF ABUSE:

ANY BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS OF ABUSE:

ANY PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOUR OR PRIOR CONCERNS LEADING UP TO AN INCIDENT, DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION:

**DETAILS OF PERSONS ALLEGED TO HAVE COMMITTED THE ABUSE (IF KNOWN)**

NAME:

GENDER

DATE OF BIRTH:

RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD:

*NOTING IF THEY ARE WITHIN THE SCHOOL OR WITHIN THE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY (THIS WILL IMPACT ON WHO YOU REPORT TO)*

ADDRESS:

CONTACT DETAILS:

### Critical action 2: reporting

See Action 2 of **Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse**

#### REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

TICK THE AUTHORITIES YOU HAVE REPORTED TO:

- VICTORIA POLICE
- DHHS CHILD PROTECTION
- CHILD FIRST
- DECISION NOT TO REPORT

IF YOU'VE DECIDED NOT TO REPORT, LIST YOUR REASONS HERE. ALSO INCLUDE ANY FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN BY YOU BELOW:

PROVIDE DETAILS OF YOUR DISCUSSIONS WITH ANY OF THE ABOVE AUTHORITIES:

DATE:

TIME:

AUTHORITY:

OUTCOMES FROM THE REPORT:

## REPORTING INTERNALLY

### PROVIDE DETAILS OF YOUR DISCUSSION WITH SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

TIME:

DATE:

NAMES:

DISCUSSION OUTCOMES:

PROVIDE DETAILS OF YOUR INTERNAL DISCUSSIONS TO EITHER OF THE FOLLOWING:

**GOVERNMENT SCHOOL STAFF** MUST REPORT TO SECURITY SERVICES UNIT AND ALSO TO THE EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH IF THE INCIDENT, DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION INVOLVES A STAFF MEMBER, CONTRACTOR OR VOLUNTEER

**CATHOLIC SCHOOL STAFF** MUST REPORT TO THEIR CATHOLIC DIOCESAN EDUCATION OFFICE

TIME:

DATE:

NAMES:

DISCUSSION OUTCOMES:

### Critical action 3: contacting parents/carers

See Action 3 of **Four Critical Actions For Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse**

## ACTIONS TAKEN

### PROVIDE DETAILS OF YOUR DISCUSSION WITH PARENTS/CARERS (IF APPROPRIATE):

*SCHOOL STAFF MUST CONSULT WITH VICTORIA POLICE AND/OR DHHS CHILD PROTECTION TO DETERMINE IF IT IS APPROPRIATE TO CONTACT PARENTS, IF IT IS, PARENTS MUST BE CONTACTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (PREFERABLY ON THE SAME DAY OF THE INCIDENT, DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION). THIS IS PARTICULARLY CRITICAL IN INSTANCES OF SUSPECTED FAMILY VIOLENCE.*

HAVE YOU SOUGHT ADVICE FROM DHHS CHILD PROTECTION OR VICTORIA POLICE?

- NO
- YES

IS IT APPROPRIATE TO CONTACT PARENT/CARER



NO

YES

LIST REASONS IF IT IS NOT APPROPRIATE TO CONTACT PARENT/CARER:

IF CONTACTING PARENT/CARER, PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING DETAILS:

NAME OF STAFF MEMBER MAKING THE CALL:

NAME OF PARENT/CARER RECEIVING THE CALL:

DISCUSSION OUTCOMES:

#### CRITICAL ACTION 4: PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

See Action 4 of **Four Critical Actions For Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse**

#### PLANNED ACTIONS

*INCLUDE DETAIL OF WHAT FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS HAVE OCCURRED TO SUPPORT THE STUDENT (FOR EXAMPLE, REFERRAL TO WELLBEING PROFESSIONALS AND OTHER SPECIALISED SERVICES, THE CONVENING OF A STUDENT SUPPORT GROUP AND DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORT PLANS):*

FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

SUPPORT:

JUNIOR S

REFERRALS(S):

# **PROCESS OF REVIEW**

*COMPLETE THIS SECTION BETWEEN 4-6 WEEKS AFTER AN INCIDENT, SUSPICION OR DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE IN CONJUNCTION WITH YOUR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM.*

*THIS WILL SUPPORT YOU AND YOUR SCHOOL TO CONTINUE TO PROTECT CHILDREN IN YOUR CARE AND TO REFLECT ON YOUR PROCESSES AND THE NEED FOR ANY FOLLOW- UP ACTIONS.*

## SAFETY AND WELLBEING

### **CURRENT SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF THE CHILD**

IS THE CHILD SAFE FROM ABUSE AND HARM – INCLUDING EXPOSURE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE?

- NO
- YES

*IF NOT, CONSIDER THE NEED TO MAKE A FURTHER REPORT*

DOES THE CHILD HAVE ANY WELLBEING ISSUES THAT ARE NOT CURRENTLY BEING ADDRESSED?

- NO
- YES

*IF SO, CONSIDER HOW THESE CAN BE ADDRESSED AND CAPTURED WITHIN A STUDENT SUPPORT PLAN*

### **CURRENT WELLBEING OF OTHER CHILDREN WHO MAY BE IMPACTED BY THE ABUSE**

ARE THERE ANY OTHER CHILDREN WHO MAY BE IMPACTED BY THE ABUSE?

- NO
- YES

IF SO, HAVE THEIR WELLBEING NEEDS BEEN MET?

- NO
- YES

*IF SO, CONSIDER HOW THESE CAN BE ADDRESSED AND CAPTURED WITHIN A STUDENT SUPPORT PLAN*

### **CURRENT WELLBEING OF IMPACTED STAFF MEMBERS**

DOES THE STAFF MEMBER WHO MADE THE REPORT/ WITNESSED THE INCIDENT, FORMED A SUSPICION OR RECEIVED A DISCLOSURE REQUIRE ANY SUPPORT?

- NO
- YES

IF SO, HAS THIS BEEN RECEIVED?

- NO
- YES

**REVIEW OF ACTIONS TAKEN**

*HAVE SCHOOL STAFF FOLLOWED THE FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS: RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS, DISCLOSURES OR SUSPICIONS OF CHILD ABUSE?*

WAS AN APPROPRIATE DECISION MADE IN RELATION TO WHEN TO ACT?

- NO
- YES

COULD THE SUSPECTED ABUSE HAVE BEEN DETECTED EARLIER?

- NO
- YES

**ACTION 1**

DID THE SCHOOL TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION IN AN EMERGENCY?

- NO
- YES

**ACTION 2**

WAS A REPORT MADE TO THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES AND INTERNALLY?

- NO
- YES

WERE SUBSEQUENT REPORTS MADE IF NECESSARY?

- NO
- YES

**ACTION 3**

DID THE SCHOOL CONTACT THE PARENTS/CARERS ASAP?

- NO
- YES

HAVE THE PARENTS CONTINUED TO BE ENGAGED IF APPROPRIATE?

- NO
- YES

**ACTION 4**

HAS THE SCHOOL PROVIDED ADEQUATE SUPPORT FOR THE STUDENT?

- NO
- YES

HAS A STUDENT SUPPORT PLAN BEEN ESTABLISHED, IMPLEMENTED AND REVIEWED?

- NO
- YES

HAS A STUDENT SUPPORT GROUP BEEN ESTABLISHED?

- NO
- YES

WAS THE STUDENT APPROPRIATELY SUPPORTED IN ANY INTERVIEWS?

- NO
- YES

HAVE ANY COMPLAINTS BEEN RECEIVED?

- NO
- YES

HAVE THE COMPLAINTS BEEN RESOLVED?

- NO
- YES

**OTHER LEARNINGS**