



RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE AT MOUNT CLEAR COLLEGE

Mount Clear College is committed to embedding a child safe culture by implementing a range of strategies. This includes agreed processes for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse, which is outlined below.

If a child discloses an incident of abuse to a staff member:

- Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation such as the Child Safety Team, police or DHHS Child Protection.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Contact the Child Safety Team to ensure correct process is followed (Assistant Principal, Principal, the SHAAC team).

The Child Safety Team will:

- Adhere to appropriate DET policies including responding to allegations of sexual assault and Mandatory reporting guidelines
- Refer to appropriate professional organisations e.g. DHHS Child Protection, Police.
- Co-ordinate the response, including communications with relevant organisations and if appropriate communication within relevant school personnel school and family.
- Refer to appropriate support services for example; CASA, Psychological therapy, counselling etc.
- Manage follow-up support.
- Ensure relevant documentation have been completed.
- Employee/Volunteer to complete an incident report form (see Appendix 1) As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is provided to the Child Safety Team to store securely.

If a parent/carer says their child has been abused in your organisation or raises a concern:

- Explain that your organisation has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as school leadership, the Child Safety Team, the police or child protection.
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Complete an incident report form to, or complete it together if deemed appropriate (see appendix 1).
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Contact a member of the Principal Class Team to ensure correct process is followed
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is provided to the Child Safety team to be stored securely.

You need to be aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse. For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety

when talking with police, and communicating in English may be a barrier for some. You need to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a friend or family member or provided by a relevant organisation).

If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal child, you will need to ensure a culturally appropriate response. Please contact the Child Safety Team to ensure a culturally appropriate response. The Child Safety Team may engage with parents of Aboriginal children, the local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisations or DET Koorie Liaison Support Officer.

Some children with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, children with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters. Advice on [communicating with people with a disability](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/communicate-and-consult-with-people-with-a-disability/communication-with-people-with-disabilities) can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/communicate-and-consult-with-people-with-a-disability/communication-with-people-with-disabilities>.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Legal responsibilities

While the child safe standards focus on organisations, every adult who reasonably believes that a child has been abused, whether in their organisation or not, has an obligation to report that belief to authorities.

The **failure to disclose** criminal offence requires all adults (aged 18 and over) who hold a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 to disclose that information to police (unless they have a reasonable excuse not to, for example because they fear for their safety or the safety of another).

While failure to disclose only covers child sexual abuse, all adults should report other forms of child abuse to authorities. Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting responsibilities.

Teachers and members of the principal class, as mandatory reporters must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse. Please refer to the Mandatory reporting policy and Child Safe Policy at Mount Clear College.

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| Approved By | School Council |
| Approval Authority | Approved at School Council Meeting 23.8.16 |
| Date Reviewed | August 2016 |
| Responsible for Review | Student Services Coordinator |
| Next Review Date | June 2019 |
| References | Victorian Government/Human Services – Communication with people with disabilities. |

APPENDIX 1

Child Abuse Incident Report

This form can be provided to a child or their family if they disclose an allegation of abuse or safety concern in your organisation. School staff can also use this resource to record disclosures.

Note: This incident report must be stored securely.

Incident details

| | |
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| Date of incident: | |
| Time of incident: | |
| Location of incident: | |
| Name(s) of child/children involved: | |
| Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved: | |

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Does the child identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? (Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

No Yes, Aboriginal Yes, Torres Strait Islander

Please categorise the incident:

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Physical violence | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sexual offence | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Serious emotional or psychological abuse | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Serious neglect | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please describe the incident

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| When did it take place? | |
| Who was involved? | |
| What did you see? | |
| Other information | |

Office use:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Date incident report received: | |
| Staff member managing incident: | |
| Follow-up date: | |
| Incident ref. number: | |

Has the incident been reported?

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Child protection | |
| Police | |
| Another third party (please specify): | |

Incident reporter wishes to remain anonymous? (Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

Yes No