



Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence. The College is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a comprehensive Child Protection Program designed to keep children safe.

At the College we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The School regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

Definitions

College: St John's Lutheran School & Kindergarten and Geelong Lutheran College. Together, the two campuses operate as Geelong Lutheran College St John's Newtown and Geelong Lutheran College Armstrong Creek, catering for children from age three to Year 12.

Values: The three core values of our College are Wisdom, Honour and Purpose.

What is child abuse? Child abuse is an act by parents or caregivers which endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development. Child abuse can be a single incident, but usually takes place over time.

child abuse includes-

- (a) any act committed against a child involving- (i) a sexual offence; or (ii) an offence under section 498(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.

In Victoria, under the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 a child or young person is a person under eighteen years of age.

Physical abuse: Physical abuse occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from an injury inflicted by a child's parent or caregiver. The injury may be inflicted intentionally or may be the inadvertent consequence of physical punishment or physically aggressive treatment of a child. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse occurs when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve the child in sexual activity and the child's parent or caregiver has not protected the child. Physical force is sometimes involved. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity. It includes fondling of the child's genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or other object, or exposure of the child to pornography.

Grooming: Grooming is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child or young person for sexual activity at a later time.

Grooming can include communicating and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/carer.



Young people are often 'groomed' before they are sexually abused. At first they may be tricked into thinking they are in a safe and normal relationship so they may not know it's happening or may feel they have no choice but to be abused.

It may be hard to identify when someone is being groomed until after they have been sexually abused, because grooming behaviour can sometimes look like 'normal' caring behaviour, however this is not always the case.

- giving gifts or special attention to a child or young person, or their parent or carer, making the child or young person feel special and/or indebted to an adult
- making close physical contact sexual, such as inappropriate tickling and wrestling/play fighting
- openly or pretending to accidentally expose the victim to nudity, sexual material and sexual acts (this in itself is classified as child sexual abuse but can also be a precursor to physical sexual assault)
- controlling a child or young person through threats, force or use of authority making the child or young person fearful to report unwanted behaviour.

Psychological harm: The child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological harm of such a kind that the child's emotional or intellectual development is, or is likely to be, significantly damaged and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

Emotional abuse: Emotional Abuse occurs when a child's parent or caregiver repeatedly rejects the child or uses threats to frighten the child. This may involve name calling, put downs or continual coldness from the parent or caregiver, to the extent that it significantly damages the child's physical, social, intellectual or emotional development.

Neglect: Neglect is the failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed.

Family violence: When dealing with children it is important to remember that 'family violence' extends to behaviour that causes a child to hear, witness, or be exposed to the effects of 'family violence'.

As family violence can result in one or more forms of child abuse (being sexual offences, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm or serious neglect) the physical and behavioural indicators of these types of abuse may also be indicative of a family violence situation.

Rationale

- The College is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.
- Everyone working at the College is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

Child Safe Principles

The School's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse.

- All children have the right to be safe.
- The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
- The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
- Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safety Code of Conduct (Procedure 4.30.2) and Staff and 5.22 Student Professional Boundaries Policy.



- The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
- Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our School community.
- Procedures are in place to screen all staff, **volunteers**, third party contractors¹ and external education providers, as all are involved in child-connected work
- Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
- Child protection training is mandatory for all School Council members, staff and volunteers.
- Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the School community.
- All children, especially those who are vulnerable for whatever reason, have a right to care and support.
- Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

Aims

This policy provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection within the School;
- the creation of a positive and robust child protection culture;
- the promotion and open discussion of child protection issues within the School; and
- complying with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria.

Implementation – Child Protection Program

The College is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Protection Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our School's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body.

Our Child Protection Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, volunteers, third party contractors, external education providers, parents and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters
- procedures for recruiting and screening School Council members staff and volunteers
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe
- policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities

¹ *There may be some specific circumstances where a third-party contractor may not be screened by the school. If this occurs specific processes will be put in place to ensure that the un-screened contractor will not be left unsupervised in the school grounds at any time.*



- a child protection training program
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards)
- a system for continuous improvement and review

As a part of the College's induction process, all staff and Direct Contact Volunteers are required to complete a selection of training modules on the content of our Child Protection Program

All staff, volunteers and School Council members are provided with additional, ongoing child protection training at least annually.

Staff, volunteers, third party contractors and external education providers are supported and supervised by the School's Child Safety Officers to ensure that they are compliant with the School's approach to child protection.

Screening and Recruitment of School Staff

Geelong Lutheran College will apply thorough and rigorous screening processes in the recruitment of employees and volunteers involved in child-connected work.

Our commitment to child safety is included in all employee position descriptions. All applicants are directed to our website to access the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct and the Child Safety Policy.

When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors and volunteers involved in child connected work, we make all reasonable efforts to:

- a. confirm the applicant's Working with Children Check and National Police Check status and/or professional registration (as relevant)
- b. obtain proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications
- c. verify the applicant's history of work involving children
- d. obtain references that address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children.

We have processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of school staff to work with children, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks and staff professional registration requirements such as Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration.

Responsibilities

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At the College all members of the School Council and staff, as well as volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

School Council

The School Council is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the School's Child Protection and Safety Policy and the Child Protection Program to be effectively implemented within the School and are responsible for holding the Principal and management team accountable for effective implementation.



The Principal

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Protection and Safety Policy and the School's Child Protection Program are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child protection culture is maintained within the School.

The School's Child Safety Officers

A number of senior staff members are nominated as the School's Child Safety Officers. Our Child Safety Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the School. They are also responsible for championing child protection within the School and assisting in coordinating responses to child protection incidents.

Staff Members

All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Safety Officers.

Volunteers

All Volunteers (people who voluntarily engage in curriculum related work without remuneration or reward), are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse.

It is each individual's responsibility to undertake Valuing Safe Communities on-line training, be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Safety Officers.

Third Party Contractors

All Third Party Contractors (service providers) engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.

All service providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program and to provide a current WWCC.

The School may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the service provider.

External Education Providers

An external education provider is any organisation that the School has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the School.

The delivery of such a course may take place on School premises or elsewhere.

All external education providers engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.

All external education providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

The College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the external education provider.

Reporting Concerns

Our Child Protection Program provides detailed guidance for members of the School Council, staff and volunteers as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of our School's nominated Child Safety Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.



Third party contractors, external education providers, students, parents/carers or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact one of the School's Child Safety Officers.

Communications will be treated confidentially on a "need to know basis".

The College will follow the PROTECT "Four Critical Actions for Schools" directions for Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse action plan (appendix 1) where advice will be received for the procedure for the College to follow. Where appropriate, action will be taken by authorities to ensure the protection of any child connected with to an allegation of child abuse until the allegation is resolved.

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf

The PROTECT "Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools will be used for recording any incident, disclosure or suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused. This template should be used in conjunction with following the Four Critical Actions For Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse.

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/PROTECT_Responding_TemplateSchools.pdf

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

Related Policies and Procedures

- Risk Management Program
- Compliance Program
- Human Resources Program
- Student Care Program
- Occupational Health & Safety Program
- Child Protection Staff Training
- Recruitment & Selection Procedures
- Induction Procedures

Evaluation – Policy & Program Review

The College is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Protection Program. The Program is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection related laws, regulations and standards.

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the College's five-year review cycle.



FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

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 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:
- at risk 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.

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

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.

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.

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

- 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).

As a school staff member, you play a critical role in protecting children in your care.

- 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.

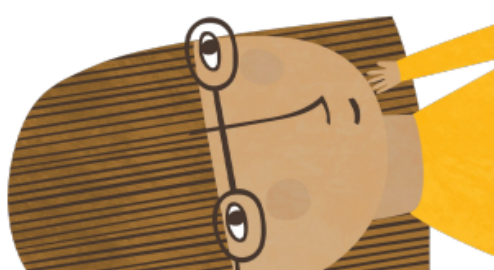
CONTACT

- DHHS CHILD PROTECTION AREA
North Division 1300 664 977
South Division 1300 655 795
East Division 1300 360 391
West Division (Rural) 1600 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-team
ORANGE DOOR
https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/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 2995
DIOCESAN OFFICE
Melbourne (03) 9587 0228
Ballarat (03) 5337 7135
Sale (03) 5622 6600
Sandhurst (03) 5443 2377

- INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA
(03) 9625 7200
THE LOOKOUT
The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence: http://www.lookout.vic.gov.au
Family violence victims/survivors can be referred to 1800 Respect for counselling, information and a referral service: 1800 737 732

PROTECT





PROTECT

Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools

When to use this template

School staff should use this template to document any incident, disclosure or suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused. This template should be used in conjunction with following the [Four Critical Actions For Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#).

Completing this template should not impact on reporting times. If a child is in immediate danger school staff should report immediately to Victoria Police.

Whilst you may need to gather the information to make a report, remember it is not the role of school staff to investigate abuse, leave this to Victoria Police and/or DHHS Child Protection.

Why record this information?

When completing this template your aim should be to provide as much information as possible. This information will be critical to any reports and may be sought at a later date if the matter is the subject of Court proceedings. These notes may also later assist you if you are required to provide evidence to support any decisions.

It is a requirement under *Ministerial Order No. 870 - Child Safe Standards - Managing the risk of child abuse in schools* for schools to keep clear and comprehensive notes on all observations, disclosures and other details that led them to suspect the abuse.

