



Procedures for dealing with an allegation of child abuse

If a student discloses an incident of abuse to you:

- Try and ensure that you speak with them in privacy and listen to them carefully.
- Let the student use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the student that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing. Try not to make any judgments.
- Do not make promises to the student, such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident but explain to them that this information will need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/carer, members of their House, Wellbeing or Leadership team at the College, or the police.
- As soon as practicable after the disclosure, either take the student to their House, Wellbeing Team or to a member of the Principal Team or call for such assistance to come to you.
- It is not appropriate for staff to investigate the allegation themselves or to discuss any details with anyone not directly involved in resolving the allegation.
- The House, Wellbeing or Principal Team member should accurately record the information using the student's words. The disclosure should be treated with discretion and ensure the privacy of everyone involved.
- The disclosure must be reported to the Principal who will ensure that the allegation is recorded accurately on a specific incident report form and stored securely. They will ensure that the allegation is investigated seriously and reported to the Department of Education & Training and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.
- The staff member who received the initial disclosure should be informed by the Principal about the general progress of the allegation and any outcomes that result.

If a parent/carer alleges an incident of abuse or raises a concern:

- Explain that the College has policies and processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Enquire about the wellbeing and current situation of the student.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words but advise them that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to a member of the Wellbeing or Leadership Team, the police or child protection.
- As soon as practicable after the disclosure, either take the parent/carer to a House, Wellbeing or Principal Team member or call for such assistance to come to you.
- The House, Wellbeing or Principal Team member should accurately record the information using the parent's words. The disclosure should be treated with discretion and ensure the privacy of everyone involved.
- Ask parents/carer what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- The disclosure must be reported to the Principal who will ensure that the allegation is recorded accurately on a specific incident report form and stored securely. They will ensure that the allegation is investigated seriously and reported to the Department of Education & Training and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.
- The staff member who received the initial disclosure should be informed by the Principal about the general progress of the allegation and any outcomes that result. Staff have the obligation to ensure that their report was acted upon in an acceptable and effective process.

Special needs:

Staff need to be sensitive to cultural or language barriers and address these needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a friend or family member).

Some students with a disability may experience barriers in disclosing an incident. For example, students with hearing, vision or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident.

For International Students in Option 3 or 4 Homestay, the college holds welfare responsibility 24 hours a day. If applicable, the International Student's parents should be contacted, with a translator if needed. If applicable, the International Student should be moved to Emergency Homestay Accommodation. The International Student should be provided with out of school support services if needed.

Legal responsibilities relating to staff members:

The following legal obligations relate to all adults who work within the College:

Every adult within the College who reasonably believes that a child has been abused, whether in the College environment or not, has an obligation to report that belief to the Principal, who will notify appropriate 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 ensure that the information is disclosed 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.

Mandatory reporters (teachers and principals) 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. Staff who believe that a mandatory report is necessary must pass this on to a member of the Wellbeing or Principal Team, who must report back to the staff member once the report is made. Staff have an obligation to ensure that reported allegations have been dealt with seriously and effectively.

The **failure to protect** criminal offence applies where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of the College will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with the College. A person in a position of authority in the College will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.