

Child Safety Support Resource 1



St Aloysius Catholic Primary School internal school process for mandatory reporting

Procedures:

St Aloysius School has a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing school environments where children and young people are respected, their voices heard and where they are safe and feel safe.

Every person involved in St Aloysius School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they have individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

It is the Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic School's policy that all schools display the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#) diagram in staff rooms and other strategic areas of the school, to ensure all school staff are aware of the actions to take as soon as they witness a child protection incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief that a child has been, or is at risk of being, abused.

3. Responding to and Reporting Child Protection Concerns

The approach to responding and reporting child protection concerns in the joint protocol incorporates the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#) (refer to Appendix 1).

A school staff member must act, and follow the *Four Critical Actions*, as soon as they become aware of a child protection incident, that is, when **a child is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing, abuse.**

3.1 Becoming aware of a child protection incident

There are four main ways in which a school staff member may become aware that a child is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing, abuse:

- Witnessing an incident:

If you witness an incident where you believe a child has been subjected to, or may be at risk of, abuse, including exposure to family violence, you must first take immediate action to protect the safety of the child or children involved and then refer to [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#).

- Forming a suspicion or reasonable belief:

All suspicions that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused must be taken seriously, including suspicions that the abuse is taking or may take place outside school grounds or areas.

If your suspicion develops into a reasonable belief, you must act and refer to the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#).

- Receiving a disclosure about or from a current student:

All disclosures must be treated seriously. You should immediately refer to the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#).

- Receiving a disclosure about or from a former student:

If you receive a disclosure from a former student about historical abuse, you must act. If the former student is currently of school age and attending a Victorian school, you must immediately refer to the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#).

If the former student is no longer of school age or attending a Victorian school, you must still report the disclosure to [DHHS Child Protection](#).

Notes and records

School staff members are to keep clear and comprehensive notes relating to incidents, disclosures and allegations of child abuse using the [Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools](#).

Even if a school staff member decides not to make a report, they must still accurately document their notes relating to the incident, disclosure or allegation of child abuse using [Protect: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools](#).

Notes and records must be kept securely on school grounds and must not be destroyed as they may be needed at a later time.

Disclosures

It is the role of school staff members to reassure and support a child or young person who makes a disclosure of abuse. However, school staff members should never promise to keep any disclosures confidential as all disclosures of abuse must be reported.

The role of school staff remains the same if disclosures are made by a parent/carer or a sibling, or if disclosures involve family violence.

For strategies on how to manage a disclosure, refer to [Protect: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#).

3.2 The Four Critical Actions

There are *Four Critical Actions* which must be taken when responding to and reporting a child protection incident, disclosure or suspicion:

- Responding to an Emergency
- Reporting to Authorities
- Contacting Parents/Carers
- Providing Ongoing Support

Critical Action 1: Responding to an Emergency

This first step is only applicable if a child has **just been abused** or is at **immediate risk of harm**. If this is not the case, go straight to **Critical Action 2: Reporting to authorities**.

If the child has **just been abused or is at immediate risk of harm** you must take reasonable steps to protect the child, including:

- separating the alleged victim and others involved, ensuring that if the parties involved are all present at the school, they are supervised separately by a school staff member
- arranging and providing urgent medical assistance where necessary, including administering first aid or calling 000 for an ambulance
- calling 000 for urgent police assistance if the person who is alleged to have engaged in the abuse poses an immediate risk to the health and safety of any person.

If the child protection incident has occurred at the school, school staff should also ensure that reasonable steps are taken to preserve the environment, the clothing and other items and prevent any potential witnesses (including school staff members, volunteers and contractors) from discussing the incident until Victoria Police or relevant authorities arrive on the premises.

Critical Action 2: Reporting to Authorities

All forms and instances of suspected or alleged child abuse must be reported to the appropriate authority.

Once immediate health and safety concerns have been addressed, the school staff member must take steps to report the incident, suspicion or disclosure of child abuse as soon as practicable. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence (refer to [Failure to disclose offence](#)).

There are different reporting procedures depending on:

- whether the source of the suspected or alleged abuse comes from within the school or within the family or community of the child
- the type of abuse.

In all cases, school staff members must report internally to the principal or, if the principal is involved in the allegation, the Leadership Team.

Additionally:

- where the source of the abuse comes from within the school, that is, the suspected or alleged abuse involves a school staff member, volunteer, allied health professional, officer/office holder, contractor or visitor at the school, it must be reported to Victoria Police
- where the suspicion, belief or disclosure relates to sexual abuse or grooming, it must be reported to Victoria Police
- where the source of the abuse comes from within the family or community and is not sexual abuse or grooming, it must be reported to DHHS Child Protection.

DHHS and DET have deliberately set a low threshold for the formation of a 'reasonable belief'. For more information, refer to the [Reasonable belief](#) section of this policy.

Failure to report physical or sexual abuse of a child is a criminal offence. For more information, refer to the **Failure to disclose** section of this policy.

[Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#) requires all school staff to report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of abuse as soon as possible to the relevant authorities.