MANDATORY REPORTING

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BACKGROUND:

All children have a right to feel safe and to be safe. All registered teachers and school principals have a legal and moral responsibility to respond to serious incidences involving abuse and neglect of the children with whom we have contact, and to report instances that we believe involve physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect.

AIMS:

To ensure that children’s’ rights to be safe are maintained and each child is protected against physical and sexual abuse, and neglect.

REPORTING:

1. All members of the Teaching Service are mandated by law to report signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, and neglect.
2. If you believe in good faith that a child is in need of protection, then you must make a report to Child Protection without delay (See contact details below). Seeking assistance or advice should not hold-up the reporting process. Furthermore, you should attempt to file the report on the same day as the belief is formed.
3. If you have some general concerns for the wellbeing of the child but have assessed that the child is not at immediate risk of harm, you can make a referral to Child FIRST.
4. You do not have to be able to prove that the child has been abused to notify The Department of Human Services.
5. It is your responsibility to report your belief – it is not the responsibility of your supervisor, principal, senior, or boss.
6. If your principal does not share your belief that a child or young person is in need of protection, you must still notify The Department of Human Services of your belief. However, it is recommended that you inform you principal that you have made a report.
7. If you are one of a group of mandated professional who share the belief, based on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is in need of protection from physical or sexual abuse, then only one mandated person needs to make the report. However, you must be satisfied that the report is made promptly and that all of the reasonable grounds are included in the notification.
8. You are not legally required to notify Child First or Child Protection if you form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection in your private life or when you are working in a capacity that is not directly related to the professional affiliation under which you are mandated, however such reports can be made voluntarily.
9. Details of a mandatory report should remain confidential.
1. New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.

2. Staff will be reminded of mandatory responsibilities annually.

3. The Principal will keep a record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern.

4. If a belief has been formed by a staff member that sexual or physical abuse has taken place, a written report must be completed, with a copy given to the principal. All concerns must be reported immediately to the principal, however note point 6. Above.

5. Members of the Department of Human Services, or associated support or intervention services that visit the school following a notification, will interview staff and children only in the presence of the Principal or principals delegate.

6. All documentation will remain on file.

7. All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.

8. All incidents to be monitored, and any subsequent signs or indications of abuse are also to be reported.

9. See flowchart and emergency numbers below – we are in the Hume region:
**A step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child FIRST**

### Responding to Concerns
This section provides a guide on how to respond to concerns about a child's safety.

**Step 1:** Responding to Concerns

1. If your concerns relate to a child in need of immediate protection; or you have formed a belief that a child is at significant risk of harm*.
   - **Go to Step 4**
2. If you have significant concerns that a child and their family need a referral to Child FIRST for family services.
   - **Go to Step 3**
3. In all other situations
   - **Go to Step 2**

*Refer to Appendix 2: Definitions of child abuse and indicators of harm in the Protocol – Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

**Step 2:** Forming a Belief on Reasonable Grounds

1. Consider the level of immediate danger to the child.
   - Ask yourself:
     a) Have I formed a belief that the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm? **YES / NO**
     b) Am I in doubt about the child's safety and the parent's ability to protect the child? **YES / NO**
2. If you answered yes to a) or b)
   - **Go to Step 4**
3. If you have significant concerns that a child and their family need a referral to Child FIRST for family services.
   - **Go to Step 3**

**Step 3:** Making a Referral to Child FIRST

- **Child Wellbeing Referral**
  1. Contact your local Child FIRST provider.
     - See over for contact list for local Child FIRST phone numbers.
  2. Have notes ready with your observations and child and family details.

**Step 4:** Make a Report to Child Protection

- **Mandatory/Protective Report*  
  1. Contact your local Child Protection Intake provider immediately.
     - See over for contact list for local Child Protection phone numbers.
     - For After Hours Child Protection Emergency Services, call **131 278**.
  2. Have notes ready with your observations and child and family details.

*Non-mandated staff members who believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection are able to report their concerns to Child Protection.

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For further information refer to Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people – A joint protocol of the Department of Human Services Child Protection, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Licensed Children’s Services and Victorian Schools.
## Important information for government schools

Principals of Victorian Government schools must report all incidents to the Emergency and Security Management Unit on 03 9418 2777.

Victorian Government schools should contact the Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit (SCIAU), Student Wellbeing Division, for advice and support when responding to allegations of student sexual assault or inappropriate sexual behaviours.

The SCIAU can be contacted on 03 9637 2487.

Victorian Government School Principals should refer to the flowchart – Responding to Allegations of Student Sexual Assault