

Mandatory Reporting

Rationale

All children have a right to feel safe and to be safe. As teachers, we 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.

Purpose

Mandatory reporting arises from the requirements of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.) for the protection of children from harm due to physical injury and sexual abuse. School personnel mandated under this Act who, in the course of carrying out their duties, forms a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse, must report that belief and the grounds for it as soon as possible.

This policy assists schools to comply with this requirement and fulfill their responsibilities regarding the welfare and protection of children at risk. This policy complements guidelines provided by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to all Victorian schools.

Aims

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

Implementation

- It is mandatory for registered teachers in Victoria to notify Child Protection if they form a reasonable belief that a child has been physically or sexually abused.
- Mandated notifiers are able to share information, without legal or professional consequences, with family services such as Child FIRST and Child Protection to help protect vulnerable children.
- Principals and teachers can make a referral to Child FIRST when they have significant concern for a child's wellbeing, but do not believe that the child needs protection.
- New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.
- Staff will be given professional development on their mandatory responsibilities annually.

- All concerns must be reported immediately to the School/College Principal/Director, or in his/her absence, the designated College Senior staff member.
- The Principal/Director will keep a record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern.
- If a belief has been formed by a staff member that sexual or physical abuse has taken place a "Notification of a Report Sheet" available from the School/College Principal/Director must be completed and filed in the Principal/Director's office.
- The teacher will contact the Department of Human Services by telephone as soon as possible to make an official notification on: (1300 650 172) or after school hours crisis line 131278)
- 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 School/College Principal/Director or his/her nominee.
- All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
- All incidents to be monitored, and any subsequent signs or indications of abuse are also to be reported.
- Teachers are also encouraged to report to the Principal/Director or his/her nominee, incidents of emotional abuse or neglect or if a student discloses a desire to harm themselves or others.
- Non-mandated staff member who believe, on reasonable ground that a child is in need of protection, may also report their concerns to Children Protection.
- Allegation of abuse by a staff member or visitor at a school must be immediately reported directly to Victoria Police for investigation by telephoning the emergency number 000.

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three year review cycle

Resources

Independent Schools of Victoria

http://www.independentschools.vic.edu.au/compliance/students/child_protection_mand_rep.htm

Department of Human Services

Every child every chance

Office for Children, Youth and Families (Child Protection)

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development-Victoria

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/spag/safety/protection/childprotection.htm>

<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/stuman/wellbeing/Flowchart Mandatory Reporting Sep 2010 pdf>

Victoria Police

- Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Unit

Victorian Institute of Teaching

- VIT Code of Conduct