

Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting

AUTHORITY: CEO

RESPONSIBILITY: All persons, businesses and/or organisations engaged with LCIS in any capacity

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Laverton Community Integrated Services Inc. (LCIS) is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse

LCIS supports and respects all children, staff and volunteers. LCIS is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

All staff, Board members, volunteers, students, contractors, participants at LCIS are responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

Further to this all staff, Board members, volunteers, students, contractors, participants at LCIS commit to;

1. To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within LCIS
2. To work towards an organisational culture of child safety.
3. To prevent child abuse within LCIS
4. To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
5. To provide guidance to staff/volunteers/contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
6. To provide a clear statement to staff/volunteers/contractors forbidding any such abuse.
7. To provide assurance that all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

LCIS has and maintains a Child Safety Statement that is displayed publicly.

Our commitment to child safety and wellbeing

All persons engaged by LCIS, all our partners current and future, are bound by the following;

'We value children and young people by making a commitment to child safety, child wellbeing and cultural safety. We embed this as part of our governance and daily practices.'

'Children and young people have the right to feel safe, respected and their voices heard. We involve them in making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them'

This statement is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation.

Reporting Child Abuse

What is reportable?

Outcomes or actions from which children are in need of protection include neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional maltreatment and exposure to family violence. These are all reportable offences.

What are reasonable grounds?

You do not need to have proof to report any concerns you have about the safety of a child under 17. Indicators that represent reasonable grounds to report a suspected offence include:

- a child or young person discloses that he or she has suffered or is suffering non accidental physical injury or sexual abuse
- someone else advises you that a child or young person has been sexually abused or non-accidentally injured, or
- your own observations of the child or young person's physical condition or behaviours lead you to reasonably suspect that the child or young person has suffered or is suffering non-accidental physical injury or sexual abuse.

The Department of Human Services Child Protection in conjunction with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development have also provided a step-by-step guide to making a report. See APPENDIX 1

Can anyone report concerns for the safety of a child or young person?

ANY person who believes, on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection may voluntarily report to Child Protection Services.

- You do not need to prove that abuse or neglect has taken place. You only need reasonable grounds for your belief.
- You do not need permission from parents or caregivers to make a report; nor do they need to be informed that a report is being made.
- If you made a report in good faith, you cannot be held legally liable- regardless of the outcome of the report.
- Your identity will remain confidential unless you need to give evidence if the matter goes to court. It is rare that this happens

What is mandatory reporting and who is mandated to report suspected abuse?

Mandatory reporting describes the legal obligation of certain professionals and community members in Victoria to report incidences of child sexual abuse and/or child physical abuse. These people are called mandated reporters; if a mandated reporter believes on reasonable grounds that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse then they have a legal obligation to report. All persons who are engaged with LCIS are mandatory reporters.

Section 182 (1) of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005(as amended in 2011) lists the following people as mandated to report:

- registered medical practitioner
- nurse
- midwife
- person who is registered as a teacher under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 or has been granted permission to teach under the Act
- the principal of a Government school or non-Government school within the meaning of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- member of the police force

Failure to Disclose

The Failure to Disclose offence was introduced in 2014. The law maintains that reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility; there is now a criminal offence in Victoria that imposes a clear legal duty upon all adults to report information about child sexual abuse to police.

Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to police.

Who to report to and how

If you need to report an offence that requires immediate police attention, please call **Victoria Police: 000**

If you suspect on reasonable grounds that a child is suffering abuse or neglect or you wish to discuss your concerns about a child or young person, you should telephone:

Child Protection Crisis Line: 131 278. This is an emergency service after-hours line. Opening hours: 5pm- 9am, Monday- Friday. During Saturday, Sunday and public holidays the line is open 24 hours.

National Child Abuse Helpline: 1800 99 10 99. This helpline operates Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm AEST.

Legislative requirements

All LCIS staff, volunteers and workplace students are mandatory reporters and will comply with their legal responsibilities. This is a condition of employment/engagement, they are trained and supported to do so.

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offense against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will be committing an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

A step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child FIRST

Protective concerns

- You are concerned about a child because you have:
- received a disclosure from a child about abuse or neglect
 - observed indicators of abuse or neglect
 - been made aware of possible harm via your involvement in the community external to your professional role.

At all times remember to:

- record your observations
- follow appropriate protocols
- consult notes and records
- consult with appropriate colleagues if necessary
- consult with other support agencies if necessary

STEP 1	RESPONDING TO CONCERNS	STEP 2	FORMING A BELIEF ON REASONABLE GROUNDS	STEP 3	MAKING A REFERRAL TO Child FIRST	STEP 4	MAKE A REPORT TO CHILD PROTECTION
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.	<p>* Refer to Appendix 2: Definitions of child abuse and indicators of harm in the Protocol – <i>Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people</i></p>	<p>1. Consider the level of immediate danger to the child. Ask yourself:</p> <p>a) Have I formed a belief that the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm? YES / NO and</p> <p>b) Am I in doubt about the child's safety and the parent's ability to protect the child? YES / NO</p> <p>2. If you answered yes to a) or b) Go to Step 4</p> <p>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</p>	<p>Child Wellbeing Referral</p> <p>1. Contact your local Child FIRST provider.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See over for contact list for local Child FIRST phone numbers. <p>2. Have notes ready with your observations and child and family details.</p>	<p>Mandatory/Protective Report*</p> <p>1. Contact your local Child Protection Intake provider immediately.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See over for contact list for local Child Protection phone numbers. For After Hours Child Protection Emergency Services, call 131 278. <p>2. Have notes ready with your observations and child and family details.</p> <p>* <i>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</i></p>	

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*

Contact Numbers

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

METROPOLITAN REGIONS	
Eastern	(03) 9265 2400
Northern	(03) 9488 9488
Western	(03) 9291 6500
Southern	(03) 9794 3555
RURAL REGIONS	
Barwon South Western	5225 1000
Gippsland	5127 0400
Grampians	5337 8444
Hume	5761 2100
Loddon Mallee	5440 3111

Office for Children and Licensed Children's Services:

METROPOLITAN REGIONS	
Eastern	(03) 9265 2400
Northern	(03) 9412 5333
Western	(03) 9275 7000
Southern	(03) 9096 9555
RURAL REGIONS	
Barwon South Western	5225 1000
Gippsland	5127 0400
Grampians	5337 8444
Hume	5761 2100
Loddon Mallee	5440 3111

Important information for government schools

Principals of Victorian Government schools must report all incidents to the Emergency and Security Management Unit on **03 9589 6266.**

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 2934** or **03 9637 2487.**

Victorian Government School Principals should refer to the flowchart – *Responding to Allegations of Student Sexual Assault Compulsory Actions for Principals* at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/childprotection/childprotection.htm>

Department of Human Services Child Protection

METROPOLITAN REGIONS		METROPOLITAN REGIONS	
Intake Unit		Regional Office	
Eastern	1300 360 391	Box Hill	(03) 9843 6000
North and West	1300 664 977	Preston	1300 664 977
		Footscray	1300 360 462
Southern	1300 655 795	Dandenong	(03) 9213 2111
RURAL REGIONS			
Intake Unit		Regional Office	
Barwon South Western			
	1800 075 599	Geelong	(03) 5226 4540
Gippsland	1800 020 202	Traralgon	(03) 5177 2500
Grampians	1800 000 551	Ballarat	(03) 5333 6530
Hume	1800 650 227	Wangaratta	(03) 5722 0555
		Wodonga	(02) 6055 7777
Loddon Mallee	1800 675 598	Bendigo	(03) 5434 5555

After hours Child Protection Emergency Services (AHCPEs)

Statewide number for all emergency child protection matters outside of normal business hours (24 hours, 7 days a week): **131 278**

Victoria Police **000**

Catholic Education Offices

Catholic Education Office, Melbourne	(03) 9267 0228
Catholic Education Office, Ballarat Diocese	5337 7135
Catholic Education Office, Sale Diocese	5622 6600
Catholic Education Office, Sandhurst Diocese	5443 2377

Independent Schools Victoria (03) 9825 7200

Other

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association, Inc.	(03) 9481 0800
Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Unit	(03) 9247 6666
Centre Against Sexual Assault	1800 806 292
Gatehouse Centre, Royal Children's Hospital (for specialist counselling and medical assistance)	(03) 9345 6391
Child Safety Commissioner	(03) 8601 5884
Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency	(03) 8388 1855

CHILD FIRST

Local Catchment Area	Contact
Barwon South Western	Greater Geelong, Queenscliff, Surf Coast Colac – Otway, Corangamite Warrnambool, Moyne, Glenelg, Southern Grampians
Gippsland	East Gippsland Wellington La Trobe, Baw Baw South Gippsland, Bass Coast
Grampians	Northern Grampians, West Wimmera, Hindmarsh, Yarrambat, Horsham Ararat, Pyrenees, Hepburn, Ballarat, Golden Plains, Moorabool
Hume	Wodonga, Towong, Indigo Alpine, Benalla, Mansfield, Wangaratta Greater Shepparton, Strathbogrie, Moira Mitchell, Murrindindi
Loddon Mallee	Greater Bendigo, Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Mount Alexander Buloke, Goonawarra, Swan Hill, Mildura
Eastern Metropolitan	Yarra Ranges, Knox, Maroondah Monash, Whitehorse, Manningham, Booroondarra
North and West Metropolitan	Nilumbik, Whittlesea, Banyule, Yarra and Darebin Brimbank, Melton Hume, Moreland Hobson's Bay, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Wyndham
Southern Metropolitan	Casey, Cardinia, Greater Dandenong Aboriginal children and families (Casey, Cardinia and Great Dandenong) Frankston, Mornington Peninsula Kingston, Bayside, Glen Eira, Stonington, Port Phillip