



Footscray North

Keeping Children Safe

Resource Kit for Staff

Footscray North Primary School is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people.

As part of the Victorian Government's commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Betrayal of Trust report, there is a new regulatory landscape surrounding child safety, underpinned by the Child Safe Standards.

The Child Safe Standards are compulsory minimum standards for all Victorian schools, to ensure that they are well prepared to protect children from abuse and neglect.

As part of our commitment to the new standards, this Resource Kit for staff will ensure that all are cognisant of their responsibilities to protect children and to ensure that Footscray North Primary School is a Child Safe School.

This kit contains all of the information staff need to report cases of child abuse.

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APPROVED BY COUNCIL:
TO BE REVIEWED:	2022

Statement of Commitment

Footscray North Primary School is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

The school has zero tolerance for child abuse.

The school is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved with the school has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays 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.

In our planning, decision-making and operations, Footscray North Primary School will:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

Understand Your Obligations to Protect Children

Critical Information

- All school staff members have a moral and legal obligation and a Duty of Care to protect any child under their care from foreseeable harm (not just staff who are classified as mandatory reporters).
- As a school staff member, you must respond to any reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused by following the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse.
- Recent changes to Victorian legislation create additional legal obligations in relation to reporting suspected sexual child abuse. Failing to meet these obligations can constitute a criminal offence, including a:
 - failure to disclose a sexual offence
 - failure to protect a child (where it is known that a person associated with their organisation poses a substantial risk of sexually abusing children).

As members of our community, we all have a moral obligation to protect any child under our care and supervision from foreseeable harm.

As school staff members, you play an especially critical role in protecting children (including identifying, responding and reporting child abuse) and must meet a range of legal obligations to do so.

The easiest way to comply with your legal and moral obligations is to remember that **you must report any reasonable suspicion that a child has been abused, or is at risk of being abused.**

This includes abuse that has, or is suspected to have, taken place within or outside of school grounds and hours.

- See [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse \(p.20\)](#)

Identifying Signs of Child Abuse

Critical Information

As a school staff member:

- it is critical to be able to recognise the physical or behavioural signs of child abuse (in many circumstances they may be the only indication that a child is subject to abuse)
- you may be the best-placed or only adult in a position to identify and respond to suspected abuse.

If indicators lead you to form a reasonable belief that a child is being abused, you must follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse. These actions will support you to immediately report your suspicion to DHHS Child Protection, and/or to Victoria Police.

- [See Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse \(p.20\)](#)

As a school staff member, you play a critical role in protecting children from child abuse. In some cases you may be the best-placed or only adult in a child's life who is in a position to identify and respond to signs that a:

- child is being abused, or is at risk of abuse
- school community member (including a school staff member) may be a perpetrator of child abuse.

This Resource Kit will help you to understand the different types of abuse and recognise the possible physical and behavioural indicators of:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- grooming
- emotional or psychological harm
- neglect
- family violence.

When identifying child abuse, it is critical to remember that:

- the trauma associated with child abuse can significantly impact upon the wellbeing and development of a child
- all concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a child, or the conduct of a staff member, contractor or volunteer must be acted upon as soon as practicable.

If physical and/or behavioural indicators lead you to suspect that a child has been or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, you must respond as soon as practicable by following the Four Steps: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse.

- [See: Four Steps: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse \(p.20\)](#)

If you believe that a student is not being abused, but you still hold concerns for their safety or wellbeing, refer to advice about responding to concerns about the wellbeing of a child (or unborn child) to determine who to consult with, when to make a report and when to engage other wellbeing professionals.

- [See: Responding to Other Concerns About the Wellbeing of a Child \(p.20\)](#)

Warning

The following sections include explicit descriptions of abuse and may be distressing to engage with for some staff members.

If you need to talk to someone, it is recommended that you speak to the school leadership team about arranging appropriate support. You can also talk to your GP or another allied health professional. Government school staff can also contact the Employee Assistance Program on 1300 361 008.

Physical Child Abuse

Critical Information

- Physical child abuse is any non-accidental infliction of physical violence on a child by any person.
 - If you suspect that a child has been or is being physically abused, or is at risk of physical abuse, you must respond by following the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse.

What is physical child abuse?

Physical child abuse can consist of any non-accidental infliction of physical violence on a child by any person. Examples of physical abuse may include beating, shaking or burning, assault with implements and female genital mutilation (FGM).

What are the physical indicators of physical child abuse?

Physical indicators of physical child abuse include (but are not limited to):

- bruises or welts on facial areas and other areas of the body, e.g. back, bottom, legs, arms and inner thighs
- bruises or welts in unusual configurations, or those that look like the object used to make the injury, e.g. fingerprints, handprints, buckles, iron or teeth
- burns from boiling water, oil or flames or burns that show the shape of the object used to make them, e.g. iron, grill, cigarette
- fractures of the skull, jaw, nose and limbs (especially those not consistent with the explanation offered, or the type of injury possible at the child's age of development)
- cuts and grazes to the mouth, lips, gums, eye area, ears and external genitalia
- bald patches where hair has been pulled out
- multiple injuries, old and new
- effects of poisoning
- internal injuries

What are the behavioural indicators of physical child abuse?

Behavioural indicators of physical child abuse include (but are not limited to):

- disclosure of an injury inflicted by someone else (parent, carer or guardian), or an inconsistent or unlikely explanation or inability to remember the cause of injury
- unusual fear of physical contact with adults
- aggressive behaviour
- disproportionate reaction to events
- wearing clothes unsuitable for weather conditions to hide injuries
- wariness or fear of a parent, carer or guardian
- reluctance to go home
- no reaction or little emotion displayed when being hurt or threatened
- habitual absences from school without reasonable explanation
- overly compliant, shy, withdrawn, passive and uncommunicative
- unusually nervous, hyperactive, aggressive, disruptive and destructive to self and/or others
- poor sleeping patterns, fear of the dark or nightmares and regressive behaviour, e.g. bed-wetting
- drug or alcohol misuse, suicide or self-harm

Please note that physical harm may also be caused by student fights and/or bullying.

For advice on:

- bullying, see: [Bully Stoppers](#)

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/teachers.aspx>

- student fights, see:
[Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance - Student Fights](#)

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/studentengagementguidance.aspx>

- Government schools can contact the DET Security Services Unit on 1800126126 to report a student fight and for advice on an appropriate response.

Child Sexual Abuse

Critical Information

Child sexual abuse:

- is when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity
- can include a wide range of sexual activity including fondling the child's genitals, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or other object, or exposure of the child to pornography
- does not always involve physical contact or force.

You must follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse if you suspect that a:

- child has been, or is being sexually abused, or is at risk of sexual abuse
- school staff member, contractor or volunteer may be engaging, or are at risk of engaging in sexual behaviour with a child/children

Unwanted sexual behaviour towards a student by a child 10 years or over can constitute a sexual offence and is referred to as student-to-student sexual offending.

What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse:

- is when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity
- can include a wide range of sexual activity including fondling the child's genitals, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or other object, or exposure of the child to pornography.

Child sexual abuse may not always include physical sexual contact (e.g. kissing or fondling a child in a sexual way, masturbation, oral sex or penetration) and can also include non-contact offences, for example:

- talking to a child in a sexually explicit way
- sending sexual messages or emails to a child
- exposing a sexual body part to a child
- forcing a child to watch a sexual act (including showing pornography to a child)
- having a child pose or perform in a sexual manner (including child sexual exploitation).

Child sexual abuse does not always involve force. In some circumstances a child may be manipulated in to believing that they have brought the abuse on themselves, or that the abuse is an expression of love through a process of grooming.

What is child sexual exploitation?

Child sexual exploitation is also a form of sexual abuse where offenders use their power (physical, financial or emotional) over a child to sexually or emotionally abuse them.

It often involves situations and relationships where young people receive something (food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money etc.) in return for participating in sexual activities.

Child sexual exploitation can occur in person or online, and sometimes the child may not even realise they are a victim.

For more information on sexting and the transmission of sexual images between students, see: [Bully Stoppers - Sexting](#)

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/teachres.aspx>

Who is most at risk of child sexual abuse?

Any child can be victim to sexual abuse, however children who are vulnerable, isolated and/or have a disability are much more likely to become victim, and are disproportionately abused.

Who are the common perpetrators of child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse is most commonly perpetrated by someone who is known to, and trusted by the child (and often someone highly trusted within their families, communities, schools and/or other institutions).

See: **advice on identifying perpetrators of child sexual abuse.** (below)

Perpetrators can include (but are not limited to):

- a family member. This is known as intra family abuse and can include sibling abuse
- a school staff member, coach or other carer
- a peer/child 10 years or over*
- a family friend or stranger
- any person via a forced marriage (where a student is subject to a marriage without their consent, arranged for by their immediate or extended family - this constitutes a criminal offence and must be reported)

** Unwanted sexual behaviour toward a student by a person 10 years or over can constitute a sexual offence and is referred to as student-to-student sexual offending.*

Please note that a child who is under 10 years of age is not considered to be capable of committing an offence. Any suspected sexual behaviour displayed by children under 10 is referred to as problem sexual behaviour.

What are the physical indicators of child sexual abuse?

PHYSICAL indicators of sexual abuse include (but are not limited to):

- injury to the genital or rectal area, e.g. bruising, bleeding, discharge, inflammation or infection
- injury to areas of the body such as breasts, buttocks or upper thighs
- discomfort in urinating or defecating
- presence of foreign bodies in the vagina and/or rectum
- sexually-transmitted diseases
- frequent urinary tract infections
- pregnancy, especially in very young adolescents
- anxiety-related illnesses, e.g. anorexia or bulimia

What are the behavioural indicators of child sexual abuse?

BEHAVIOURAL indicators of sexual abuse include (but are not limited to):

- disclosure of sexual abuse, either directly (from the alleged victim) or indirectly (by a third person or allusion)
- persistent and age-inappropriate sexual activity, e.g. excessive masturbation or rubbing genitals against adults
- drawings or descriptions in stories that are sexually explicit and not age-appropriate
- fear of home, specific places or particular adults
- poor/deteriorating relationships with adults and peers
- poor self-care or personal hygiene
- complaining of headaches, stomach pains or nausea without physiological basis
- sleeping difficulties
- regressive behaviour, e.g. bed-wetting or speech loss
- depression, self-harm, drug or alcohol abuse, prostitution or attempted suicide
- sudden decline in academic performance, poor memory and concentration
- promiscuity
- wearing layers of clothing to hide injuries and bruises

How can I identify perpetrators of child sexual abuse?

In addition to identifying the physical and behavioural signs of abuse within children, you can play a critical role in identifying signs that a member of the school community may be engaging in child sexual abuse, or grooming a child for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity.

Most critically you must follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools if you:

- feel uncomfortable about the way an adult interacts with a child/children, and/or

- suspect that the adult may be engaging in sexual abuse of a child/children, and/or
- suspect that the adult is grooming the child/children for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity, and/or
- reasonably believe that the adult is at risk of engaging in sexual behaviour with a child/children.

You must report suspected abuse, or risk of abuse regardless of any concerns about the risk to the reputation of the suspected perpetrator or school. A failure to report can result in criminal charges and your report could prove critical to protecting children in your care.

What are the behavioural indicators for perpetrators of child sexual abuse?

In many cases the signs that an adult is sexually abusing (or grooming a child with the intent of sexually abusing them) may not be obvious. However there are a number of signs to look for.

BEHAVIOURAL indicators for perpetrators of child sexual abuse include (but are not limited to):

Family Member (adult)

- attempts by one parent to alienate their child from the other parent
- overprotective or volatile relationship between the child and one of their parents/family members
- reluctance by the child to be alone with one of their parents/family members

Family Member (sibling)

- the child and a sibling behaving like boyfriend and girlfriend
- reluctance by the child to be alone with a sibling
- embarrassment by siblings if they are found alone together

School staff member, coach or other carer

- touching a child inappropriately
- bringing up sexual material or personal disclosures into conversations with a student/s
- inappropriately contacting the student/s, e.g. calls, emails, texts, social media
- obvious or inappropriate preferential treatment of the student/s (making them feel "special")
- giving of gifts to a student/s
- having inappropriate social boundaries, e.g. telling the potential victims about their own personal problems
- offering to drive a student/s to or from school
- inviting themselves over to their homes, calling them at night
- befriending the parents themselves and making visits to their home
- undermining the child's reputation (so that the child won't be believed)

Grooming

Critical Information

- **Grooming is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/carer.**
- **If you suspect that a child is being groomed, you must follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse**

What is grooming?

Grooming is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/carer.

Sometimes it is hard to see when someone is being groomed until after they have been sexually abused, because some grooming behaviour can look like "normal" caring behaviour.

Examples of grooming behaviours may include:

- giving gifts or special attention to a child or their parent or carer (this can make a child feel special or indebted to an adult)
- controlling a child through threats, force or use of authority (this can make a child fearful to report unwanted behaviour)
- making close physical contact sexual, such as inappropriate tickling and wrestling
- openly or pretending to accidentally expose the victim to nudity, sexual material and sexual acts (this in itself is classified as child sexual abuse but can also be a precursor to physical sexual assault).

What is online grooming?

Online grooming is a criminal offence and occurs when an adult uses electronic communication (including social media) in a predatory fashion to try to lower a child's inhibitions, or heighten their curiosity regarding sex, with the aim of eventually meeting them in person for the purposes of sexual activity. This can include online chats, sexting, and other interactions. Any incidents of suspected grooming must be reported by following the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse.

Online grooming can also precede online child exploitation, a form of sexual abuse where adults use the internet or a mobile to communicate sexual imagery with or of a child (e.g. via a webcam). Any incidents of suspected online child exploitation must be reported.

For more information about:

- online grooming, see: [Bully Stoppers - Online Grooming](#)

- sexting and the transmission of sexual images between students, see: [Bully Stoppers - Sexting](#) (See previous link)

What are the behavioural indicators that a child may be subject to grooming?

BEHAVIOURAL indicators that a child may be subject to grooming include (but are not limited to):

- developing an unusually close connection with an older person
- displaying mood changes (hyperactive, secretive, hostile, aggressive, impatient, resentful, anxious, withdrawn, depressed)
- using street/different language; copying the way the new 'friend' may speak; talking about the new 'friend' who does not belong to his/her normal social circle
- possessing jewellery, clothing or expensive items given by the 'friend'
- possessing large amounts of money which he/she cannot account for
- using a new mobile phone (given by the 'friend') excessively to make calls, videos or send text messages
- being excessively secretive about their use of communications technologies, including social media
- frequently staying out overnight, especially if the relationship is with an older person
- being dishonest about where they've been and whom they've been with
- using drugs; physical evidence includes spoons, silver foil, 'tabs', 'rocks' etc.
- assuming a new name; being in possession of a false ID, stolen passport or driver's license provided by the 'friend' to avoid detection
- being picked up in a car by the 'friend' from home/school or 'down the street'

For information on the indicators to look for in suspected perpetrators, see: [Behavioural indicators for perpetrators of child sexual abuse](#) (above)

Emotional Child Abuse

Critical Information

- Emotional child abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats, or by witnessing family violence.
- If you suspect that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological harm, you must follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse.

What is emotional abuse?

Emotional child abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats, or by witnessing family violence.

It also includes hostility, derogatory name-calling and put-downs, and persistent coldness from a person, to the extent that the child suffers, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological harm to their physical or developmental health. Emotional abuse may occur with or without other forms of abuse.

What are the physical indicators of emotional child abuse?

PHYSICAL indicators of emotional abuse include (but are not limited to):

- speech disorders such as language delay, stuttering or selectively being mute (only speaking with certain people or in certain situations)
- delays in emotional, mental or physical development

What are the behavioural indicators of emotional child abuse?

BEHAVIOURAL indicators of emotional abuse include (but are not limited to):

- overly compliant, passive and undemanding behaviour
- extremely demanding, aggressive and attention-seeking behaviour or anti-social and destructive behaviour
- low tolerance or frustration
- poor self-image and low self-esteem
- unexplained mood swings, depression, self-harm or suicidal thoughts
- behaviours that are not age-appropriate, e.g. overly adult, or overly infantile
- fear of failure, overly high standards, and excessive neatness
- poor social and interpersonal skills
- violent drawings or writing
- lack of positive social contact with other children

Neglect

Critical Information

- **Serious neglect significantly impairs the health or physical development of the child, or places this development at serious risk.**
- If you suspect that a child is experiencing neglect, you must report it by following the **Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse**.
- If you have low to moderate concerns for the wellbeing of a child, such as concerns due to conflict within a family, parenting difficulties, isolation of a family or a lack of apparent support, the **Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse** can support you in determining whether to make a report and what other action to take to support the child.

What is neglect?

Neglect includes a failure to provide the child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision to the extent that the health or physical development of the child is significantly impaired or placed at serious risk.

In some circumstances the neglect of a child:

- can place the child's immediate safety and development at serious risk
- may not immediately compromise the safety of the child, but is likely to result in longer term cumulative harm.

Both these forms of neglect must be responded to via the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse](#).

What are the physical indicators of neglect?

PHYSICAL indicators of neglect include (but are not limited to):

- appearing consistently dirty and unwashed
- being consistently inappropriately dressed for weather conditions
- being at risk of injury or harm due to consistent lack of adequate supervision from parents
- being consistently hungry, tired and listless
- having unattended health problems and lack of routine medical care
- having inadequate shelter and unsafe or unsanitary conditions

What are the behavioural indicators of neglect?

BEHAVIOURAL indicators of neglect include (but are not limited to):

- gorging when food is available or inability to eat when extremely hungry
- begging for or stealing food
- appearing withdrawn, listless, pale and weak
- aggressive behaviour, irritability
- involvement in criminal activity
- little positive interaction with parent, carer or guardian
- poor socialising habits
- excessive friendliness towards strangers
- indiscriminate acts of affection
- poor, irregular or non-attendance at school
- staying at school for long hours and refusing or being reluctant to go home
- self-destructive behaviour
- taking on an adult role of caring for parent

Family Violence

Critical Information

- **Family violence can include physical violence or threats, verbal abuse, emotional and physical abuse, sexual abuse and financial and social abuse.**
 - If you suspect that a child is exposed to family violence (including witnessing family violence), or is at risk of family violence, you must follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse.

What is family violence?

Family violence is behaviour towards a family member that may include:

- physical violence or threats of violence
- verbal abuse, including threats
- emotional or psychological abuse
- sexual abuse
- financial and social abuse.

A child's exposure to family violence constitutes child abuse. This exposure can be very harmful and may result in long-term physical, psychological and emotional trauma. Action must be taken to protect the child, and to mitigate or limit their trauma.

The longer a child experiences or is exposed to family violence, the more harmful it is. This is why, if you suspect that a child is exposed to, or at risk of being exposed to family violence, it is critical to follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse.

What are the physical indicators of family violence?

PHYSICAL indicators of family violence include (but are not limited to):

- speech disorders
- delays in physical development
- failure to thrive (without an organic cause)
- bruises, cuts or welts on facial areas, and other parts of the body including back, bottom, legs, arms and inner thighs
- any bruises or welts (old or new) in unusual configurations, or those that look like the object used to make the injury (such as fingerprints, handprints, buckles, iron or teeth)
- internal injuries

What are the behavioural indicators of family violence?

BEHAVIOURAL indicators of family violence include (but are not limited to):

- violent/aggressive behaviour and language
- depression and anxiety and suicidal thoughts
- appearing nervous and withdrawn, including wariness of adults
- difficulty adjusting to change
- psychosomatic illness
- bedwetting and sleeping disorders
- 'acting out', such as cruelty to animals
- extremely demanding, attention-seeking behaviour
- participating in dangerous risk-taking behaviours to impress peers
- overly compliant, shy, withdrawn, passive and uncommunicative behaviour
- taking on a caretaker role prematurely, trying to protect other family members
- embarrassment about family
- demonstrated fear of parents, carers or guardians, and of going home
- disengagement from school and/or poor academic outcomes
- parent-child conflict

For older children and young people indicators can also include:

- moving away/running away from home
- entering into a relationship early to escape the family home
- experiencing violence in their own dating relationships
- involvement in criminal activity
- alcohol and substance abuse

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

All staff members of Footscray North Primary School will implement the four critical actions set out below.

However, all staff members are advised to notify the Principal if they have formed a belief about child abuse and therefore are obligated to make a report. All staff members will be supported through this process by the Principal or nominee.

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

As a school staff member, you play a critical role in protecting children in your care.

- You **must** act, by following the 4 critical actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
- You **must** act if you form a suspicion/reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).
- You **must** use the Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template to keep clear and comprehensive notes.

* A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action

ACTION 1: RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to ACTION 2.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you must ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid
- **calling 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance** to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

ACTION 2: REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you must report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

IF THE SOURCE OF SUSPECTED ABUSE IS FROM WITHIN THE SCHOOL:

VICTORIA POLICE

You must report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor or volunteer to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

- School Principal
- Employee Conduct Branch
- DET Security Services Unit

IF THE SOURCE OF SUSPECTED ABUSE IS FROM WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

You **must** report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:

- in need of protection from child abuse
- at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

VICTORIA POLICE

You **must also** report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

- School Principal
- DET Security Services Unit

ACTION 3: CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your Principal **must** consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- **not to contact** the parents/carers (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parents/carers to be contacted)
- **to contact** the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion).

ACTION 4: PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your school **must** provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a Student Support Plan in consultation with wellbeing professionals. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements.

Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals etc.

You **must** follow the Four Critical Actions every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold **significant concerns** for their wellbeing you must still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from **Child FIRST** (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support), or to **DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police**.

See sections below on: [Responding to other concerns about the wellbeing of a child and Providing Ongoing Support](#)

CONTACTS

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

Footscray office 1300 360 462

AFTER HOURS

After hours, weekends, public holidays 13 12 78

CHILD FIRST

www.dhs.vic.gov.au

VICTORIA POLICE

000 or contact your local police station

DET SECURITY SERVICES UNIT

1800126126

STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT

(03) 9637 2934

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH

(03) 9637 2595

Responding to Other Concerns about the Wellbeing of a Child

Critical Information

Regardless of the suspected cause, all concerns about the wellbeing of a child (or their unborn child) should be taken seriously and acted upon. This includes concerns about the wellbeing of a child, which do not appear to be the result of abuse.

You should make a referral to Child FIRST if:

- you have a significant concern for a child's wellbeing
- your concerns have a low-to-moderate impact on the child
- the child's immediate safety is not compromised
- you/your school has discussed the referral with the family and they are supportive of it.

You must contact Victoria Police if:

- there is any concern for a child's immediate safety and/or
- a child is partaking in any risk taking activity that is illegal and extreme in nature or poses a high risk to the child.

You should contact DHHS Child Protection if:

- after consideration of all of available information you form a view that the child is in need of protection
- you believe that the child's parent/carers will not be open to support from family services to address their child's wellbeing.

If you are unsure whether to take action, or what action to take, you should discuss this with your leadership team and make contact with authorities for further advice.

Regardless of the suspected cause, all concerns about the wellbeing of a child (or their unborn child) should be taken seriously and acted upon. This includes concerns about the wellbeing of a child, which do not appear to be the result of abuse.

This section will support you to determine how to respond to concerns about the wellbeing of a child which do not appear to be the result of child abuse, with information on:

- When to Report Wellbeing Concerns to Child FIRST
- When to Report Wellbeing Concerns to Victoria Police
- When to Report Wellbeing Concerns to DHHS Child Protection.

In addition to reporting and referring wellbeing concerns to relevant authorities, you also have a Duty of Care to ensure that students feel safe and supported at school.

See **Action Four - Providing Support** for advice on how to engage relevant allied health professionals and plan and document support strategies via a Student Support Planning process.

If you are unsure whether to take action, or what action to take, you should discuss this with your leadership team and make contact with authorities for further advice.

When to Report Wellbeing Concerns to Child FIRST

At Footscray North Primary School we encourage all staff to consult with the Principal or Student Wellbeing Coordinator before a referral is made to Child FIRST.

In most instances, the Principal or Student Wellbeing Coordinator will make the necessary referral to Child FIRST on the staff member's behalf.

Child FIRST (Family Information, Referral and Support Team) is a community-based referral point into Family Services.

In addition to reporting suspected abuse to appropriate authorities, you should make a referral to Child FIRST if:

- you have a significant concern for a child's wellbeing
- your concerns have a low-to-moderate impact on the child
- the child's immediate safety is not compromised
- you/your school has discussed the referral with the family and they are supportive of it.

Examples of concerns that school staff should reported to Child FIRST include instances when a child's care or development is significantly impacted on by:

- parenting problems
- family conflict or family breakdown
- pressure due to a family member's physical/mental illness, substance abuse, or disability
- vulnerability due to youth, isolation or lack of support
- significant social or economic disadvantage

When to Report Wellbeing Concerns to Victoria Police

In addition to reporting suspected abuse to appropriate authorities, you **must** contact **Victoria Police on 000** if the:

- child's immediate safety is compromised
- child is partaking in any risk taking activity that is illegal and extreme in nature or poses a high risk to the child.

When to Report Wellbeing Concerns to DHHS Child Protection

In addition to reporting suspected abuse to appropriate authorities, you should contact **DHHS Child Protection** if you believe a child is in need of protection.

This includes all concerns that:

- have a serious impact on a child's safety, stability or development, including abandonment, death or incapacity, extreme risk-taking behaviour, or harm to an unborn child.

- are persistent and entrenched and likely to have a serious impact on a child's safety, stability or development and
- relate to a parent/s who cannot or will not protect the child from significant harm
- include a belief that the family is likely to be uncooperative in seeking assistance.

Common grounds for protection include:

- **Abandonment**
The child's parents have abandoned the child and, after reasonable inquiries, the parents cannot be found, and no other suitable person can be found who is willing and able to care for the child.
- **Death or incapacity of parent/carer**
The child's parents are dead or incapacitated and there is no other suitable person willing and able to care for the child.
- **Extreme risk-taking behaviour**
The child is displaying extreme risk taking behaviour, which has potentially severe or life threatening consequences. Examples include severe alcohol or drug use, unsafe sexual activity including prostitution, solvent abuse and chroming, and violent or dangerous peer group activity.

In addition to contacting DHHS Child Protection, it may also be necessary to contact Victoria Police where the risk taking activity is illegal and extreme in nature or poses a high risk to the child.

- **Harm to an unborn child**
Threat of harm to an unborn child, including circumstances where a parent has previously demonstrated an inability to safely parent.

The *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* allows DHHS Child Protection to receive and respond to reports about an unborn child, which provides an important opportunity for earlier intervention and prevention. Prenatal reports may be particularly helpful to the unborn child in family violence situations, or where there are mental health concerns or drug or alcohol misuse during pregnancy.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/schotherconcerns.aspx>

Providing On-Going Support

Critical Information

- **In addition to reporting suspected abuse, as a school staff member you have a critical role in supporting students impacted by abuse and have a Duty of Care to ensure that the students feels safe and supported at school.**
- Support can include direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals and community services and should involve the development of a Student Support Plan.
- Principals are responsible for ensuring students are supported during interviews at school conducted by Victoria Police or DHHS Child Protection and you may be required to respond to subpoenas to attend court.
- Support must be provided to any impacted staff members.

Experiences of child abuse can cause trauma and significantly impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children. In addition to reporting and referral into relevant authorities, as a school staff member you play a central role in addressing this trauma and have a Duty of Care to ensure that the students feels safe and supported at school.

This section outlines actions that schools must take, where deemed appropriate, to support students who are impacted by child abuse, including:

- Working Together and Planning Support
- Engaging Allied Health and Wellbeing Supports
- Referring to Non-School Based Supports
- Providing Developmentally and Culturally Appropriate Support
- Providing Support for Impacted School Staff Members
- Supporting Students in Interviews Conducted at School
- Responding to Subpoenas or Court Attendance
- Responding to Complaints or Concerns.

In the context of student-to-student offending, school staff have a Duty of Care to support all students who are impacted by the abuse – this will include the students who were subjected to the abuse, the students who perpetrated the abuse, and any students who witnessed or were otherwise impacted by the abuse.

Working Together and Planning Support

Providing holistic support to address the trauma and wellbeing issues associated with child abuse is best achieved through careful planning and working in partnership with wellbeing professionals, parents/carers and educators.

At Footscray North Primary School, the following supports and strategies will be implemented by members of the student's welfare team, including as appropriate: class teacher, teacher assistant, PLT leader, Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Assistant Principal, Principal, Student Support Services Officer and other external agencies as deemed necessary.

If a student is impacted by suspected abuse, and it is deemed appropriate, school staff must:

- establish regular communication between staff and the child's parent/ guardian/carer (if this is appropriate) to discuss a child's progress wellbeing and the effectiveness of planned strategies
- convene a Student Support Group to plan on-going monitoring, support, and follow-up of the child's health and wellbeing (Student Support Groups usually comprise school wellbeing staff, teachers, allied health professionals and where appropriate the student and/or their parent/carer)
- develop and implement a Student Support Plan, which documents the planned support strategies and includes timeframes for review (where possible, these support strategies should be informed by allied health and wellbeing professional with expertise in addressing child abuse and trauma).

Engaging Allied Health and Wellbeing Professionals

Where appropriate school staff should engage allied health and wellbeing supports and services to meet the wellbeing needs of the child impacted by abuse, including:

- Student Support Services
- Wellbeing staff members
- Allied health and wellbeing professionals engaged by the student and families.

Allied health and wellbeing professionals can provide:

- intensive support to children and their families
- critical input into Student Support Plans
- advice to school staff members on how to appropriately support the student.

Referring to External Supports

School staff can also refer to the wide range of non-school based support services, which specialise in providing tailored support and advice for children impacted by abuse.

For example the Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASA) provide expert support for victims of sexual assault

For details on where to go for further support, see: [Counselling/Support Organisations](#)

All schools can contact their local government for advice on available local services.

Staff at Footscray North Primary School can contact the Regional Office for advice on local and specialised services.

Providing Developmentally and Culturally Appropriate Support

Whilst a child's background should not impact on a decision to report suspected abuse, school staff need to be sensitive to a child's individual circumstances when providing support and working with families impacted by abuse.

It is a requirement under the Child Safety Standards that school governing authorities must "take account of the diversity of all children", including (but not limited to) the needs of:

Children with Disabilities

When supporting a child with a disability who has been impacted by child abuse it is critical to consider the child's:

- chronological age, developmental age and their cognitive functioning in order to tailor developmentally appropriate support strategies
- vulnerability to on-going abuse (children with disabilities disproportionately fall prey to child abuse, in particular child sexual abuse) when considering the need to make a further report and/or implement risk mitigation strategies.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children

When supporting an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child who has been impacted by child abuse it is essential that school staff provide culturally appropriate support.

- Principals from **Government schools must** notify their Regional Office to ensure that the Koorie Engagement Support Officer (KESO) can arrange appropriate support for the child and/or advise on culturally appropriate support strategies.

Children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds

When supporting a child from CALD backgrounds who has been impacted by child abuse it is essential that schools provide culturally appropriate support. However this should not detract from ensuring the child's safety and wellbeing.

Where possible schools should work with relevant cultural support services (ensuring that the confidentiality of the student and family is maintained) and engage an interpreter when communicating with the student's family if needed.

Students with Refugee Backgrounds

When working with children from refugee backgrounds who have been impacted by child abuse it is important to recognise that they (and their families) may also be experiencing trauma, dislocation and loss. This trauma may significantly affect family wellbeing and parenting capacity and whilst these issues also require sensitive consideration, they should not detract from ensuring the child's safety and wellbeing (or impact on decisions to report suspected abuse).

School staff should consider contacting services that specialise in providing support to refugees (ensuring that the confidentiality of the child and their family is maintained).

Schools should also engage an interpreter when communicating with the student's family if needed.

International Students

Principals must ensure appropriate measures are taken for the welfare of international students. This may require additional support given that the child's family may not be present to provide support within the home environment.

For details on who must be contacted in the event that an international student is involved in suspected abuse, see: [Reporting if the incident, suspicion or disclosure relates to an international student](#)

Providing Support for Other Impacted Children

It can be stressful for other children involved in any incidents, disclosures or suspicions of child abuse. Principals must ensure that other impacted children are offered and provided appropriate support.

Providing Support for Impacted School Staff Members

It can also be stressful for staff involved in any incidents, disclosures or suspicions of child abuse. Principals must support impacted staff members to access necessary support.

School staff requiring wellbeing support can contact:

- DET Employee Assistance Program (EAP) on 1300 361 008
- Counsellors/Psychologists from Student Support Services may also be of assistance to staff members who require support.

Supporting Children Who Are Interviewed at School

All children (including children who are alleged to have perpetrated abuse) must be independently supported in any interviews conducted by Victoria Police or DHHS Child Protection at school.

Where possible and appropriate the child's parent/carer should be present for these interviews. However if this is not appropriate or practicable the Principal (or delegate) may be identified as the independent person or support person for the child for the purpose of the interview.

At Footscray North Primary School, the staff members who are nominated to support students being interviewed at school are:

- Principal – Kay Willmott
- Assistant Principal – Kevin Pyrcroft
- Student Wellbeing Coordinator – Samantha Molloy/Melissa Martin

Police Interviews

In the event that Victoria Police schedule an interview with a child at the school, the Principal (or delegate) must advise the child's parent/carer (where advised to be appropriate) as well as notifying the:

- Student Incident and Recovery unit on (03) 9637 2934
- Koorie Engagement Support Officer if the child is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- International Division if the child is an international student on (03) 9637 3990.

Police Interviews at School Where the Child is the Alleged Victim or Witness

The information below includes critical detail on when and how police interviews are conducted at school and what role the Principal (or delegate) should play if they are nominated as the support person.

- Police should only interview children at school as a matter of urgency or necessity.
- A request must be made to the Principal (or delegate) who must be advised of the reason for the interview.
- The child's parent/carer should be present where it is practical and appropriate to make these arrangements. If the parent/carer is not able to be present, an independent person must be present during the interview (the role of the independent person is to ensure the child understands what is happening and to provide support).
- Principals (or delegate) may if necessary, act as an independent person where the child is a victim, unless they believe it will place them in a conflict of interest to do so.
- As an independent person, school staff must refrain from providing their opinions or accounts for events during interviews.
- The nominated "independent persons" at Footscray North Primary School are:
 - Principal – Kay Willmott
 - Assistant Principal – Kevin Pyrcroft
 - Student Wellbeing Coordinator – Samantha Molloy/Melissa Martin

Police Interviews at School Where a Student Has Allegedly Abused Another Child

- If the police need to speak with a student who has allegedly abused another child this should preferably be done in the presence of the parent/carer, or another independent person that is not a school staff member.
 - In this instance, the Footscray North Primary School Principal will contact the SEIL to seek advice and to determine who would be a suitable independent person in this instance.

DHHS Child Protection Interviews at School

DHHS Child Protection may conduct interviews of children at Victorian schools without parental knowledge or consent of the parent/carer (although this will only occur in exceptional circumstances and if it is in the child's best interests to proceed in this manner).

The information below includes critical detail on when and how DHHS Child Protection interviews are conducted at school and what role the Principal (or delegate) should play if they are nominated as the support person.

- DHHS Child Protection will notify the school staff of any intention to interview a child at the school. This may occur regardless of whether the school staff member is the source of the report to DHHS Child Protection.
- When DHHS Child Protection practitioners arrive at the school, the school Principal (or delegate) should ask to see their identification before allowing DHHS Child Protection to have access to the child. See Visitors in School Policy.
- Children should be advised of their right to have a supportive adult present during interviews. If the child is too young to understand the significance, a supportive adult should be provided even though they may not have consented or requested this to occur.
- A staff member may be identified as a support person for the child during the interview. Prior to the commencement of the interview, the DHHS Child Protection practitioner should always authorise the staff member of the school to receive information regarding DHHS Child Protection's investigation. This could be conducted verbally or in writing using the relevant DHHS Child Protection proforma.
- As an independent person, school staff must refrain from providing their opinions or accounts for events during interviews.
- At Footscray North Primary School, the staff members who are nominated to support students being interviewed at school are:
 - Principal – Kay Willmott
 - Assistant Principal – Kevin Pycroft
 - Student Wellbeing Coordinator – Samantha Molloy/Melissa Martin

Complying with Subpoenas or Court Attendance

- A subpoena / witness summons is a Court Order that compels you to produce documents, or attend Court and give evidence, or to do both of these things.
- You are usually issued with a subpoena / witness summons because one of the parties to the legal proceedings believes that you may have information / documentation that is relevant to the legal proceeding.
- If a **government school** staff member receives a subpoena / witness summons in the context of their employment with the DET, they should contact the Legal Division on (03) 9637 3146 for advice and assistance in meeting their legal obligations.

Responding to Complaints or Concerns

There may be concerns or complaints about the school staff's management of an incident, in particular by parents/carers. This is a very stressful time for parents/carers, and concerns that they do not believe have been dealt with fairly may quickly escalate.

As a first step school staff must consider whether the complaint raises any concerns about unreported abuse and/or risk of abuse. You must follow the Four Critical Actions: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse if **any** new information comes to light which leads you to believe that a child may be subject to, or at risk of any unreported abuse.

See: [Four Critical Actions: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse](#) (Above)

Government School Complaint Process

Principals or delegates of government schools should follow the Department's standard parent complaints process, including:

- meeting the complainants to clarify their concerns (a face-to-face meeting with the Principal will often resolve the matter)
- documenting the concerns, clarify the issues, explain and gain agreement to further action
- linking the complainants to the responsible Regional Office (e.g. the Regional Director) if the issues are not quickly resolved,
- advising complainants of internal and external supports including the role of parent groups to provide independent advice and support
- advising complainants of their rights to:
 - escalate their complaint, in writing, to: Deputy Secretary Regional Services Group
 - write to the Victorian government Ombudsman if they have exhausted the internal procedures and remain dissatisfied.

If the complaint is related to sexual abuse, government school Principals (or delegates) should seek advice from the Incident Support and Operations Centre (1800126126) and the Legal Division on (03) 9637 3146.

Staff should also refer to the [Footscray North Primary School Complaints Policy](#).

Contact Details and More Information

Support Roles within the Department

Within the Department of Education and Training, there are a number of supports available to Victorian government schools responding to incidents, disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, including:

Security Services Unit (SSU)

The Security Services Unit provides a 24-hour communications centre for schools and Departmental staff to report a range of incidents. On receiving notification of an incident involving child abuse the Security Services Unit immediately alerts the Student Incident and Recovery Unit (SIRU) and relevant staff within the Central and Regional Office.

Regional Offices

Principals of Victorian government schools are required to maintain on-going contact with their Regional Office throughout any incidents, disclosures or suspicions of child abuse.

Each region has an emergency management contact/s. These officers can provide initial advice and support to Victorian government schools during and after incidents, and assists schools to minimise the effects of trauma and enhance recovery.

Student Incident and Recovery Unit (SIRU)

The Student Incident and Recovery Unit (SIRU) works with Victorian Government schools following incidents of a sexual nature to ensure appropriate advice and supports are in place that prioritise the health and wellbeing of the children involved. The SIRU is notified by the Security Services Unit as soon as an incident involving sexual abuse (or problem sexual behaviour) is reported.

The SIRU will:

- provide timely and appropriate advice to Victorian Government schools
- support regions and Victorian Government schools to respond to critical incidents of a sexual nature
- advise Victorian Government schools to meet their legal obligations and duty of care responsibilities
- assist Principals and senior school staff from Victorian Government schools to manage incidents of a sexual nature in a manner that ensures adverse impact on the school community is minimised
- monitor the progress of school management of such incidents
- provide advice on appropriate response measures, such as counselling and management strategies to support those involved in allegations of sexual offending or problem sexual behaviour
- provide advice on the provision of a suitable level of support to school staff and members of the school community on whom the incident has impacted

The SIRU works closely with other key agencies, such as Victoria Police SOCIT and the DHHS, and with organisations such as the Centre against Sexual Assault (CASA) to support student wellbeing in Victorian Government schools.

Student Support Services

The role of the Student Support Services (SSS) is to provide support to Victorian Government schools including:

- establishing a relationship with students and possibly their families
- providing a supportive, calm approach and acknowledging the issues raised
- clarifying the needs of the child
- evaluating the child's present strengths and resources
- evaluating possible ways of accommodating the child's identified needs, such as referral for specialist counselling and school-based supports
- documenting information and actions

- identifying the process for follow up and review
- ascertaining which intervention programs are most appropriate in meeting an individual child's needs
- working with the school staff on the appropriate strategies and supports needed for individual children

Employee Conduct Branch

The Employee Conduct Branch is responsible for the implementation of policy and the provision of advice on complaint resolution procedures, unsatisfactory performance, serious misconduct (which would include allegations of child abuse), equal opportunity complaints, managing appeals against disciplinary action, criminal records checks and police liaison, as it relates to Victorian Government school and DET employees.

The branch also manages discipline matters involving members of the teaching service (including Principal Class Officers), Student Support Services and public servants. A key role of the branch is to support Principals or designated officers in their management of processes, and provide advice to them concerning legislative and procedural frameworks.

The Employee Conduct Branch must be contacted on all issues of alleged serious misconduct including allegations of child abuse and grooming which involve a staff member employed by the Department. This includes teachers and Principals.

Legal Division

The Department's Legal Division provides specific advice to government school Principals in relation to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse.

Communications Division

The Department's Communications Division manages all Departmental media liaison, and can support Principals of Victorian government schools in responding to media enquiries relating to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse.

Roles of Other Relevant Authorities

DHHS Child Protection

Under the *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has a responsibility to provide child protection services for all children and young people under the age of 17 years, or where a protection order is in place, for children under the age of 18.

The main functions of DHHS Child Protection are to:

- receive reports from people who believe that a child is in need of protection or have significant concerns about the wellbeing of a child
- provide consultation and advice to people making reports
- investigate matters where it is believed that a child is at risk of significant harm
- refer children and families to services that assist in providing for the ongoing safety and wellbeing of children.

DHHS Child Protection will also intervene and bring cases before the Children's Court if a child's safety cannot be managed without intervention. DHHS Child Protection has a responsibility to provide adequate supervision, care and protection for children in accordance with orders granted by the Children's Court.

Child FIRST

Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Teams (Child FIRST) were introduced to give families an opportunity to obtain family services earlier at their own request or following a referral from others, including school staff.

Child FIRST is staffed by family services practitioners who are experienced in assessing the needs of vulnerable children and their families. Child FIRST teams work closely with community-based DHHS Child Protection workers.

The role of Child FIRST includes:

- providing a point of entry to a local network of family services
- receiving reports about vulnerable children where there are significant concerns about their wellbeing
- undertaking an initial identification and assessment of the risks to the child and the child's needs in consultation with DHHS Child Protection and other services
- identifying appropriate service responses for families.

Victoria Police

Both DHHS and Victoria Police have statutory responsibilities under the *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* in relation to the protection of children. DHHS Child Protection is the lead agency responsible for the care and protection of children, while Victoria Police is responsible for criminal investigations into alleged child abuse.

Members of Victoria Police are protective interveners and mandatory reporters under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*. The predominant role of police in child abuse incidents is to detect and investigate alleged child physical and sexual abuse and to initiate legal proceedings where appropriate, against the alleged offender/s.

The key responsibilities of Victoria Police in relation to child abuse are to:

- ensure all police members are aware of relevant legislation and their responsibilities
- ensure all police accept and carry out their responsibilities under the Act
- conduct all investigations on the basis that the safety and welfare of the child are paramount
- plan investigations in collaboration with other, relevant agencies
- work with other agencies in accordance with agreed work practices
- provide information to other, relevant agencies
- provide training for staff, and, jointly, with relevant agencies.

Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCIT) have been established to ensure that appropriately trained and qualified police officers are available to respond to and investigate allegations of child abuse and sexual offences.

Counselling/Support Organisations

The Centre Against Sexual Assault

There are fifteen Centres Against Sexual Assault, who work to ensure that women, children and men who are victim/survivors of sexual offending have access to comprehensive and timely support and intervention to address their needs.

<http://www.casa.org.au/> Phone: 1800 806 292

Gatehouse Centre, Royal Children's Hospital

Provides support and assistance to children and young people affected by sexual offending or problem sexual behaviours

http://ww2.rch.org.au/gatehouse/index.cfm?doc_id=1151

Kids First Australia

Provide advice and support to children and families to help them break out of the cycle of abuse, neglect, poverty and disadvantage through a creative portfolio of programs, resources and services.

Phone: (03) 9450 0900

Australian Childhood Foundation

Provide recognised programs that counsel and support children to recovery, help professionals who work with children to better support at risk children and raise awareness of the causes and consequences of abuse.

<http://www.childhood.org.au/home/> Phone: 1300381581

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited provides legal advice and representation for the Koorie community

<http://www.vals.org.au> Phone: (03) 9322 3555 or country toll free on 1800 015 188

Child Wise

Child Wise is Australia's leading international child protection charity committed to the prevention and reduction of sexual abuse and exploitation of children around the world.

<http://www.childwise.org.au/> Phone 1300244539

Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services

Provides assistance to victims of family violence and sexual offending and to work with families and communities affected by violence.

<http://www.fvpls.org/>

Contact Information

24 Hour Services

- Victoria Police - 000

- Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection - 131 278
- Department of Education and Training Security Services Unit - (03) 9589 6266

Department of Education and Training

- Security Services Unit - 1800126126
- Student Incident and Recovery Unit - (03) 9637 2934 or (03) 9637 2487
- Legal Division - (03) 9637 3146
- Employee Assistance Program - 1300 361 008
- Employee Health - (03) 9637 2395
- Employee Conduct Branch - (03) 9637 2595
- Privacy Unit - (03) 9637 3601
- International Division - (03) 9651 3976
- Communications Division - (03) 9637 2871

Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection

Western Division Intake – metro only
 Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melbourne,
 Melton, Moonee Valley, Wyndham.
 Business Hours: 8.45 am – 5.00 pm
 After Hours Emergency: 13 12 78
 5.00 pm – 9.00 am, weekends & public holidays

1300 664 977

Child FIRST

Child FIRST referrals for students at Footscray North Primary School can be made on: 1300 775 160

Other Services

- Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASA) - Emergency Counselling & Support Line - 1800 806 292
- Australian Childhood Foundation - 1300381581
- Children's Protection Society - (03) 9450 0900
- Child Wise - (03) 9695 8900
- Vic Aboriginal Education Association - (03) 9481 0800
- Child Safety Commission - 1300 782 978
- Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner - 1800 880 176

- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) - (03) 9287 8800
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) - (03) 9411 9411

Sexually Abusive Behaviour Treatment Services Providers

- Aust Childhood Foundation - (03) 9874 3922
- Children's Protection Society - (03) 9450 0900
- Gatehouse centre 93456391 (afterhours 93455522)

Schools Online Learning

For the Department's Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations eLearning module for Government and non-Government schools, see: [Mandatory Reporting eLearning module](#).

Please note, a username and password are no longer required. Follow the link below to complete the online training.

At Footscray North Primary School all staff will complete this module every year.

<http://www.elearn.com.au/det/protectingchildren/>

RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE: TEMPLATE FOR FOOTSCRAY NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

THIS INFORMATION SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE FOOTSCRAY NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

MANDATORY REPORTING (CHILD PROTECTION) POLICY.

WHEN TO USE THIS TEMPLATE?

School staff should use this template to document any incident, disclosure or suspicion that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused. This template should be used in conjunction with the following: Four Critical Actions For Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse. (See above)

Completing this template should not impact on reporting times. If a child is in immediate danger, school staff should report immediately to Victoria Police.

Whilst you may need to gather the information to make a report, remember it is not the role of school staff to investigate abuse, leave this to Victoria Police and/or DHHS Child Protection.

Staff are encouraged to confer with a member of the Leadership Team –specifically the Principal/Assistant Principal/ Student Wellbeing Coordinator, before a report is made.

WHY RECORD THIS INFORMATION?

When completing this template your aim should be to provide as much information as possible. This information will be critical to any reports and may be sought at a later date if the matter is the subject of Court proceedings. These notes may also later assist you if you are required to provide evidence to support any decisions.

It is a requirement under *Ministerial Order No. 870- Child Safe Standards- Managing the risk of child abuse in schools* for schools to keep clear and comprehensive notes on all observations, disclosures and other details that led them to suspect the abuse.

RESPONDING TO AN INCIDENT, DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE

PLEASE NOTE: IF YOU ARE MAKING A REPORT TO DHHS CHILD PROTECTION OR VICTORIA POLICE YOU MUST SEEK ADVICE BEFORE CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS SO AS NOT TO COMPROMISE ANY INVESTIGATION OR PLACE A CHILD AT FURTHER RISK

STAFF MEMBER LEADING THE RESPONSE
NAME:
OCCUPATION:
LOCATION (SCHOOL ADDRESS):
RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD:

CRITICAL ACTION 1: IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO AN INCIDENT

If anyone is in immediate danger school staff should report immediately to Victoria Police on 000.

See action 1 of [Four Critical Actions For Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#).

RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY
DID THE CHILD REQUIRE FIRST AID? PROVIDE DETAILS IF 'YES'.
WHO ADMINISTERED THIS? (NAME AND TITLE)
DID THE CHILD REQUIRE FURTHER IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE?
CURRENT LOCATION AND SAFETY STATUS: <i>E.G. ARE ALL IMPACTED STUDENTS SAFE AND NOT IN ANY IMMEDIATE DANGER? IF A CHILD IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER SCHOOL STAFF SHOULD REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO VICTORIA POLICE ON 000</i>

CHILD'S INFORMATION

PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME:

GENDER:

YEAR LEVEL/CLASS:

DATE OF BIRTH:

RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS:

PARENT/CARER NAME/S:

PARENT/CARER CONTACT:

LANGUAGE(S) SPOKEN BY CHILD:

DISABILITIES, MENTAL OR PHYSICAL HEALTH ISSUES:

CHILD'S BACKGROUND

CULTURAL STATUS AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

IF THE CHILD IS OF ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BACKGROUND, GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS MUST CONTACT THEIR KOORIE ENGAGEMENT SUPPORT OFFICER, AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS MUST CONTACT THE DIOCESAN EDUCATION OFFICE TO ARRANGE CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SUPPORT. IF THE CHILD IS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT YOU MUST NOTIFY THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION DIVISION ON (03) 9637 2990

ANY KNOWN PREVIOUS HISTORY OF SUSPECTED ABUSE

(PRIOR TO THIS INCIDENT, DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION OR INVOLVEMENT WITH AGENCIES):

FAMILY BACKGROUND

FAMILY COMPOSITION (IF KNOWN):
LIST PARENTING OR CARE ARRANGEMENTS AND SIBLING NAMES AND AGES

ANY OTHER PEOPLE LIVING WITH THE CHILD (IF KNOWN):

FAMILY BACKGROUND

DISABILITY, MENTAL OR PHYSICAL HEALTH ISSUES IN FAMILY (IF KNOWN):

LIKELY REACTION TO A REPORT BEING MADE (IF KNOWN):

DETAILS OF THE INCIDENT, DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION

GROUNDS FOR YOUR BELIEF THAT A CHILD HAS BEEN, OR IS AT RISK OF ABUSE

INDICATORS OR INSTANCES WHICH LED YOU TO BELIEVE THAT A CHILD/CHILDREN ARE SUBJECT TO CHILD ABUSE, OR AT RISK OF ABUSE:
DETAIL ANY DISCLOSURES OR INCIDENTS OR SUSPICIONS (INCLUDING NAMES, TIMES AND DATES DOCUMENTING A CHILD'S EXACT WORDS AS FAR AS POSSIBLE). INCLUDE SPECIFIC DETAIL HERE ON WHAT LED YOU TO FORM A REASONABLE BELIEF THAT A CHILD HAS BEEN, OR IS AT RISK OF BEING ABUSED.

ANY PHYSICAL INDICATORS OF ABUSE:

ANY BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS OF ABUSE:

ANY PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOUR OR PRIOR CONCERNS LEADING UP TO AN INCIDENT, DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION:

DETAILS OF PERSONS ALLEGED TO HAVE COMMITTED THE ABUSE (IF KNOWN)

NAME:

GENDER

DATE OF BIRTH:

RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD:

NOTHING IF THEY ARE WITHIN THE SCHOOL OR WITHIN THE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY (THIS WILL IMPACT ON WHO YOU REPORT TO)

ADDRESS:

CONTACT DETAILS:

CRITICAL ACTION 2: REPORTING

See Action 2 of Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

TICK THE AUTHORITIES YOU HAVE REPORTED TO:

- VICTORIA POLICE
- DHHS CHILD PROTECTION
- CHILD FIRST
- DECISION NOT TO REPORT

IF YOU'VE DECIDED NOT TO REPORT, LIST YOUR REASONS HERE. ALSO INCLUDE ANY FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN BY YOU BELOW:

PROVIDE DETAILS OF YOUR INTERNAL DISCUSSIONS TO EITHER OF THE FOLLOWING:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOL STAFF MUST REPORT TO SECURITY SERVICES UNIT AND ALSO TO THE EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH IF THE INCIDENT, DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION INVOLVES A STAFF MEMBER, CONTRACTOR OR VOLUNTEER.

DATE:

TIME:

AUTHORITY:

OUTCOMES FROM THE REPORT:

At Footscray North Primary School, it is school policy to discuss your belief that abuse has occurred – or is likely to occur – with the Principal before you lodge your report.

REPORTING INTERNALLY

PROVIDE DETAILS OF YOUR DISCUSSION WITH SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

TIME:

DATE:

NAMES:

DISCUSSION OUTCOMES:

PROVIDE DETAILS OF YOUR INTERNAL DISCUSSIONS TO EITHER OF THE FOLLOWING:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOL STAFF MUST REPORT TO SECURITY SERVICES UNIT AND ALSO TO THE EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH IF THE INCIDENT, DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION INVOLVES A STAFF MEMBER, CONTRACTOR OR VOLUNTEER

TIME:

DATE:

NAMES:

DISCUSSION OUTCOMES:

CRITICAL ACTION 3: CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

See Action 3 of Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

ACTIONS TAKEN

PROVIDE DETAILS OF YOUR DISCUSSION WITH PARENTS/CARERS (IF APPROPRIATE):

SCHOOL STAFF MUST CONSULT WITH VICTORIA POLICE AND/OR DHHS CHILD PROTECTION TO DETERMINE IF IT IS APPROPRIATE TO CONTACT PARENTS, IF IT IS, PARENTS MUST BE CONTACTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (PREFERABLY ON THE SAME DAY OF THE INCIDENT, DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION).

HAVE YOU SOUGHT ADVICE FROM DHHS CHILD PROTECTION OR VICTORIA POLICE?

- NO
- YES

IS IT APPROPRIATE TO CONTACT PARENT/CARER

- NO
- YES

LIST REASONS IF IT IS NOT APPROPRIATE TO CONTACT PARENT/CARER:

IF CONTACTING PARENT/CARER, PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING DETAILS:

NAME OF STAFF MEMBER MAKING THE CALL:

NAME OF PARENT/CARER RECEIVING THE CALL:

DISCUSSION OUTCOMES:

CRITICAL ACTION 4: PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

See Action 4 of Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

PLANNED ACTIONS

INCLUDE DETAIL ON WHAT FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS HAVE OCCURRED TO SUPPORT THE STUDENT (FOR EXAMPLE, REFERRAL TO WELLBEING PROFESSIONALS AND OTHER SPECIALISED SERVICES, THE CONVENING OF A STUDENT SUPPORT GROUP AND DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORT PLANS):

FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

SUPPORT:

REFERRAL(S):

PROCESS OF REVIEW

COMPLETE THIS SECTION BETWEEN 4-6 WEEKS AFTER AN INCIDENT, SUSPICION OR DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE IN CONJUNCTION WITH YOUR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM.

THIS WILL SUPPORT YOU AND YOUR SCHOOL TO CONTINUE TO PROTECT CHILDREN IN YOUR CARE AND TO REFLECT ON YOUR PROCESSES AND THE NEED FOR ANY FOLLOW- UP ACTION.

SAFETY AND WELLBEING

CURRENT SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF THE CHILD

IS THE CHILD SAFE FROM ABUSE AND HARM?

- NO
- YES

IF NOT CONSIDER THE NEED TO MAKE A FURTHER REPORT

DOES THE CHILD HAVE ANY WELLBEING ISSUES THAT ARE NOT CURRENTLY BEING ADDRESSED?

- NO
- YES

IF SO, CONSIDER HOW THESE CAN BE ADDRESSED AND CAPTURED WITHIN A STUDENT SUPPORT PLAN

CURRENT WELLBEING OF OTHER CHILDREN WHO MAY BE IMPACTED BY THE ABUSE

ARE THERE ANY OTHER CHILDREN WHO MAY BE IMPACTED BY THE ABUSE?

- NO
- YES

IF SO HAVE THEIR WELLBEING NEEDS BEEN MET

- NO
- YES

IF SO, CONSIDER HOW THESE CAN BE ADDRESSED AND CAPTURED WITHIN A STUDENT SUPPORT PLAN

CURRENT WELLBEING OF IMPACTED STAFF MEMBERS

DOES THE STAFF MEMBER WHO MADE THE REPORT/ WITNESSED THE INCIDENT, FORMED A SUSPICION OR RECEIVED A DISCLOSURE REQUIRE ANY SUPPORT?

- NO
- YES

IF SO HAS THIS BEEN RECEIVED?

- NO
- YES

REVIEW OF ACTIONS TAKEN

HAVE SCHOOL STAFF FOLLOWED THE FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOLS: RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS, DISCLOSURES OR SUSPICIONS OF CHILD ABUSE?

WAS AN APPROPRIATE DECISION MADE IN RELATION TO WHEN TO ACT?

HAVE THE PARENTS CONTINUED TO BE ENGAGED IF APPROPRIATE?

NO

YES

COULD THE SUSPECTED ABUSE HAVE BEEN DETECTED EARLIER?

NO

YES

ACTION 1

DID THE SCHOOL TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION IN AN EMERGENCY?

NO

YES

ACTION 2

WAS A REPORT MADE TO THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES AND INTERNALLY?

NO

YES

WERE SUBSEQUENT REPORTS MADE IF NECESSARY?

NO

YES

ACTION 3

DID THE SCHOOL CONTACT THE PARENTS/CARERS ASAP?

NO

YES

NO

YES

ACTION 4

HAS THE SCHOOL PROVIDED ADEQUATE SUPPORT FOR THE STUDENT?

NO

YES

HAS A STUDENT SUPPORT PLAN BEEN ESTABLISHED, IMPLEMENTED AND REVIEWED?

NO

YES

HAS A STUDENT SUPPORT GROUP BEEN ESTABLISHED?

NO

YES

WAS THE STUDENT APPROPRIATELY SUPPORTED IN ANY INTERVIEWS?

NO

YES

HAVE ANY COMPLAINTS BEEN RECEIVED?

NO

YES

HAVE THE COMPLAINTS BEEN RESOLVED?

NO

YES