



Child Abuse Reporting Procedure:

What to do when an allegation of child abuse is made

If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you

- Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, or the police.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to your manager, police or child protection. If the complaint is against the Childcare Coordinator go to the Centre Coordinator or President of the Committee.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

If a parent/carer says their child has been abused in your organisation or raises a concern

- If possible, refer immediately to the Coordinator or President to enable them to join the discussion.
- Explain that your organisation has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the organisation's management, the police or child protection.
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together.
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

Making a Report to the MNC Centre Coordinator

Call Amy Atkinson 0422 419 922

in case of allegation against MNC Centre Coordinator, report directly to MNC Committee President

Making a report to MNC Committee President

Call Pam Millwood 0419 373 408

Making a Report to Victoria Police

Call Maldon Police Station on 5475 2210 or call 000 if in immediate danger

Making a report to Child Protection

Contact the Loddon Mallee region Department of Human Services Child Protection on 1800 675 598 or the Bendigo Regional Office on 03 5434 5555 or Department of Human Services Child Protection Northern Division Intake 1300 664 977. After Hours Child Protection Emergency Services (AHCPEs) 131278

People from diverse backgrounds

You need to be aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse. For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking with police, and communicating in English may be a barrier for some. You need to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a friend or family member).

If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal child, you will need to ensure a culturally appropriate response. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal children, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisations to review policies and procedures.

Some children with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, children with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters. Advice on [communicating with people with a disability](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/communicate-and-consult-with-people-with-a-disability/communication-with-people-with-disabilities) can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/communicate-and-consult-with-people-with-a-disability/communication-with-people-with-disabilities.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Legal responsibilities – Mandatory Reporting

Every adult who reasonably believes that a child has been abused, whether in their organisation or not, has an obligation to report that belief to authorities.

The **failure to disclose** criminal offence requires all adults (aged 18 and over) who hold a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 18 to disclose that information to police (unless they have a reasonable excuse not to, for example because they fear for their safety or the safety of another).

While failure to disclose only covers child sexual abuse, all adults should report other forms of child abuse to authorities. Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting responsibilities.

Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

The **failure to protect** criminal offence (commenced on 1 July 2015) applies where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 18 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

Legal responsibilities – Reportable Conduct Scheme

The scheme seeks to improve organisation responses to allegations of child abuse and neglect by their workers and volunteers. Under the scheme, heads of organisations must notify the Commission for Children and Young People about allegations of certain types of conduct involving a child by their workers and volunteers.

Allegations must be reported about workers even if:

- They do not have direct contact with children as part of their work
- The conduct occurred within or outside the course of employment

Heads of organisations then have to investigate these allegations

What is Reportable Conduct?

There are five types of reportable conduct:

- 1) Sexual offences
- 2) Sexual misconduct
- 3) Physical violence
- 4) Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- 5) Significant neglect of a child

Sexual offences, sexual misconduct and physical violence are covered by the scheme if they are committed with, against or in the presence of a child.