

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 5: CHILD SAFETY RESPONDING AND REPORTING OBLIGATIONS (INCLUDING MANDATORY REPORTING) POLICY AND PROCEDURES

All children and young people have the right to protection in their best interests.

Altona College understands the important role our school plays in protecting children from abuse including:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse (including sexual exploitation)
- Family violence
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect (including medical neglect)
- Grooming

The staff at Altona College are required by law to comply with various child safety reporting obligations. For detailed information about each obligation, please refer to [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#).

At Altona College we also recognise the diversity of the children and young people at our school and take account of their individual needs and backgrounds when considering child safety.

RATIONALE

- The child safe standards require organisations that provide services for children to have processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.
- Whilst reporting can be difficult to do, people are much more likely to report concerns if there is a clear and effective reporting process to follow. The safety of the child and the risk of harm must always be the primary consideration, with due regard for confidentiality and fairness to the person against whom the allegation has been made.
- Organisations have a responsibility to encourage staff, volunteers and children to speak up when they are uncomfortable or concerned. When there is a well-publicised reporting process that staff and volunteers are trained to use, it is more likely that people will raise relevant and important issues about child safety. This process will also encourage people to give helpful and important information that reduces the risk of all forms of harm to children, staff and volunteers.
- Concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children can range from an uncomfortable feeling through to a direct observation or disclosure by a child.
- Examples of child safety concerns include:
 - concerns about a physical environment that may pose a risk to children (this includes health and hygiene issues)
 - inappropriate or special relationships developing between staff or volunteers and children
 - inadequate child-staff supervision ratios

- feelings of discomfort about interactions between a staff member or volunteer and child
 - suspicions or beliefs that children are at risk of harm
 - observations of concerning changes in behaviour
 - children's disclosure of abuse or harm, which must be reported to DHHS Child Protection or the police.
- This Standard provides guidance on what to do if a child discloses an incident of abuse, or if a parent/carer raises a concern or allegation of abuse which may have taken place within the school environment.

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Every adult who reasonably believes that a child has been abused, whether within the school environment or not, has an obligation to report that belief to authorities.

The failure to disclose criminal offence requires that all adults (aged 18 years and over) who hold a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 years to disclose that information to police (unless they have a reasonable excuse not to, for example because they fear for their safety or safety of another).

While failure to disclose only covers child sexual abuse, all adults should report other forms of 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 July 2015) applies where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 years 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 of responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

Further information about failure to protect can be found on the Department of Justice and Regulation website:

<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-protect-a-new-criminal-offence-to>

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff and members of our school community understand the various legal and other reporting obligations related to child safety that apply to Altona College.

- To ensure Altona College complies with the legislative requirements of MO 870
- To ensure the school demonstrates its commitment to creating a child safe environment.
- To raise awareness of the importance of child safety with staff and the community.
- To protect children and reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur.
- To ensure the school develops procedures and practices that reduce the risk of child abuse are compliant with the Child Safe Standard 5.
- To ensure the promotion of:
 - the cultural safety of Aboriginal children

- the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- the safety of children with a disability

The specific procedures that are applicable at our school are contained at Appendix A.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all school staff, volunteers and school community members. It also applies to all staff and students engaged in any school and school council-run events, activities and services such as Outside School Hours Care.

POLICY

DEFINITIONS

The 'school environment' is defined as anywhere within the school grounds, classrooms, computer and/or science laboratories, storerooms, offices. It extends to off-site locations such as venues for school camps, sporting venues, excursions.

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Physical violence occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from a non-accidental injury or injuries inflicted by another person. Physical violence can be inflicted in many ways, including beating, shaking, burning or use of weapons (such as belts and paddles).

Possible physical indicators:

- unexplained bruises
- burns/and or fractured bones
- multiple injuries
- bald patches indicating hair has been pulled out

Possible behavioural indicators:

- showing wariness
- wearing long sleeved clothes on hot days (to hide bruising or other injury)
- fear of specific people
- unexplained absences
- academic problems

SEXUAL OFFENCES

Sexual offences occur when a person involves the child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to his/her age and development. Child sexual abuse can involve a range of sexual activity including fondling, masturbation, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exposure to or exploitation through pornography or prostitution, as well as grooming behaviour.

Possible physical indicators:

- presence of sexually transmitted diseases
- pregnancy
- vaginal or anal bleeding or discharge

Possible behavioural indicators:

- displaying sexual behaviour or knowledge that is unusual for the child's age
- difficulty sleeping
- being withdrawn
- complaining of headaches or stomach pain
- fear of specific people
- showing wariness or distrust of adults
- displaying aggressive behaviour

SERIOUS EMOTIONAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

Serious emotional or psychological abuse occurs when harm is inflicted on a child through repeated rejection, isolation or by threats or violence. It can include derogatory name-calling and put downs, or persistent and deliberate coldness from a person to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed, or their emotional development is at serious harm of being impaired. Serious emotional or psychological abuse could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.

Possible physical indicators:

- delays in emotional, mental, or physical development
- physical signs of self-harming

Possible behavioural indicators:

- exhibiting low self esteem
- exhibiting high anxiety
- displaying aggressive or demanding behaviour
- being withdrawn, passive and/or tearful
- self-harming

SERIOUS NEGLECT

Serious neglect is the continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention or adequate supervision, to the extent that the child's health, safety and/or development, or is likely to be jeopardised. Serious neglect can occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child where the child is exposed to extremely dangerous or life-threatening situations.

Possible physical indicators:

- frequent hunger
- malnutrition
- poor hygiene
- inappropriate clothing

Possible behavioural indicators:

- stealing/asking for food
- staying at school outside of school hours
- aggressive behaviour
- misusing alcohol or drugs
- academic issue

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Family violence is abuse towards a family member that may include physical violence or threats of violence, verbal abuse, emotional/psychological abuse, sexual or social abuse.

Possible physical indicators:

- speech disorders
- delays in physical development
- failure to thrive
- bruises, cuts, welts on any part of the body
- internal injuries

Possible behavioural indicators:

- violent or aggressive play or behaviour
- depression or anxiety
- nervous, withdrawn
- difficulties adjusting to change
- 'acting out' such as cruelty to animals
- overly compliant, shy, passive, withdrawn
- risk taking behaviour
- taking on care-giver roles prematurely

RACIAL, CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS ABUSE

This is conduct that demonstrates contempt, ridicule, hatred or negativity towards a child because of their race, culture or religion. It may be overt, such as direct racial vilification or discrimination, or covert, such as demonstrating a lack of cultural respect (attitude and values) and awareness (knowledge and understanding) or failing to provide positive images about another culture.

IMPLEMENTATION

- The promotion of a child safe culture is Altona College's highest priority.
- The school has a **zero tolerance of child abuse**.
- Physical or sexual abuse of a child is a crime and must be reported to the police.
- While the standards apply specifically to child abuse, the school will look to promote children's health and wellbeing in a broader sense.
- The school will ensure all staff, volunteers and external providers are aware that failure to disclose and failure to protect are now criminal offences under Victorian law.
- If staff or any other adult has significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child, they are encouraged to report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection or Child FIRST.
- Alternatively, to report concerns about the immediate safety of child call the Child Protection Crisis line on 13 12 78 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week, toll free).
- The school will take a four-step approach to incidents of child abuse:
 - respond to the emergency
 - report the abuse to authorities
 - contact parents/carers
 - provide ongoing support to those involved – children, staff and families

- For full information and a descriptive poster, the school will refer to:
www.education.vic.gov/protect
- The school will ensure children know who to talk to if they are worried or are feeling unsafe and ensure that they are comfortable to do so.
- Children, parents, staff and volunteers will be encouraged and supported in their efforts to protect themselves and others.
- The school will proactively engage with children in an age-appropriate manner about abuse.
- The school will utilise a range of strategies to respond to allegations of child abuse depending on who has disclosed as follows:

IF A CHILD DISCLOSES AN INCIDENT OF ABUSE

The person to whom the allegation of child abuse has been disclosed will:

- Try to discreetly separate the child from other children and listen to them carefully
- Let the child use their own words and explain what has occurred
- Reassure the child that what they are saying is taken seriously, it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in the school or the police.
- 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.
- Not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.

If you think the child is able to do so, provide him/her with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together. Please see Appendix 1 (attached) for a sample Incident Report Form.

As soon as possible after the disclosure, records the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to the college Principal/Assistant Principal, Wellbeing Leader, police or DHHS Child Protection. Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately and that the record is stored securely.

NOTE 1: If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000 and ask for police

NOTE 2: If the discussion has not been with the Principal, she/he must be informed at the earliest opportunity.

IF A PARENT/CARER ALLEGES THEIR CHILD HAS BEEN ABUSED WITHIN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT OR RAISES A CONCERN

The person to whom the allegation of child abuse has been disclosed will:

- Explain that the school has processes to ensure that 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 notes will be taken during the discussion to capture all details.

- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the Principal/Assistant Principal, the police or DHHS 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.

NOTE: If the discussion has not been with the Principal, she/he must be informed at the earliest opportunity.

The school is 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. The school will 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, then school will 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 organisation to review policies and procedures and/or to provide professional learning for staff.

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 can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website:

<https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/communicate-and-consult-people-disability#:~:text=Communicating%20with%20people%20with%20disabilities&text=If%20a%20person%20with%20a,rather%20than%20'a%20disabled%20person'>

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR RESPONDING TO AN INCIDENT OF CHILD ABUSE

The school will:

- Ensure children are safe, and that procedures for responding to alleged abuse are fair and focus on child safety, for example by suspending the alleged perpetrator or providing them with alternate duties pending investigation.
- Provide support and comfort to a child reporting abuse or safety concerns, and never blame or interrogate a child.
- Contact parents/carers
- Be culturally aware if the incident involves an Aboriginal child, a child from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background or child with a disability as described above.
- Provide ongoing support of make referrals for support to alleged victims, their families and affected staff, such as helping them understand their rights and the process that will be followed in responding to allegations, and assistance in accessing counselling or other support as required.
- Provide support and/or counselling for the staff member or adult who makes the report.

- Undertake timely reviews of the school's child safe policies and procedures to be followed if child abuse occurs.
- Review organisational responses following an incident to help drive continuous improvement.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The school's Mandatory Reporting Policy (contained below) requires that an annual professional learning session will be held on protecting the wellbeing and safety of children and young people. New staff are briefed about their mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of the induction procedure.

In addition to this and as soon as practicable, the school will arrange professional learning for all staff including:

- The school's zero tolerance policy
- Understanding the implications of Standard 5
- The Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Responding to child abuse allegations
- Understanding cultural sensitivities

Volunteers and external providers will be briefed prior to commencing work within the school.

MANDATORY REPORTING

Principals, registered teachers, registered medical practitioners, nurses, registered psychologists, school counsellors and all members of the police force are mandatory reporters under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic).

All mandatory reporters must make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection as soon as practicable if, during the course of carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that:

- a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical abuse and/ or sexual abuse, and
- the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

A mandatory reporter who fails to comply with this legal obligation may be committing a criminal offence. It is important for all staff at Altona College to be aware that they are legally obliged to make a mandatory report on each occasion that they form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection and they must make a mandatory report even if the principal does not share their belief that a report is necessary.

At our school, all mandated school staff must undertake the *Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations eLearning Module* annually. We also encourage all other staff to undertake this module, even where they are not mandatory reporters.

For more information about Mandatory Reporting see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: [Child Protection – Reporting Obligations](#).

CHILD IN NEED OF PROTECTION

Any person can make a report to DHHS Child Protection (131 278 – 24 hour service) if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection.

The policy of the Department of Education and Training (DET) requires **all staff** who form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection to report their concerns to DHHS or Victoria Police, and discuss their concerns with the school leadership team.

For more information about making a report to DHHS Child Protection, see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: [Child Protection – Making a Report and Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#).

At Altona College we also encourage all staff to make a referral to Child FIRST when they have significant concern for a child's wellbeing. For more information about making a referral to Child FIRST see the School Policy and Advisory Guide: Child Protection – Reporting Obligations.

REPORTABLE CONDUCT

Our school must notify the Department's Employee Conduct Branch (9637 2594) if we become aware of an allegation of 'reportable conduct'.

There is an allegation of reportable conduct where a person has formed a reasonable belief that there has been:

- *a sexual offence (even prior to criminal proceedings commencing), sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child;*
- *behaviour causing significant emotional or physical harm to a child;*
- *significant neglect of a child; or*
- *misconduct involving any of the above.*

The Department, through the Employee Conduct Branch, has a legal obligation to inform the Commission for Children and Young People when an allegation of reportable conduct is made.

Our principal must notify the Department's Employee Conduct Branch of any reportable conduct allegations involving current or former teachers, contractors, volunteers (including parents), allied health staff and school council employees.

If school staff become aware of reportable conduct by any person in the above positions, they should notify the school principal immediately. If the allegation relates to the principal, they should notify the Regional Director.

For more information about Reportable Conduct see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#).

FAILURE TO DISCLOSE OFFENCE

Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults (i.e. persons aged 18 years and over), not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police, as soon as practicable, where they form a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 by another person aged 18 years or over.

Failure to disclose information to Victoria Police (by calling 000 or local police station) as soon as practicable may amount to a criminal offence unless a person has a 'reasonable excuse' or exemption from doing so.

"Reasonable belief" is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed when:

- *a child states that they have been sexually abused*

- *a child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)*
- *someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused*
- *professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a mandated professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually abused*
- *signs of sexual abuse lead to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.*

"Reasonable excuse" is defined by law and includes:

- *fear for the safety of any person including yourself or the potential victim (but not including the alleged perpetrator or an organisation)*
- *where the information has already been disclosed, for example, through a mandatory report to DHHS Child Protection.*

For more information about this reporting obligation, see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: [Failure to disclose offence](#).

FAILURE TO PROTECT OFFENCE

This reporting obligation applies to school staff in a position of authority. This can include principals, assistant principals and campus principals. Any staff member in a position of authority who becomes aware that an adult associated with their school (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the age of 16 under their care, authority or supervision, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk.

This may include removing the adult (i.e. persons aged 18 years and over) from working with children pending an investigation and reporting your concerns to Victoria Police.

If a school staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence.

For more information about this reporting obligation, see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: [Failure to protect offence](#).

GROOMING

Grooming is a criminal offence under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic). This offence targets predatory conduct undertaken by an adult to prepare a child, under the age of 16, to engage in 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.

For more information about this offence and reporting obligations see: [Child Exploitation and Grooming](#).

SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF STANDARD 5

The school will know this standard has been successfully implemented when:

- all legal requirements for reporting suspected child abuse are complied with
- staff and volunteers are aware of the actions they should take in the event of an incident or allegation, including the type of contact that should be reported, who is responsible for reporting and to whom the report should be made.
- Allegations of abuse and safety concerns are appropriately recorded and stored securely to protect privacy.

- disciplinary processes, that are clearly defined and understood by all staff and volunteers, are adhered to when necessary.
- adequate and suitable steps are taken to ensure that children are safe if an allegation of child abuse is reported, for example by suspending a worker or providing them with alternative duties while an investigation is undertaken
- children reporting an allegation of abuse or safety concern are provided with support and comfort
- culturally safe practices are applied if an Aboriginal child is involved in an allegation of abuse
- if an allegation of abuse involves a child from a culturally/linguistically diverse background, the required steps are taken to ensure the child and child's family are supported to understand the situation, including the use of an interpreter if required
- where an allegation of abuse involves a child with a disability, steps are taken to ensure the child and their family understand the situation and are supported

RELATED POLICIES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

- o Child Safety Policy/Statement of Commitment

EVALUATION AND REVIEW CYCLE

This policy will be reviewed after the completion of the child safe review process and then as part of the school's three-year review cycle or if guidelines change (latest information July 2016). This document, (Standard 5), was ratified by school council in July 2020 and is scheduled for review in July 2023.

APPENDIX A

CHILD SAFETY RESPONDING AND REPORTING PROCEDURES AT ALTONA COLLEGE

FOR STUDENTS

- *All students should feel safe to speak to any staff member to raise any concerns about their safety or any other concerns that they have.*
- *If a student does not know who to approach at Altona College, they should start with the Wellbeing Coordinator, School Chaplain, Home Group teacher or member of the College Leadership Team.*

MANAGING DISCLOSURES MADE BY STUDENTS

When managing a disclosure you should:

- *listen to the student and allow them to speak*
- *stay calm and use a neutral tone with no urgency and where possible use the child's language and vocabulary (you do not want to frighten the child or interrupt the child)*
- *be gentle, patient and non-judgmental throughout*
- *highlight to the student it was important for them to tell you about what has happened*
- *assure them that they are not to blame for what has occurred*
- *do not ask leading questions, for example gently ask, "What happened next?" rather than "Why?"*
- *be patient and allow the child to talk at their own pace and in their own words*
- *do not pressure the child into telling you more than they want to, they will be asked a lot of questions by other professionals and it is important not to force them to retell what has occurred multiple times*
- *reassure the child that you believe them and that disclosing the matter was important for them to do*
- *use verbal facilitators such as, "I see", restate the child's previous statement, and use non-suggestive words of encouragement, designed to keep the child talking in an open-ended way ("what happened next?")*
- *tell the child in age appropriate language you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop the abuse, and explain the role of these authorities if appropriate (for a young child this may be as simple as saying "I will need to talk to people to work out what to do next to help you").*

When managing a disclosure you should AVOID:

- *displaying expressions of panic or shock*
- *asking questions that are investigative and potentially invasive (this may make the child feel uncomfortable and may cause the child to withdraw)*
- *going over the information repeatedly (you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need to make a report to the relevant authority)*
- *making any comments that would lead the student to believe that what has happened is their fault*

- *making promises to the child about what will occur next or that things will be different given the process can be unpredictable and different for each child depending on their circumstances (instead reassure them that you and others will do your best to help).*

GENERAL PROCEDURES

Our school will follow the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#) (Four Critical Actions) when responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse.

All staff at our school who believe that a child is in need of protection, even if it doesn't meet the threshold required for mandatory reporting or the staff member is not a mandatory reporter, should in the first instance, speak to the Altona College principal or should make the required reports to DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police as necessary.

At our school the principal will be responsible for monitoring overall school compliance with this procedure.

Nothing in this procedure prevents a staff member or any other person from reporting to the relevant authorities if they form a reasonable belief that a child is at risk of abuse.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS, DISCLOSURES OR INCIDENTS OF CHILD ABUSE

Responsibilities of all school staff

If a school staff member reasonably suspects or witnesses an incident of child abuse or receives a disclosure of child abuse, they must:

- *If a child is at immediate risk of harm, separate alleged victims and others involved, administer first aid and call 000.*
- *Speak to the principal, a member of the leadership team/wellbeing team as soon as possible, who will follow the [Four Critical Actions](#).*
- *Make detailed notes of the incident or disclosure using the [Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template](#) and ensure that those notes are kept and stored securely in locked filing cabinet in the principal's office.*
- *If the staff member is a mandatory reporter and reasonably believes that a student has suffered physical and/or sexual abuse from which the child's parents have not protected the child, they must make a report to DHHS Child Protection.*
- *If the staff member has formed a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been against a child, they must make a report to Victoria Police.*

In circumstances where a member of the leadership team disagrees that a report needs to be made, but the staff member has formed a 'reasonable belief' that the child is in need of protection and/or has been the victim of sexual abuse, the staff member must still contact DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police to make the report.

Responsibilities of Principal

The principal is responsible for promptly managing the school's response to an incident, suspicion or disclosure of child abuse, and ensuring that the incident, suspicion or disclosure is taken seriously. The principal is also responsible for responding appropriately to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse.

If the principal receives a report from a school staff member or member of the school community of a suspicion, disclosure or incident of child abuse, they must:

- Follow the [Four Critical Actions](#) as soon as possible, including:
 - Responding to an emergency
 - Reporting to authorities/referring to services
 - Contacting parents/carers and
 - Providing ongoing support.
- Make detailed notes of the incident or disclosure, including actions taken using the [Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template](#) and ensure that those notes are kept and stored securely in principal's locked office filing cabinet. They are also responsible for ensuring that any staff member who reported the incident, disclosure or suspicion to them also makes and keeps notes of the incident.
- At Altona College, the school principal and college leadership team will be responsible for ensuring that there is a prompt response to the disclosure and that the child is appropriately supported.

If the principal or the nominated Officer in Charge is unavailable, the Student Wellbeing Coordinator, School Nurse or School Chaplain will take on the role and responsibilities described in this section.

Duty of care and ongoing support for students

Fulfilling the requirements in this procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of abuse.

All staff have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students. All staff must ensure that the principal is aware of any incidents, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible after they occur. This will allow appropriate supports to be put in place for the student affected.

For school visitors, volunteers and school community members

All community members aged 18 years or over should be aware of their legal obligations – see *Failure to disclose offence* above, in this Policy.

Any person can make a report to DHHS Child Protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. For contact details see the Four Critical Actions - https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf

There is no requirement for community members to inform the school if they are making a disclosure to DHHS Child Protection or the Victoria Police. However, where a community member is concerned about the safety of a child or children at the school, and where disclosure of that concern will not compromise any potential police investigation, the community member should report this concern to the principal so that appropriate steps to support the student can be taken.

APPENDIX 1

Child Safe Standards

Incident report

All incident reports must be stored securely, and password protected to maintain confidentiality. Please contact the Child Safety Officer when lodging this report to communicate any protections added to the document.

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

Incident details

Date of incident:	
Time of incident:	
Location of incident:	
Date Identified (if different from date of incident)	

Name(s)/Detail of child/children involved:	
Name(s) of staff/student/volunteer involved:	

Please categorise the incident

Physical violence	Make Selection	Comments
Sexual offence		
Sexual misconduct		
Serious emotional or psychological abuse		
Serious neglect		
Grooming		
Breach of the University's Child Safe Code of Conduct		
Reportable Conduct		

Does the child identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

No ☐ Yes, Aboriginal ☐ Yes, Torres Strait Islander ☐

Is the child from a culturally or linguistically diverse background?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

No

☐

Yes, please provide details:

Does the child have a disability?

A disability can be any physical, sensory, neurological disability, acquired brain injury, intellectual disability, or developmental delay that affects a child's ability to undertake everyday activities.

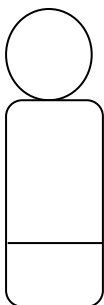
(Mark with an 'X' as applicable).

No

☐

Yes, please provide details:

Please describe the incident

<p>Overview:</p> <p>When did it take place and what were the circumstances:</p>	
<p>Who was involved?</p>	
<p>What did you see / hear?</p> <div data-bbox="304 902 408 1205">  </div>	
<p>Other information:</p>	

Proposed corrective action and mitigation plan:

Action	Responsible Person	Date (Completion)	Status

Details of person reporting the incident:

Name of person reporting the incident:	
Department of reporter (if/where applicable):	
Contact Details of reporter:	

Office use only:

Date incident report received:		
Staff member managing incident:		
Incident ref. number:		
Has the incident been reported?	Date Notified	Comments
Child protection		
Police		
Commission for Children and Young People		
Another third party (please specify):		