



Mandatory Reporting Policy

Morningson Park Primary School 5040

POLICY DATE: May 2020

STATUS: Approved by School Council on June 23, 2020

REVIEW: This policy will be reviewed in accordance with our cyclic process in 2023

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Purpose of the Policy

- To ensure staff are trained in recognising potential child abuse or neglect and respond appropriately
 - To ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities under the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 to report to the Department of (Health) and Human Services when they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child has suffered , or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury or as a result of sexual abuse
 - To comply with the Victorian Government's Child Safe Standards (2016) Standard 5
 - To inform staff about their obligation to access Mandatory Reporting Online training
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Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse is an act by parents or caregivers which endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development. Child abuse can be a single incident, but usually takes place over time.

In Victoria, under the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 a child or young person is a person under eighteen years of age.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from an injury inflicted by a child's parent or caregiver. The injury may be inflicted intentionally or may be the inadvertent consequence of physical punishment or physically aggressive treatment of a child. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.

Sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse occurs when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve the child in sexual activity and the child's parent or caregiver has not protected the child. Physical force is sometimes involved. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity. It includes fondling of the child's genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or other object, exposure of the child to pornography or human trafficking (including forced marriage).

Emotional abuse

Emotional Abuse occurs when a child's parent or caregiver repeatedly rejects the child or uses threats to frighten the child. This may involve name calling, put downs or continual coldness from the parent or caregiver, to the extent that it significantly damages the child's physical, social, intellectual or emotional development. Exposure to family violence can also be considered a form of emotional abuse.

Neglect

Neglect is the failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed.

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

ACTION 2: REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

IF THE SOURCE OF SUSPECTED ABUSE IS FROM WITHIN THE SCHOOL

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 and/or Assistant Principal
- Employee Conduct Branch
- DET Security Services Unit

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

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**

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

You **must also report internally** to:

- School Principal and/or the Assistant Principal
- DET Security Services

If you believe the student is not subject to abuse however you still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing you still must act

ACTION 3: CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

The Principal (or their delegate) **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 day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion).

ACTION 4: PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Mornington Park Primary 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 the 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.

List of contacts:

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION- Southern 1300 655 795

After hours, weekends, public holidays: 13 12 78

ORANGE DOOR

1800 319 353

VICTORIA POLICE

000 or contact your local Police Station.

Mornington Police 5970 4900

Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT) – Frankston 8770 1000

DET SECURITY SERVICES UNIT

(03) 9589 6266

STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT

(03) 9637 2595

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH

(03) 9637 2595

Training for Staff

The Department of Education and Training requires teachers to complete on line training in Mandatory Report, annually, to update their knowledge and skills in recognising and responding to suspected child abuse.