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Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Our commitment to child safety and wellbeing

The Learning Co-operative is committed to child safety and wellbeing. We have a zero-tolerance stance of child abuse and harm. We are committed to comply with the child safe standards as set out in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)¹, Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 (Vic)² and the Children's Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct Act 2017 (Vic)³ for Schools as mandated by Ministerial Order No.870⁴ and National Principles for Child Safe Organisations⁵.

Our school board is responsible for authorizing the child safe standards policy, overseeing the implementation and managing the risk of child abuse. It is committed to the promotion of child safety and wellbeing at all levels of policy, practice, consultation and review. The school principal will support the board to meet the requirements of Ministerial Order 870, ensure all staff is aware of their legal obligations and help embed child safety and wellbeing in the culture and practice at the school.

All teaching staff working with students and those employed in child-related work, including child-connected roles (the school principal, non-teaching employees, parents, volunteers, visiting specialists and contractors) share in the moral and legal obligation and **duty of care**⁶ to protect any child in our care from injury or harm, and ensure supervision from reasonably foreseeable harm (not just mandatory reporters). The school's duty of care is **non-delegable**, that is the school cannot discharge its duty of care by delegating this responsibility to another person or entity. The school's non-delegable duty of care extends to ensuring the safety and welfare of students when they are engaged in off-site activities and when learning with another provider.

The Learning Co-operative is committed to all legal responsibilities including duty of care obligations, mandatory reporting obligations, criminal offences (Failure to Disclose⁷, Failure to Protect⁸ and Grooming Offence)⁹, managing the risk of child abuse in schools under Ministerial

¹ <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/child-wellbeing-and-safety-act-2005/033>

² <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/as-made/acts/child-wellbeing-and-safety-amendment-child-safe-standards-act-2015>

³ <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/as-made/acts/children-legislation-amendment-reportable-conduct-act-2017>

⁴ <https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/pages/documents/Min%20Order%20870%20Child%20Safe%20Standards.pdf>

⁵ <https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles>

⁶ <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/prinduty.aspx>

⁷ <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/failure-disclose-offence-fact-sheet-word>

⁸ <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-protect-a-new-criminal-offence-to>

⁹ https://files.justice.vic.gov.au/2021-06/grooming_betrayal_of_trust_factsheet_2017.pdf

Order No.870, adhering to the requirements to report allegations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme¹⁰ and obligations under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.¹¹ The school leadership is committed to provide a safe physical and online environment for all children, free of child abuse and harm, discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and abuse, vilification, victimization and bullying.

To achieve these commitments, we incorporate processes and procedures that aim to ensure child safety and wellbeing across all areas of our organisation. We have legal responsibilities and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety and wellbeing, which we follow rigorously. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated promptly through an accessible and responsive complaints management process that is focused on the needs and concerns of children and young people.

We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We are committed to celebrating diversity and ensuring an equitable organizational culture is afforded to everyone. We believe in the right for children and young people to not be discriminated against, harassed or abused on the basis of their culture, identity, religious beliefs, disability or background. We will provide support and care for children who may be living away from home. Our community is committed to creating culturally, psychologically, physically and safe online environments.

We will champion and model a child safe culture from top down to bottom up and have governance arrangements that facilitate child safety and wellbeing at all levels. The children in our care have a right to participate in the decision-making process and have their voices heard. We are committed to providing programs and resources to educate and engage with children and young people about their rights, to provide safe environments, to teach protective strategies for staying safe; including how to seek help when needed. Our risk management strategies will focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children and young people, including the physical and online environments.

Staff and volunteers are supported through training and supervision. They understand their obligations to promote and protect children's rights and commit to privacy and confidentiality requirements. We have robust human resources, recruitment and screening practices to reduce the risk of child abuse and harm to children and young people. The Learning Co-operative is committed to providing support and supervision for all people involved in child-related and child-connected work at our school, whether paid or unpaid.

We are committed to the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. We work hard to ensure our school and environment is free from discrimination or denial of culture. We support this by working with Wurundjeri Elders and learning about the importance of acknowledging Traditional Owners.

The Learning Co-operative regards the safety of cultural and linguistically diverse children as a priority. We foster participation in decision making and support empowerment of children from culturally and /or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families. We celebrate community, identity, differences in language and embed cultural activities in the school's

¹⁰ <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme/>

¹¹ <https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/human-rights/>

curriculum. Interpreting services will be arranged, in relation to child safety and wellbeing referrals and reports, if required. Information handouts will be provided in languages other than English, at the parents' requests or if deemed necessary to support all parent training.

We are committed to support children and families that identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer and questioning. Our staff will have access to training that informs a best practice approach to embed children's safety and wellbeing in curriculum, to better understand and provide age-appropriate resources to support inclusion, participation and empowerment of children who identify in this way.

We are committed to support children with disability. We will work with families/carers to provide extra **duty of care** to protect them from harm, injury, abuse and discrimination. We will ensure they have the right to feel valued, to feel they belong and have a say about things which are important to them. We will ensure that our spaces are accessible, activities are inclusive, and their communication needs and preferences are met.

Children and young people's rights to safety and participation

The Learning Co-operative is a child-led school. This policy is intended to empower children so they can be active participants in decision making, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say. We are guided by our commitments to all children, regardless of their culture, identity, religious beliefs or background.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse¹², the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations¹³ and the Child Safe Standards¹⁴ have identified the need for organisations to uphold the rights of children and young people. The Learning Co-operative actively supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) framework. We want children to be informed about all their safety rights, in order that they can fully and safely participate in Learning Co-operative life. Children have the right to be heard, the right to be safe and not harmed by anyone, the right to grow up and live healthy lives, the right to express and have a say about their views and about the decisions that affect them. We also encourage children to recognise their friendships and encourage support from peers, to help children feel safe and connected in our school. We support the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child **Articles 12.1**¹⁵ and **13.1**¹⁶. The simplified UN Convention on the Rights of Child state:

Article 12

Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.

Article 13

¹² <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>

¹³ <https://childsafef.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles>

¹⁴ <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/being-a-child-safe-organisation/the-child-safe-standards/>

¹⁵ <https://www.unicef.org.au/upload/unicef/media/unicef-simplified-convention-child-rights.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.unicef.org.au/upload/unicef/media/unicef-simplified-convention-child-rights.pdf>

Children have the right to get and to share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or to others.

The Learning Co-operative actively seeks to include the voices of children. We seek to understand what makes children feel safe and regularly communicate what they can do if they feel unsafe. We value the voices of children and we will act on concerns raised by the children or their families.

Strategies that Promote Child Empowerment and Participation

Specific programs include:

- a) **Standards of Behaviour for students attending the school:** which are outlined in the Learning Co-operative Student Code of Conduct and the Learning Co-operative Learner Contract.
- b) **Healthy and Respectful Relationships:** which are explicitly taught as part of the School's Resilience Rights and Respectful Relationships Program and complemented by year level specific programs through Elephant Ed¹⁷ Sex Education, Inter Relate Relationship and Sexuality Education¹⁸ and Cybersmart & Safe Student external programs.
- c) **Resilience:** which is explicitly taught through the Peaceful Kids Program to support Mindfulness and Positive Psychology and life-long coping skills.
- d) **Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention:** information of which is shared with the learning community through the school's website and relevant parent and student forums.

Other regular activities include:

- a) Teachers also have the option to include other child friendly and age-appropriate resources to complement child abuse awareness and prevention within their individual teaching and learning programs.
- b) Designing learning activities, curriculum, learning spaces and resources with input from all children. Extra **duty of care** will be provided for students with disabilities and or additional learning needs. The school's Student Wellbeing and NCCD Coordinator will engage with parents/carers to ensure we meet our obligations. Every child has an equal right to safety and participation.
- c) Scheduling two Kids' Meetings a day, that are chaired by the children to support child-led conversations about what makes them feel safe and what matters to them about their learning.
- d) Timetabling weekly child-led clubs such as Craft and Coding and Big Buddy support for learning activities and other responsibilities. This helps promote and empower participation, to build friendships and foster a sense of belonging, so the children feel safe and less isolated. It also supports children to design and lead activities.
- e) Providing a suggestion box, where children can write or draw their concerns regarding safety and other matters that they have identified. The Child Safe Officer

¹⁷ <https://www.elephanted.com.au>

¹⁸ <https://www.interrelate.org.au/programs-services/schools>

will address safety concerns in a timely manner with the child and or parents/teachers/Principal. All other suggestions will be raised at subsequent Kids' Meetings and or to the parent fortnightly meeting so that appropriate action and or response can be implemented.

- f) Conducting workshops and surveys to hear from children and young people about what makes them feel safe or unsafe, and how things can be improved, for example developing a student Code of Conduct that is displayed in the entry locker area of the school.
- g) Providing opportunities to create a passion project each term, or set a goal that requires peer or adult support.
- h) Encouraging children to design their play spaces and be responsible for changes to the physical spaces in which they learn.
- i) Timetabling a Student Council meeting fortnightly. The children can identify important issues and come to a consensus about their needs. The Child Safe Officer will support them with any immediate concerns.
- j) Inviting a student to nominate to attend a parent meeting once a term so they can report back any safety concern, requests and other issues identified by the Student Council.
- k) Scheduling regular teacher discussions supported by appropriate curriculum resources for Kids' Meetings with regards to the UN Rights of the Child.

Recruitment

The Learning Co-operative's commitment to informing employees and volunteers about their legal obligation to provide **duty of care** to take reasonable steps to protect students from risk of harm or injury is embedded within the school's Recruitment Policy and induction and training processes. We support our community and employees to reflect on child safety and wellbeing values in practice. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of social and legislative responsibilities. The Learning Co-operative understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legal obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with disability.

All people engaged in child-related work including our non-teaching staff, parent volunteers and visiting allied health professionals must have a [Working with Children Check](#) and provide evidence of this Check. We additionally require contractors, volunteers and visitors that present frequently at the school, doing child-connected work, to sign in and also show proof of this check. The school maintains an up to date Working with Children Check Register.

When engaging in the recruitment process, we carry out reference checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. During the screening process we ask questions relating to the applicant's understanding and ability to adhere to the Child Safe Standards. In accordance with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) Registration requirements, all teaching staff must be registered which includes the WWC and Police Records Check. VIT registered teachers must also maintain Protecting Children - Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations eLearning

training on an annual basis. A training register is maintained by the school's Human Resources Manager and administrative support staff.

If, during the recruitment process, a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Culturally appropriate support

As an intercultural community, we aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse. All adults need to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a family friend or family member) or the school will arrange for a registered interpreter from VITS Victorian Interpreting and Translation Service.

If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child, a culturally appropriate response must be ensured. We will contact Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) and Independent Schools Victoria for advice.

Refer to PROTECT guidelines P. 48 for further information.

Children with disability and extra needs

Some children with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, children with hearing and cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters. Advice on how to communicate with children and or parents/carers will be provided by the Principal or Student Wellbeing Coordinator and or NCCD Coordinator at our school.

Other children that may be deemed as vulnerable, such as those unable to live at home. The school's Principal, Child Safety Officer and Student Wellbeing Coordinator will contact external agencies such as Orange Door, DFFH-Child Protection and Berry Street for further advice and or referrals.

Staff and volunteer induction training

The Learning Co-operative has an induction and training process that requires all employees registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (including Casual Relief Teachers), employees in non-teaching roles, parents, visiting health professionals, volunteers and contractors to commit to Child Safety and Wellbeing practices for all children in our care. The Human Resource Manager and administration support staff are responsible for induction and training, and ensure records are kept up to date. Any person that requires a school induction must acknowledge their completion and understanding of their responsibilities and commitments to child safety and wellbeing by signing a Child Safe Code of Conduct and the Induction Training form. We also provide opportunities for children, staff and volunteers to contribute to the development and review of the above-mentioned documents.

Communication

The Child Safe Code of Conduct, Child Safety and Wellbeing, Mandatory Reporting, Reportable Conduct and Amendments to the Crimes Act policies are available on the Learning Co-

operative's website. Hard copies will be available and accessible from the school office. Families that identify as culturally and or linguistically diverse can request the information in Languages other than English. External supports and referrals will be made available for children and families needing additional support for safe access to culturally appropriate services, LGBTQI+ and disability services, when deemed necessary or requested by families and or children.

Internal and external training is provided so our community can:

- Understand their commitment and accountability for Child Safety and Wellbeing.
- Identify indicators of child abuse including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, grooming¹⁹, neglect, family violence and forced marriage²⁰
- Know how to approach the Principal, Child Safe Officer or mandated staff member if they witness an incident, form a suspicion, or receive a disclosure of child abuse.
- Know how to report a breach of the Child Safe Code of Conduct.
- Communicate a child safety incident or concern so we can quickly respond to the child and care for their needs.
- Understand the reporting procedures and how investigations of child abuse concerns and allegations are responded to.
- Understand risk management practices in relation to child safety and
- to raise awareness of cultural safety, inclusion and protection from abuse for children and young people.

Our training providers include:

- Independent Schools Victoria
- eLearn Childlink for Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) and the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS)
- Protecting Children - Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations eLearning training through MARAM and DET
- The Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP)
- Child First
- eSafety Commissioner and other providers.
- In-house training, supervision and ongoing opportunities are led by our staff through our curriculum days, and through regular philosophy, parent and board meetings.

Supervision:

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegation of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify and assess, and minimize risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse and harm.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural

¹⁹ <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/grooming-offence>

²⁰ <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/identify.aspx>

safety of children from linguistically and /or diverse backgrounds, and safety of children with disability.

New employees and volunteers, including returning members of staff will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand the Learning Co-operative's commitment to child safety, and that all involved have a role to play in protecting children from abuse and harm. This will include checking that their behavior is safe and appropriate in line with the school's Child Safe Code of Conduct. Any inappropriate and or criminal behavior will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and Victoria Police depending on the severity and urgency of the matter. Additional reporting obligations may involve the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) and may include notifying the Victorian Institute of Teaching and Independent School Victoria. Thresholds for maintaining privacy and ensuring procedural fairness must be applied under the relevant Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes and Child Information Sharing Schemes.

Child Safe Person and leader

The Learning Co-operative has two Child Safety persons who have specific responsibility for responding to any concerns made by children, staff, parents, volunteers or contractors regarding a child safety concern, disclosure or incident. A photo of the Child Safety Officer and Leader is displayed on the notice board in the entry/locker area. Child Safe Standards is a standing agenda item at the fortnightly parent meetings and termly board meetings. For all reportable conduct matters or breach in school's Code of Conduct, the school must report to the Board Chair as per the Reportable Conduct Policy.

Fair procedures for staff and volunteers

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and reasonable to all staff and volunteers. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent and based on evidence. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form and must adhere to the Complaints and Grievances Policy and process. Anyone that has an allegation or complaint made against them will be supported, provided investigation updates and ensured that procedural fairness, privacy and confidentiality is maintained. All written documentation must be securely stored and maintained as per the Records Management and Archiving Policy.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates on progress and any actions we take as a school to the relevant services, Independent Schools Victoria and where appropriate, the children and families.

Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children. We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and tackle steps to minimize child abuse risks which include risks posed by the physical environment and online environments. The school Board and Principal are required to do a Child Safety Risk Assessment annually. They must attend to training regularly and keep the school community informed of new legislation and requirements relating to Child Safe Standards.

Privacy and sharing information

Planning and care should be taken before providing information about suspected child abuse to the school community. Confirming the existence of an allegation can lead to the identification of a victim, and may be a breach of the child's and family's privacy. All personal information considered and recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, families or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it and who will have access to it. This is intended to protect reporters and to ensure that all members of the Learning Co-operative are comfortable to disclose allegations or concerns in relation to child safety without repercussions.

Our school is listed as an authorised Sharing Entity (ISE) and as such the school Principal, Child Safety Officer or Board Chair may be required to request and share information with other professionals to support children's wellbeing and safety. The authorized person must ensure that a three-part threshold test has been met before sharing information under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and ensure that the three requirements for information sharing under the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) have been met.

Legislative responsibilities

The Learning Co-operative takes all its legal responsibilities seriously, including:

Failure to report or take action in relation to suspect child sexual abuse may constitute a criminal offence.

Failure to disclose:

All adults in Victoria who form a reasonable belief that another adult may have committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 years in Victoria must call Victoria Police on 000 or the Hurstbridge Police Station. This applies to everyone aged over 18, not just mandatory reporters. Failure to disclose the information may be a criminal offence, unless you have 'reasonable excuse' from doing so. More information about failure to disclose is on the Department of Justice and Regulation Website. While failure to disclose only covers child sexual abuse, all adults should report other forms of abuse to authorities.

Any person who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties. Mandatory reports (including but not limited to doctors, nurses, midwives, 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.

Mandatory reporters must also follow the Four Critical Actions to ensure they fulfill all their legal obligations. Refer to the school's Mandatory Reporting Policy and other information provided in this document.

Failure to protect:

This offence applies to any staff member in a position of authority within an organization (board chair, principal, deputy principal and staff in management leadership positions) who:

- Knows of a substantial risk that a child will become the victim of a sexual offence (including through grooming) committed by an adult associated with the school such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor and
- Has the power or responsibility to remove the risk, but fails to remove or reduce the risk of harm.

- This may include, for example, removing the adult from child-related work pending investigation.

The Crimes Amendment (Grooming) Act 2014:

The offence can be committed by any person aged 18 years or over.

- The offence of grooming concerns predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time.
- The offence applies where an adult communicates, by words or conduct, with a child under the age of 16 years or with a person who has care, supervision or authority for the child with the intention of facilitating the child's involvement in sexual conduct, either with the groomer or another adult.
- Grooming does not necessarily involve any sexual activity or even discussion of sexual activity – for example, it may only involve establishing a relationship with the child, parent or carer for the purpose of facilitating sexual activity at a later time.
- The sexual conduct must constitute an indictable sexual offence. This includes offences such as sexual penetration of a child, indecent assault and indecent act in the presence of a child. It does not include summary offences, such as up skirting and indecent behaviour in public.

Mandated reporters

Individuals who are required to report to Child Protection as mandatory reporters include doctors, nurses, midwives, VIT registered teachers including principals, registered psychologists, people in religious ministry, staff who provide direct support to students for mental, emotional and psychological wellbeing and all members of the police force must comply with their duties. Report to Victoria Police and or DFFH-Child Protection as soon as practicable if, in the course of carrying out their duties, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that:

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

*Mandatory reporters must also follow the **Four Critical Actions** to ensure they fulfill all their legal obligations.*

Reportable Conduct

The Board Chair must be made aware of any allegation of reportable conduct raised against employees, contractors, volunteers, allied health workers and other office holders who are 18 years or older. An allegation of reportable conduct is where a person has a reasonable belief that there has been:

- A sexual offence including grooming, sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against or in the presence of a child, or
- Behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm to a child or
- Significant neglect of a child, or
- Misconduct involving any of the above.

The Board Chair must notify the Commissioner for Children and Young People of the allegation through the requirements of the Children Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2017 (Vic).

Organisational duty of care

We are legally required to ensure duty of care: If a child is abused by an individual associated with our organisation, our organisation is presumed to have breached its duty of care unless it can prove that it took 'reasonable precautions' to prevent the abuse in question. All school staff members have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to protect children in our care and provide supervision from harm that is reasonably foreseeable. These steps may include:

- Acting on concerns and suspicions of abuse as soon as practicable.
- Seeking appropriate advice or consulting with other professional agencies.
- Reporting suspected child abuse to appropriate authorities such as Victoria Police and DFF -Child Protection.

What to do when you suspect a case of child abuse or a child in danger of abuse

If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you, then you must:

- Try to separate them from 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 with others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organization, or the police (in line with our Mandatory Reporting Policy & Guidelines).
- 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 the school's Child Safe Incident Report form to complete, or complete it together, if in consultation with the Principal you think the child would be able to do this.

- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to the Principal, Victoria Police or DFFH-Child Protection. (Use the Protect template)
- Ensure the disclosure is accurately recorded, and that the record is stored securely by the Principal.

If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you, then you must (cont'd):

Discuss your concerns and detail the issue immediately with the Principal, who is the Child Safety Leader.

i) In the absence of the School Principal report to the Child Safety Officer

If a parent/carer communicates that their child has been abused or raises a concern

If a parent/carer discloses an incident of abuse then you must:

- Explain that the school has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of their 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 the details.
- Explain to them that the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the Principal, the Police or Child Protection.
- Do not make any promises at this very early stage, except that you will do your best to keep their child safe.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together if requested.
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what their immediate next steps will be.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

The Learning Co-operative takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. We work to ensure all children, families, board members, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, or notice inappropriate behaviour. We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place. If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may include;

- A child states they or someone they know has been abused.
- Sometimes the child, may in fact be referring to themselves).
- Behaviour is consistent with that of an abuse victim observed.
- Someone else has raised the suspicion of abuse and is unwilling to report it
- Observing suspicious behaviour.

What actions will the school take when responding to an allegation of child abuse, is a witness to an incident, or receives a disclosure of suspected child abuse and or responding to suspected student sexual offending (mandated reporter):

If you believe a child is at immediate risk, phone 000 or Hurstbridge Police Station, 97182111

1. Refer the matter to the Principal and or Child Safety Officer
2. Principal or delegate must follow the Four Critical Actions PROTECT
3. Take reasonable steps to protect and or provide emergency care to the child connected to the alleged child abuse and or student until the allegation is resolved, in consultation with Victoria Police and or DFFH-Child Protection.
4. See notes of how to respond to a child that makes a disclosure below.
5. Get clearance from Police or DFFH Child Protection before contacting parents/carers
6. Follow the guidance notes in the PROTECT Guidelines

7. Document

- a) PROTECT: Recording your actions: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse (template for Victorian Schools) and or
- b) PROTECT: Responding to Student Sexual Offending (template for Victorian Schools) Preserve evidence to maintain integrity of the potential crime scene.
- c) Learning Co-operative Child Safe Incident Report Form.

Securing records

- 8) The school Principal must secure all records of allegations of child abuse and the school's response to the incident.
- 9) The Principal and staff member must ensure confidentiality and privacy of the student. (Only share information with other school staff on a need-to-know basis).
- 10) Adhere to the Mandatory Reporting Policy obligations and processes.
- 11) Make sure you have followed the school's process and school checklist
 - a) Responding to suspected child abuse
 - b) Responding to Suspected Student Offending

Communicating an allegation of abuse and safety concern to parents

- The Principal will provide updates to children, parents/care-givers on the process, actions and procedures for responding to allegations, incidents or suspicions of child abuse (including exposure to family violence) and Student Sexual offending when advised by Victoria Police and or Child Protection- DFFH and cleared as safe to do so. They may advise:
- Not to contact the parent/carers (for example, 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 parent/career to be contacted)
- To contract the parent/carers to provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day as the incident, disclosure or suspicion)

- How to communicate with all relevant parties with consideration for their safety. The school will not share information to a family service agency (or other agency) without the consent of the child's parents/carers unless the person is at risk of serious harm, or where staff have further wellbeing concerns for the child and are required to report these.

Child in need of therapeutic treatment

Any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child over 10, but under 18 years of age has been exhibiting sexually abusive behaviors and may need therapeutic treatment may make a report to Child Protection. School staff must also report student sexual offending to the Victoria Police.

Significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child

All concerns about the wellbeing of a child (or unborn child) should be taken seriously and acted upon. Any adult can make a referral to Child First/the Orange Door if they:

- Have a significant concern for a child's wellbeing.
- The issue of concern has a low-to-moderate impact on the child.
- The child's immediate safety is not compromised.
- Believe that the child and/or family will act on the referral and be supportive of it.

School staff must contact Victoria Police if:

- There is a 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 or any other person.

School staff can contact DFFH-Child Protection if:

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

Providing ongoing support

Our school will provide ongoing support for children impacted by abuse. This may include the development of a student support and safety plan. Direct support and referral to wellbeing and support services will be arranged. Our staff must follow the Four Critical Actions every time they become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes new information to authorities.

Confidentiality and professional protections

When you make a report, your identity as a reporter must remain confidential unless;

- You choose to inform the child, young person or parent of the report.
- You consent in writing to your identity being disclosed.
- A court or tribunal decides that it is necessary for your identity to be disclosed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child.
- A court or tribunal decides that in the interests of justice the evidence needs to be given.

If a report is made in good faith:

- It does not constitute unprofessional conduct or a breach of professional ethics on the part of a reporter.
- The reporter cannot be held legally liable in respect of the report

Documentation

- All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
- Staff must document in writing as to the time, place, circumstance and description of the incidents/event.
- Hard copies must be kept of computer-generated documentation.
- No judgment/assumptions should be included.
- Factual information and observations must be dated.
- Keep records up to date to monitor absences and track behavior.
- Collate notes in diaries into useable documentation, for the file.
- All incidents should be monitored, and any subsequent signs of abuse or indications of abuse are also to be reported.
- All documentation and information must be handed over to the Principal.
- The Principal is responsible for securing and retaining the information so it is safe and can be retrieved, if required at a future time.
- Procedures for maintaining records and information, including archiving must be adhered to.

For school visitors, volunteers and school community members

1. A non-mandated person can contact DFFH-Child Protection or Victoria Police if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. All community members aged over 18 years or over should be aware of their legal obligations- see Failure to Disclose offence above, in this Policy. There are some exemptions for not disclosing information. Refer to **PROTECT** document p. 9 non-disclosure
2. There is no requirement for community members to inform the school that they are making a disclosure to DFFH- Child Protection or to Victoria Police. However, where a community member is concerned for the safety of a child or children, and where a disclosure of that concern will not compromise any potential police investigation, the community member should report this concern to the Principal or Child Safety Officer so that appropriate steps to support the student can be taken.
3. If you make a report or referral to Victoria Police or Child Protection- DFFH, your identity will be protected, unless you consent to disclose it or the disclosure is specifically authorised by a court or tribunal.

Other legislative requirements

1. Wrongs Amendment (Organisational Child Abuse) Act 2017 (Vic) imposes a duty of care to prevent physical or sexual abuse of children committed by people associated with the organisation.
2. Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic) (6) assists in protecting children from sexual or physical harm through the provision of a screening process.

3. Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
4. Education Legislation Amendment (Victorian Institute of Teaching, TAFE and Other Matters) Act 2018 (Vic) aligns the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) scheme for registering teachers with the Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic).

Other regulatory instruments and reports

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Minimum Standards 2021²¹.

Appendices attached

- Responsibilities of Child Safety Officer/leader (Appendix1)
- Responsibilities of the Child Safety Leader (Appendix 2)
- Student Code of Conduct Pictorial (Appendix 3)
- Student Learner Contract (Appendix 4)
- Student Questions for 3 Way Meetings (Appendix 5)
- Adult Code of Contract (Appendix 6)
- Flowchart: Child Safety Reporting Process (Appendix 7)
- Who to Go to poster: Child Safety Officer and Leader (Appendix 8)
- Four Critical Actions Child Abuse²² (Appendix 9)
- Four Critical Actions Child Student Sexual Offending²³ (Appendix 10)
- Learning Co-operative Child Safe Incident Report Form (Appendix 11)
- How to respond to a child that makes a disclosure (Appendix 12)
- Decision Tree: Can I share information under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) (Appendix13)
-

Related policies

Amendments to the Crimes Act Policy

Mandatory Reporting Policy

Reportable Conduct Policy

Code of Conduct (Document)

Recruitment Policy

Communication Policy

Information Sharing Policy

Privacy Policy

Records Management Policy (inc. Archiving)

Complaints and Grievances Policy

²¹ <https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/schools/Pages/standards-guidelines-requirements-for-schools.aspx>

²² https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf

²³ https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_SSO.pdf

Regular review

This policy was ratified by the School Board on: **11/10/2021**

This policy will be reviewed every two years as part of the ongoing overall policy review process.

There will be a 6-month interim review in March 2022 for the purpose of including all the necessary changes to policy, procedure and practice required of the New Victoria’s Child Safe Standards to commence in Victoria 1 July 2022.

Chairperson’s signature:



(MYRA THEISZ)

Version and revision control record

Date	Version	Approver	Next Review Date
14/10/2021	1	Name: MYRA THEISZ Position: Chair of the School Board Signature: 	March 2022 March 2024

APPENDIX 1

Learning Co-operative Child Safety Officer Role

Provide authoritative advice

- Act as a support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety
- Liaise with the principal and the school community to maintain the visibility of child safety
- Lead the development of the school's child safety culture, including being a child safety champion and providing coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety.

Raise awareness

- Ensure the school's policies are well known and used appropriately
- Ensure the school's child safety policy is reviewed by the Board in the context of the school's self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework
- Ensure each child safety and wellbeing policy is publicly available and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this.
- Be alert to the specific needs of the children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers.
- Encourage among staff a culture of listening to children taking into account their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.

Train

- being authoritative in providing advice by:
- keeping their skills up to date with appropriate training carried out every two years
- having a working knowledge of how the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and Community Care Organisations conduct a child protection case conference to be able to attend and contribute effectively when required to do so.
- being able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals
- ensure each member of staff has access to and understand the school's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff.
- make sure employees are aware of training opportunities and the latest DFFH policies and responsibilities under the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework²⁴ (MARAM), Child Information Sharing Scheme²⁵ (CISS) and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme²⁶ (FVISS).

²⁴ <https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources>

²⁵ <https://www.vic.gov.au/child-information-sharing-scheme>

²⁶ <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-information-sharing-scheme>

APPENDIX 2

Learning Co-operative Child Safety Leader Role

Provide authoritative advice

The Principal is responsible to work with the governing Board to comply with Ministerial Standards 870 by ensuring:

- The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of the school and that children are safe.
- ensuring appropriate arrangements for child safety and wellbeing (including without limitation, clear and comprehensive policies, procedures, accountability mechanisms and communication strategies) are implemented, monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.
- All staff is aware of their legal obligations.
- The Principal is the authorised person to report to authorities and referral services including Victoria Police, Child Protection, Child First, the Orange Door and Lookout. All thresholds for the Child Information Sharing Scheme and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes must be met. The alternative procedure for responding to an allegation or disclosure would be filled by the Child Safety Officer under clause 11(3) (c) (i) if the Principal cannot full his/her role.

Raise awareness

The Principal will:

- Support the Child Safety Officer for implementing the school's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the mandated requirements of Ministerial Order 870 in conjunction with the governing Board.
- Lead and contribute to discussions and promotion in child safety and wellbeing at meetings with the governing Board, staff meetings and parent meetings.

Train

The Principal will:

- keep up to date with the new Child Safe Standards 1 July 2022
- oversee the transition of Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and training to the new requirements
- Guide the implementation of the MARAM Framework including Child Information Sharing Scheme and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme to align with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy transition and processes.

- Provide ongoing advice and support to inform parents/carers of their duty of care responsibilities in relation to child safety and wellbeing and to ensure parents/volunteers and staff have access to accredited training programs and courses.

APPENDIX 3 – STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT



APPENDIX 4

LEARNING CO-OPERATIVE LEARNER CONTRACT

At the Learning Co-operative we acknowledge that all children have rights and responsibilities that relate to the school values.

At the Learning Co-operative you have:

- The right to learn, and play in a safe, secure, stimulating and positive environment.
- The right to be respected and valued as an individual.
- The right to express your ideas and opinions in a positive way, and to be listened to.
- The right to have fair access to school resources and the support you need to learn.

With these rights also come responsibilities, these are:

- To act responsibly, to attend meeting and focus time and to work to the best of your ability.
- To respect the rights and property of others.
- To be cooperative and considerate.
- To share and care for resources.
- To stay within sight of the Co-op buildings if you are a little.
- To follow the Co-op Kids Code and the Co-op Tech Code.

The Learning Co-operative has a zero tolerance of bullying behaviour and illegal behaviour.

This Learner Contract applies at school and when you are representing the school in different ways.

If a student does not follow school expectations, then consequences will apply. A child may be reminded about the school values and expectations, they may also be warned or there might be a consequence such as repairing damage, being moved away from an activity, or a call to parents.

I have discussed the Learner Contract with my child and I believe my child will do his/her best to follow the Contract. I have also reinforced the need to speak with a trusted adult, (e.g. parent or teacher) to seek advice on how to deal with a problem.

Child's Name: _____

Appendix 5

Student Questions for 3- Way Meetings

Please help kids complete this to help us update/create an individual learning plan

All about you:

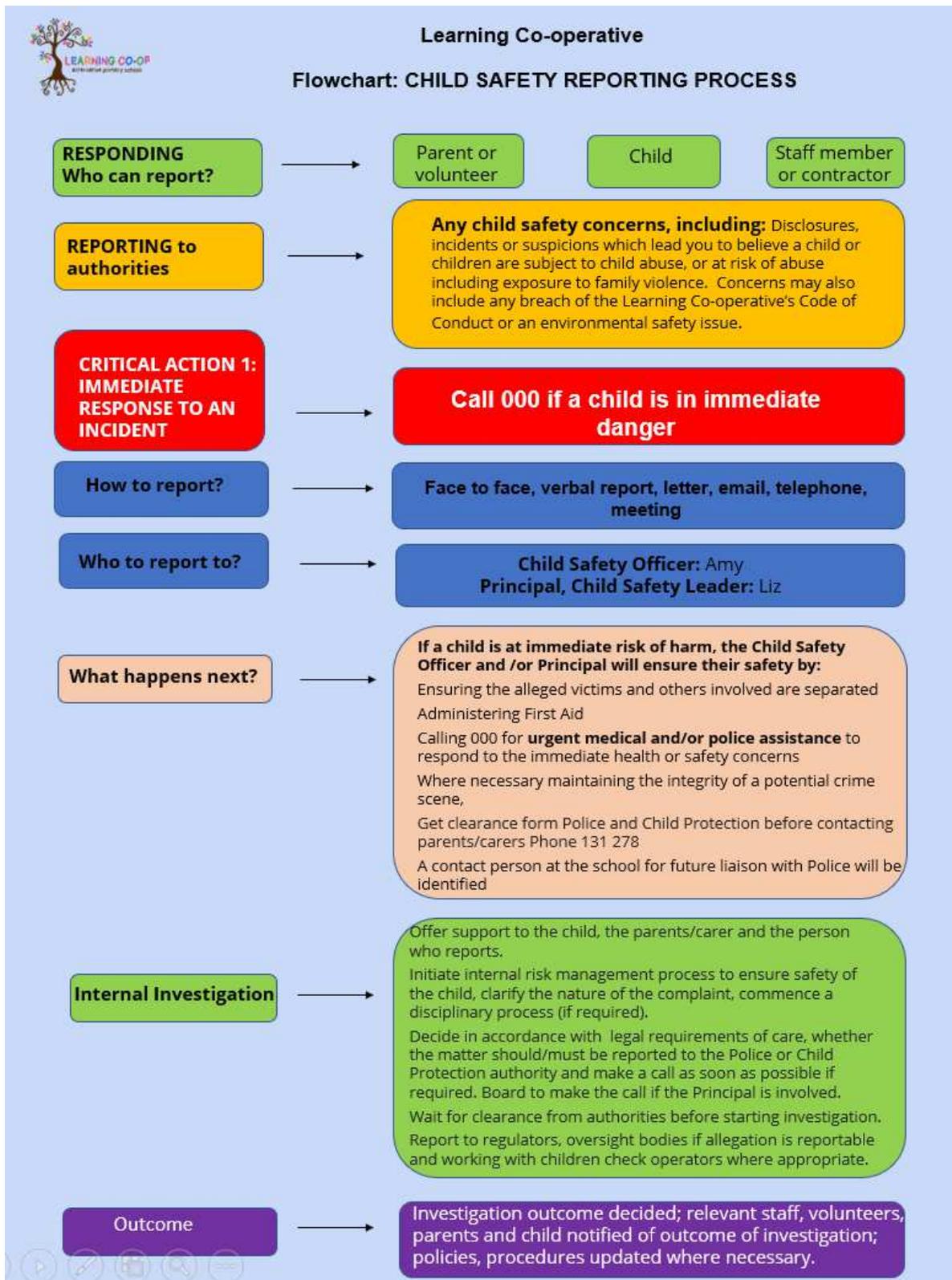
Name:

Strengths and Interests:

1. What activities do you most enjoy doing at school?
2. What hobbies/activities/interests do you have outside of school?
3. What do you think you are good at?
4. What do your parents/ the person helping you fill this in think you are good at?
5. Is there anything you (or your parents) think you need help with at Co-op?
6. How happy are you at Co-op?
 Very Happy
 Happy
 O.K.
 Unhappy
7. What idea/s do you have for making Co-op better?
8. How do you think you usually learn things best? You can tick more than one. Your parents may be able to help you decide, if you aren't sure talk to Liz or Amy.
 Visual: You prefer using pictures and images or looking at things written down
 Aural: You prefer using sound or music e.g., songs that help you remember things
 Verbal: You prefer listening, using words and talking about things to help you understand

- Physical: You prefer learning by doing things and being active
 - Logical: You prefer working things out for yourself
 - Social: You prefer to learn in groups or with other people
 - Solitary: You prefer to work alone and use self- study
9. What learning activities do you do at home? Do you read, write, do online programs or do activity books?
10. What do you most like reading and writing about?
11. How do you most enjoy learning about math/numbers?
12. What do you think about how much time you spend on learning about writing and math at Co-op?
- Not enough time to make me feel confident
 - Just right I feel confident
 - Too much time
13. What learning activities would you really like to do at Co-op this term? Are there any instruments you would like to play or something new you would like to learn? Languages? Crafts? Science? History? Geography? Well Being? Sports? Clubs? Math? Excursions?
14. What would you like your blackboard target/s to be this term? (The target written up in the locker area- the main thing you want to achieve/learn about this term)
15. Did you manage to achieve your target from last time yet? (If not, what went wrong, what help do you need, do you still want to keep it or change to something new?)

Appendix 7



Appendix 8



Feeling unsafe, sad,
or scared? Worried
about a friend?
Feeling unwell?



We are here to help.



Amy - Child Safety Officer



Liz - Child Safety Leader

By speaking up, you are helping us to do a better job and take better care of you.

**We will keep your information about you private.
Sometimes we may need to share certain information with others, but we will talk to you about how that may work best.**

**You can talk to anyone that works here. It's our job to listen to you.
You may also feel comfortable talking to a parent that you know you can trust. We will listen and try to help.**

If you need to talk with your parents, we can arrange a phone call so you feel comfortable.

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

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 Four 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).
- It is strongly recommended that you use the **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template** to keep clear and comprehensive notes, even if you make a decision not to report.

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

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES / REFERRING TO SERVICES

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.

Q: Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?

WITHIN THE SCHOOL

VICTORIA POLICE

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

You **must also** report internally to:

- GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - Employee Conduct Branch
 - DET Incident Support and Operations Centre
- CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - Diocesan education office

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or school chaplain
- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 878**

All allegations of reportable conduct **must** be reported as soon as possible to:

- GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
 - Employee Conduct Branch
- CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
 - Diocesan education office
- INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
 - Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 878**.

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:

- GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - DET Incident Support and Operations Centre
- CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - Diocesan education office
- INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or chaplain.

OTHER CONCERNS

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/The Orange Door: In circumstances where the family are open to receiving support
- DHHS Child Protection
- Victoria Police.

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:

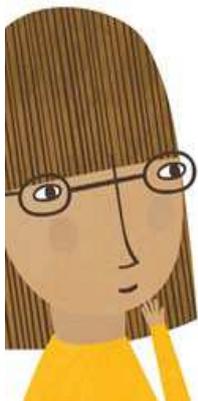
- not to contact** the parents/carer (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parent/carer to be contacted);
- to contact** the parents/carer and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon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

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 and support.

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.



CONTACT

- DHHS CHILD PROTECTION**
- AREA
- North Division **1300 664 977**
 - South Division **1300 655 796**
 - East Division **1300 360 391**
 - West Division (Rural) **1800 075 599**
 - West Division (Metro) **1300 664 977**
- AFTER HOURS
- After hours, weekends, public holidays **13 12 78**
- CHILD FIRST**
- <https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-first-and-support-teams>
- ORANGE DOOR**
- <https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/the-orange-door.html>

- VICTORIA POLICE**
- 000** or your local police station
- DET INCIDENT SUPPORT AND OPERATIONS CENTRE**
- 1800 126 126**
- INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT UNIT**
- 1800 126 126**
- EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH**
- (03) 9637 2595**
- DIOCESAN OFFICE**
- Melbourne **(03) 9267 0228**
- Ballarat **(03) 5337 7135**
- Sale **(03) 5622 6400**
- Sandhurst **(03) 5443 2377**

- INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA**
- (03) 9625 7200**
- THE LOOKOUT**
- The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence. <http://www.lookout.org.au>
- Family violence victims/services can be referred to **1800 Respect** for counselling, information and a referral service. **1800 737 732**



FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS Responding to Student Sexual Offending

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 suspicion that a student is a victim of a student sexual offending and/or a student has engaged in sexual offending.
- You **must** act even if you are unsure and have not directly observed student sexual offending (e.g. if a victim, or another person tells you about the offence).
- You **must** use the **Responding to Student Sexual Offending template** to keep clear and comprehensive notes.



1 IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO AN INCIDENT

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.

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you **must** report incidents, suspicions and disclosures of student sexual offending as soon as possible.

VICTORIA POLICE

All instances on **000**

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

- If you believe that:
- the victim's parent/carers are unable or unwilling to protect the child
 - the student who is alleged to have engaged in the student sexual offending is:
 - aged over 10 and under 15 years and may be in need of therapeutic treatment to address these behaviours
 - may be displaying physical and behavioural indicators of being the "victim of child abuse".

INTERNALLY

- ALSO report internally to:
- School Principal and/or leadership team** (all instances)
 - Government Schools:** DET Security Services Unit
 - Catholic Schools:** Diocesan education office

You must identify a contact person at the school for future liaison with Victoria Police and/or Child Protection and seek advice about contacting parents/carers (see **Action 3**).

*See the **Four Critical Steps for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse** for further guidance in these circumstances.

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

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

- not to contact the parents/carers** (e.g. in circumstances where contacting the parents/carers is likely to adversely affect a **Victoria Police** investigation, or where the student is a mature minor and has requested that their parent/carer not be notified);
- 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).

4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your school **must** provide support for students who are victim to a student sexual offence AND students who have engaged in a sexual offence. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements. This support should include the development of a **Student Support Plan** in consultation with wellbeing professionals, outlining support strategies. Strategies may include the development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals.

CONTACT		
DHHS CHILD PROTECTION AREA North Division 1300 664 877 South Division 1300 655 795 East Division 1300 360 391 West Division (Rural) 1800 075 599 West Division (Metro) 1300 664 977 AFTER HOURS After hours, weekends, public holidays 13 12 78	CHILD FIRST www.dhvc.gov.au VICTORIA POLICE 000 or contact your local police station DET SECURITY SERVICES UNIT (03) 9589 6266 STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT (03) 9651 3622	EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH (03) 9637 2595 DIOCESAN OFFICE Melbourne (03) 9267 0228 Ballarat (03) 5337 7135 Sale (03) 5622 6600 Sandhurst (03) 5443 2377 INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA (03) 9825 7200



Appendix 11

Learning Co-operative Child Safe Incident Report Form

(Ratified by School Council: September 2021)

The child safe standards require organizations that provide services for children to have processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.

In consultation with the principal, you should use this resource to record disclosures and provide this completed incident report to the principal who will place the document into secure storage. You will also need to complete The PROTECT template for responding to Child Abuse and or Student Sexual Offending.

<p>Incident details</p> <p>Date of incident:</p> <p>Time of incident:</p> <p>Location of incident:</p>
<p>Name(s) of child/children involved:</p>
<p>Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved:</p>
<p>If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.</p>
<p>Does the child identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?</p> <p>Yes: Aboriginal</p> <p>Yes: Torres Strait Islander</p> <p>No:</p> <p>List extra support provided.</p>

<p>Does the child have a disability?</p>
--

Yes:

No:

List extra support provided.

Does the child have additional learning needs?

Yes:

No:

List extra support provided.

Please categorise the incident

Physical violence

Sexual offence

Serious emotional or psychological abuse

Serious neglect

Please describe the incident

When did it take place?

Who was involved?

What did you see?

Has the incident been reported?

Child protection:

Police:

Another third party (please specify):

Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved:

Incident reporter wishes to remain anonymous?

List other supports provided:

When was the child's parent/carer informed?

List further support or actions put into place.

What supports were offered to the person who received the disclosure?

What supports were required for other students?

Other comments:

Office use:

Date incident report received:

Staff member managing incident:

Follow-up date:

Incident ref. number:

Appendix 12

How to respond to a child that makes a disclosure of abuse

When a child talks about being abused, they may:

- Feel confused, scared, guilty, ashamed, sad, angry or powerless
- Believe they are to blame or worry that no one will believe them
- Not understand that the behaviour may be abusive
- Want to protect the person responsible and be frightened for them
- Experience mixed emotions towards the person responsible
- Be worried about what will happen to them and their family
- Want to protect their family, or their own reputation
- Have been threatened with more harm to themselves, others or animals if they tell anyone about the abuse

When managing a disclosure, staff should;

- Be calm, patient and listen carefully to what they are saying
- Stay calm and use a neutral tone with no urgency and where possible use the child's language and vocabulary
- Be gentle, patient and non-judgmental throughout
- Highlight to the student it was important to tell you about what has happened
- Be patient and let them use their own words
- Do not pressure a child into telling you more than they want you to
- Reassure the child that you believe them and 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.
- Do not ask leading questions, for example, gently ask "What happened next?" How does it make you feel? How often does it happen? Rather than "Why?"
- Write some notes about what they have told you
- Respect the fact they may only tell you some details
- Respond empathically, objectively and use supportive language
- Acknowledge their feelings and that it can be hard to talk about
- Let them tell you in their words what happened and how they felt
- Let them know you want to protect them and what you plan to do next

Talking to the child in a child friendly way

- Tell them in an age-appropriate way that you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop the abuse, and explain the role of these authorities if appropriate
- "I will need to talk to people to work out what to do next to help you."
- Contact an appropriate authority or child protection
- Maintain a calm appearance by controlling expressions of panic, shock and disbelief

Statements and questions to avoid when talking about abuse

When talking about abuse it's important to avoid:

Filling in the story – by giving them words or asking leading questions like “Did mum or dad hit you?” or “Do they make you afraid”?

Asking too many questions – leave the investigating and fact finding to trained professionals

Expressing anger about the alleged abuser – they may be an adult the child loves and cares for

Confronting the alleged abuser – it could make things worse or unsafe for the child

Making promises you can't keep – such as promising you will not tell anyone

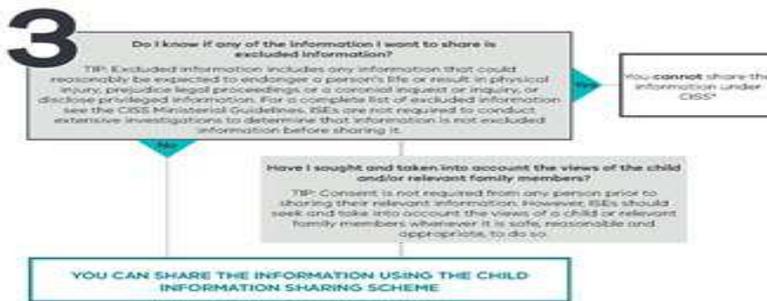
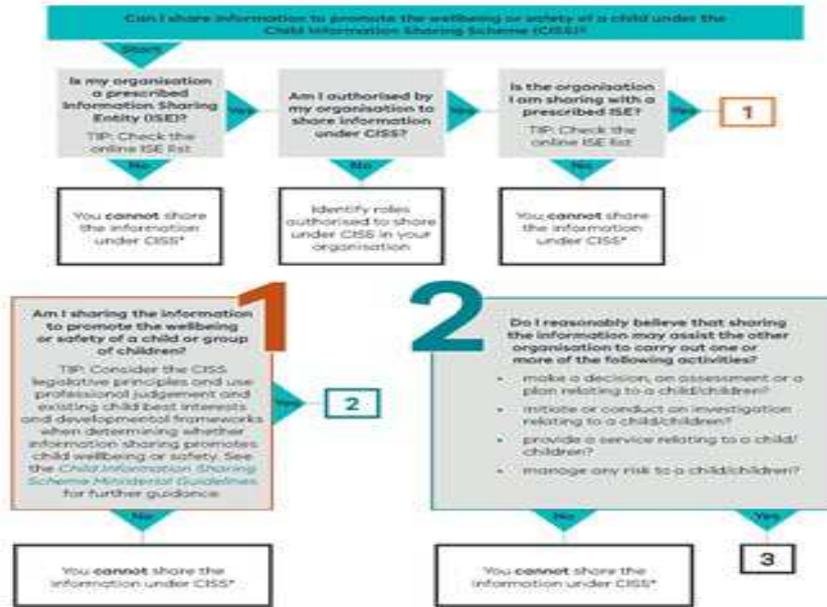
Pressuring the child for information – or for details beyond what they want to say

Questions that infer blame – like “Did you try to stop them?” or “Did you scream or call out for help?”

Appendix 13



Decision tree: Can I share information under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS)?



***I can't share information under CISS. What should I do?**
 There is a range of information sharing mechanisms outside CISS. Organisations and services should share information and collaborate as permitted by law. Privacy, child safety reporting and information sharing obligations continue to apply including mandatory reporting obligations, reporting to Child Protection if there is a significant risk of harm, and information sharing with Child Protection.