

# 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).
- You must use the **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template** to keep clear and comprehensive notes, even if you make a decision not to report. Each report must be emailed to: [protect@ceosand.catholic.edu.au](mailto:protect@ceosand.catholic.edu.au)

\* 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
- call 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** report internally to:

##### CES Ltd SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office  
P: (03) 5443 2377

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

##### CES Ltd SAFEGUARDING TEAM

- Diocesan education office  
P: (03) 5443 2377

#### 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 as 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** report internally to:

##### CES Ltd SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office  
P: (03) 5443 2377

### 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/carers 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**

**AFTER HOURS**  
After hours, weekends, public holiday **13 12 78**

##### ORANGE DOOR

<https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/the-orange-door.html>

##### VICTORIA POLICE

**1300 664 977** North Division

##### DIOCESAN OFFICE

Sandhurst **(03) 5443 2377**

Email ALL PROTECT reports to [protect@ceosand.catholic.edu.au](mailto:protect@ceosand.catholic.edu.au)