

 Plenty Valley <small>CHRISTIAN COLLEGE</small> <small>In Christ: Wisdom & Knowledge</small>		Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Policy	
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The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) states that registered teachers or person's granted permission to teach under the Education Training and Reform Act 2006 are mandated to report a belief, developed on reasonable grounds that a child is being physically or sexually abused and is therefore in need of protection. Some other professions, such as nurses are also mandated to report such a belief. It is the responsibility of individual professionals to ensure they are aware of and comply with the requirements of their profession with regard to mandatory reporting of child abuse. Individuals working within professions that are mandated to report have a legal and professional responsibility to report. This overrides any organisational policy.

Confidential consultation with trained professionals can be a part of the process of forming a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. Child Protection workers and the College counsellor at PVCC are available for confidential consultation.

In view of the legislation, advice and publications from DHHS and Child Protection **it is policy at Plenty Valley Christian College that the College nurse, College psychologist and teaching staff report their belief that a child is in need of protection to DHHS Child Protection, and in the case of suspected sexual abuse, to SOCIT in the first instance and then to DHHS. The staff member will then complete the reporting form to inform the College Child Protection Officer.**

The principal will report any reportable allegations made against a staff member to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) under the Reportable Conduct Scheme within three business days after becoming aware of the allegation.

We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to providing a safe environment and to the safety of children of all genders, abilities, cultures and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Mandatory reporters are;

- Teachers registered to teach or who have permission to teach pursuant to the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
- Principals of government and non-government schools
- Registered medical practitioners
- Nurses
- All members of the police force

Any person may make a report if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection for any of the following reasons:

- The child has been abandoned and there is no other suitable person who is willing and able to care for the child.
- The child's parents are dead or incapacitated and there is no other suitable person who is willing and able to care for the child.
- The child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury and the parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.
- The child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of sexual abuse and their parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.
- The child has suffered or is likely to suffer emotional or psychological harm and the parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.
- The child's physical development or health has been, or is likely to be significantly harmed and the parents are unable or unwilling to provide basic care, or effective medical or other remedial care.

Any person may make a report if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child, who is 10 years of age or over, but less than 15 years of age, is in need of therapeutic treatment because he or she has exhibited sexually-abusive behaviours.

Any person may make a report if they have significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child.

Duty of care

All staff have a duty of care to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of students in their care. If a staff member has concerns about the safety, health and wellbeing of students in their care it is important to take immediate action.

In the case of a student who may be in need of protection or therapeutic treatment, or where there are significant concerns about the wellbeing of a student, college staff can discharge this duty of care by taking action which includes the following:

- Consultation with the Head of Sub-School; College Counsellor and/or Deputy Principal.
- Notifying the Principal or a member of the College leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns
- Reporting their concerns to SOCIT (in the case of sexual abuse) and the DHHS Child Protection.

Types of child abuse and indicators of harm

Child abuse can have a significant effect on a student's physical or emotional health, development and wellbeing. The younger a student the more vulnerable he/she is and the more serious the consequences are likely to be.

Types of child abuse include:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse

- emotional abuse
- neglect
- medical neglect
- family violence
- risk-taking behaviour
- student exhibiting sexually-abusive behaviours.

There are many indicators of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single indicator, or even several indicators, does not prove that abuse or neglect has occurred. However, the repeated occurrence of an indicator, or the occurrence of several indicators together, should alert teachers to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.

Making a report

1. College staff should keep comprehensive notes that are dated and include the following information:
 - a. Description of the concerns (e.g. physical injuries, student behaviour)
 - b. Source of those concerns (e.g. observation, report from student or another person)
 - c. Actions taken as a result of the concerns (e.g. consultation with Principal, report to SOCIT, DHHS Child Protection etc.).
2. College staff should discuss any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of students with the Principal or a member of the College Leadership team. The individual staff member should then make their own assessment about whether they must or may make a report about the student. At all stages of the process of dealing with children linked to abuse, staff should take into account the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable and make reasonable efforts to accommodate the matters with reference to the principle of inclusion.
3. College staff should gather the relevant information necessary to make the report. This should include the following information:
 - a. Full name, date of birth, and residential address of the student
 - b. Details of the concerns and the reasons for those concerns
 - c. The individual staff member's involvement with the student
 - d. Details of any other agencies who may be involved with the student
4. Make a report to the relevant agency – SOCIT first for sexual abuse and then DHHS. DHHS for non-sexual abuse.
5. Make a written record of the report by completing the Child Safe Report Form for Responding to Allegations of Suspected child Abuse. This form should be given to the Child Protection Officer.
 - a. The Child Protection Officer will notify the College Executive that a report has been made.
6. In the event that two or more mandated professionals form a belief about the same child and one person organises to make a report to DHS Child Protection, the other is obliged to ensure that the report has been made and that all the grounds for their own belief were included in the report made by the other person.

Potential consequences of making a report

The identity of a reporter must remain confidential unless:

- the reporter chooses to inform the student, or parent of the report.
- the reporter consents in writing to their identity being disclosed.
- a Court or Tribunal decides that it necessary for the identity of the reporter to be disclosed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the student.
- a Court or Tribunal decides that, in the interests of justice, the reporter is required to provide evidence.

Professional Protection

If a report is made in good faith:

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

Interviews

DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police may conduct interviews of children and young people at the College without the parent's knowledge or consent.

Interviewing children and young people at school should only occur in exceptional circumstances and if it is in the best interests of the student to proceed in this manner.

DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police will notify the Principal or a member of the leadership team of their intention to interview the student on the school premises.

When DHHS Child Protection practitioners/Victoria Police officers come to the school premises, the Principal or a member of the leadership team should request to see identification before permitting them to have access to the student.

When a student is being interviewed by DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police, College staff must arrange to have a supportive adult present with the student.

Support for the student

The roles and responsibilities of staff members in supporting children who are involved with DHHS Child Protection may include the following:

- Acting as a support person for the student.
- Attending DHHS Child Protection case planning meetings.
- Observing and monitoring the student's behaviour.
- Liaising with professionals.

Requests for Information

DHHS Child Protection and/or Child FIRST and/or Victoria Police may request information about the student or family for the purpose of investigating a report and assessing the risk to the student.

In certain circumstances, DHHS Child Protection can also direct College staff and Department staff to provide information or documents about the protection or development of the student. Such directions should be in writing and only be made by authorised persons within DHHS Child Protection.

If DHHS Child Protection makes a Protection Application in the Children's Court of Victoria, any party to the application may issue a Witness Summons to produce documents and/or to give evidence in the proceedings.

Related legislation

- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- Crimes Act 1958
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Victorian Institute of Teaching Act 2001

Other resources

Full definitions for all of the types of child abuse and a comprehensive list of the indicators of harm

- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/Principals/spag/safety/Documents/protectionofchildren.PDF>

A step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child FIRST

- <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/parents/health/mandreportsep10.pdf>

Department of Human Services:

- Child Protection and Child FIRST- <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/family-and-parenting-support/family-services>

Victoria Police

- Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCIT) - http://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document_ID=36237

Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary Documents

- Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Permanent Care and Other Matters) Act 2014 http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/Domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/PubStatbook.nsf/f932b66241ecf1b7ca256e92000e23be/4322e8395e14b750ca257d4e001b87ef!OpenDocument
- Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014 - [Crimes Amendment \(Protection of Children\) Act 2014](#)
- Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Security Measures) Act 2014 - [Children, Youth and Families Amendment \(Security Measures\) Act 2014](#)

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Approved By:

Date:



Mr John Metcalfe
Principal