



Child Protection Reporting Procedure

(updated June 2018)

Introduction

Annunciation Primary School Staff Members have a duty of care to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care. If a staff member has concerns about the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care they should take immediate action.

The school's Child Protection Reporting Procedure assists staff members, Clergy, CRT, volunteers, contractors, parents and care givers to:

- Identify the indicators of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- Understand how a 'reasonable belief' is formed » Make a report of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- Comply with mandatory reporting obligations under child protection laws as well as their legal obligations, relating to criminal child abuse and grooming under criminal law.

Mandatory Reporting

Mandatory reporting is a legal requirement under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.) (Act) to protect children from harm relating to physical injury and sexual abuse. A child, student or young person for the purpose of the relevant parts of the Act, is any person 17 years of age or younger.

Staff members mandated under this Act (teaching staff & principals) who form a 'reasonable belief' that a child, student or young person is in need of protection from physical, emotional, psychological, developmental harm or sexual abuse, and that the child's parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child, must report that belief to DHHS Child Protection and the 'grounds' for it, as soon as possible after forming the belief.

A subsequent report must be made on each occasion in which the Mandatory Reporter becomes aware of further reasonable grounds for the belief.

Forming a Reasonable Belief

When a Staff Member is concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a 'reasonable belief'.

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

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

- A student or young person states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- A student or young person states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- Someone who knows a child states that the student or young person has been physically or sexually abused
- A student or young person exhibits sexually-abusive or age-inappropriate behaviours
- Professional observations of the student or young person's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the student has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused
- Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the student or young person has been physically or sexually abused.

Types of Abuse and Indicators of Harm

Child abuse can have a significant effect on a child's physical or emotional health, development and wellbeing. The younger a child the more vulnerable he/she is and the more serious the consequences are likely to be. 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 staff members to the possibility of child abuse and neglect. While any indicators of possible child abuse or neglect are concerning, it is important to know which indicators must be reported. It is mandatory to report concerns relating to:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse

While not mandated, making a report to DHHS Child Protection may also be needed for:

- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Medical neglect
- Family violence
- Human trafficking (including forced marriage)
- Sexual exploitation (including pornography and prostitution)
- Risk-taking behaviour
- Female genital mutilation
- Risk to an unborn child
- A student or young person exhibiting sexually-abusive behaviours.

Reporting Child Protection Concerns

Any Staff Member who 'believes on reasonable grounds' that a student or young person is in need of:

- Protection from physical harm or sexual abuse – must report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection
- Protection from harm that is not believed to involve physical harm or sexual abuse – are encouraged to report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection
- Therapeutic treatment – are encouraged to report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection or Child FIRST.

All Staff Members are encouraged to report any Child Protection concerns to the Principal or a Member of the Leadership Team prior to reporting to the DHHS or Child FIRST. This aims to support the Staff Members making the report.

NOTE# Child Protection is the Victorian Government Agency, provided by the DHHS, that protects children at risk of significant harm. Child Protection has statutory powers and can use these to protect children. Child FIRST is the Family Information Referral Support Team run by a registered community service in a local area that can receive confidential referrals about a child of concern. It does not have any statutory powers to protect a child, but can refer matters to family services.