

## REPORTING CHILD SAFETY CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

In order for CHIPS to comply with the Failure to Disclose, Failure to Protect and Mandatory Reporting legislation, we require anyone involved with our programs to report any concerns or complaints they have about child safety. Please refer to the table below for CHIPS' reporting process summary. Anyone may contact the police, DHHS Child Protection or Child FIRST / The Orange Door at any time if they believe on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection.

<b>Who can report?</b>	<b>Anyone – including parents, children, schools, volunteers or staff</b>
<b>What to report?</b>	<b>Any child safety concerns, including:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ disclosure of abuse or harm</li> <li>▪ allegation, suspicion or observation of abuse or harm</li> <li>▪ any breach of the Code of Conduct</li> <li>▪ equipment, activity and environmental safety issues</li> </ul>
	<b>Call 000 if a child is in immediate danger</b>
<b>How?</b>	<b>A face-to-face verbal report, letter, email, phone call or meeting</b>
<b>Who to?</b>	<b>The CHIPS Child Safety Officer, Cathy Wieckmann (preferred) or any CHIPS leader or event co-ordinator</b>
<b>What happens next? (*this is a summary, please refer to the details in the following pages)</b>	<p><b>The person informed will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ offer support to the child (*don't ask leading questions)</li> <li>▪ make notes about what was reported or observed</li> <li>▪ inform the CHIPS Child Safety Officer (preferred), or CHIPS leader or event co-ordinator</li> <li>▪ if they are unable to inform the relevant CHIPS person, or if they feel that the concern has not been addressed appropriately, follow the direct method for making a report process below</li> </ul> <p><b>The CHIPS Child Safety Officer or event co-ordinator will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ initiate internal processes to ensure the safety of the child, clarify the nature of the complaint, and commence disciplinary processes if required</li> <li>▪ offer further support to the child, the parents, the person who reported and the accused person</li> <li>▪ decide, in accordance with legal requirements and duty of care, whether the matter should or must be reported to the police or Child Protection and make a report as soon as possible if required</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Investigation occurs; Outcome decided; Relevant staff, volunteers, school, parents and children are notified of the investigation outcome; Policies and procedures are updated where necessary</b>

The CHIPS Child Safety Officer will also review all feedback surveys about CHIPS' programs, noting any child safety concerns or complaints, and address them as described in this document.

### **SUPPORTING THE CHILD AND THEIR FAMILY**

If a child tells you they have been harmed or abused, it is very important to validate what they have told you, no matter how you feel about it. This means listening to the child, concealing any shock or distress you may have, taking them seriously and responding to and acting on the disclosure as described in the table above.

Key support steps when listening to a child include:

- Don't push them for more information or ask leading questions.
- Let the child talk about their concerns in their own time and in their own words. Give them your full attention.
- Be a supportive and reassuring listener. Comfort them if they are distressed.
- Tell them it is not their fault and that telling you was the right thing to do.
- Let them know that you will get some help and that you will need to let other people know. If the child does not want you to do this, explain that that it is very important.
- Praise them for helping CHIPS become safer for children.

Further support steps for the CHIPS Child Safety Officer only:

- Contact Child First / The Orange Door for initial advice.
- Subject to advice received from Child Protection Services or Child FIRST / The Orange Door, contact the child's parents to let them know (if the disclosure does not relate to abuse within the family).
- Assist the child and their family to access appropriate support for the child, such as counselling.
- Let the child and their family know about the steps CHIPS is taking, and any resulting action.

For concerns not relating to a child's disclosure, the child and their family may still require some of the support steps above.

## RECORDING INFORMATION

When making notes about the concern or complaint, include details about:

- when it arose or occurred,
- where it happened,
- where you were when told about it or you noticed it,
- who was present,
- what happened,
- what you saw or heard to cause concern,
- what was said to you about it,
- if it relates to a child's disclosure, record it using the child's words,
- any other conversations you have had about it since,
- your name and role at the time.

Once informed of the concern or complaint, the CHIPS Child Safety Officer will collate all the information available, keep a record of the action taken, of any internal investigations and of any reports made to statutory authorities or professional bodies.

All this information will be kept securely and confidentially in accordance with CHIPS Privacy Policy and the potential legal requirements if police or other investigators become involved. The person reporting the concern must also keep the information confidential.

## MAKING A REPORT TO CHILD PROTECTION

Please follow the DHHS Guide to Making a Report to Child Protection or Child FIRST / The Orange Door at the end of this policy, found at:

<https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mandatory-reporting#:~:text=In%20Victoria%2C%20under%20the%20Children,their%20office%2C%20position%20or%20employment>

## **INVESTIGATION PROCESS AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

For concerns involving staff, volunteers and parents who attend CHIPS programs, please refer to our Recruitment and Disciplinary Policy, available on request to CHIPS.

For both concerns involving people who attend CHIPS programs, and concerns not involving people such as equipment, facilities, activities, program content and procedures:

- Review all the policies, procedures, risk assessments, and any other documents pertaining to the concern for both CHIPS and any other relevant organisations.
- Determine if any amendments are required.
- Implement the amendments and educate staff, volunteers, schools, parents and children about them.
- Request that everyone involved with CHIPS re-sign the Codes of Conduct and Child Safe Policy if necessary.

## **REVIEWING THIS POLICY**

This Reporting Child Safety Concerns and Complaints Policy was approved by the CHIPS Board on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2016. It was reviewed in October 2020, and will be reviewed every two years.

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

## Protective concerns

You are concerned about a child because you have:

- received a disclosure from a child about abuse or neglect
- observed indicators of abuse or neglect
- been made aware of possible harm via your involvement in the community external to your professional role.

## At all times remember to:

- record your observations
- follow appropriate protocols
- consult notes and records
- consult with appropriate colleagues if necessary
- consult with other support agencies if necessary

STEP 1	RESPONDING TO CONCERNS	STEP 2	FORMING A BELIEF ON REASONABLE GROUNDS	STEP 3	MAKING A REFERRAL TO Child FIRST	STEP 4	MAKE A REPORT TO CHILD PROTECTION
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If your concerns relate to a child in need of immediate protection; or you have formed a belief that a child is at significant risk of harm*. <b>Go to Step 4</b></li> <li>2. If you have significant concerns that a child and their family need a referral to Child FIRST for family services. <b>Go to Step 3</b></li> <li>3. In all other situations <b>Go to Step 2.</b></li> </ol> <p>* Refer to Appendix 2: Definitions of child abuse and indicators of harm in the Protocol – <i>Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider the level of immediate danger to the child. Ask yourself:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Have I formed a belief that the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm? <b>YES / NO</b></li> <li>and</li> <li>b) Am I in doubt about the child’s safety and the parent’s ability to protect the child? <b>YES / NO</b></li> </ol> </li> <li>2. If you answered yes to a) or b) <b>Go to Step 4</b></li> <li>3. If you have significant concerns that a child and their family need a referral to Child FIRST for family services. <b>Go to Step 3</b></li> </ol>	<p><b>Child Wellbeing Referral</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contact your local Child FIRST provider.           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See over for contact list for local Child FIRST phone numbers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Have notes ready with your observations and child and family details.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Mandatory/Protective Report*</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contact your local Child Protection Intake provider immediately.           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See over for contact list for local Child Protection phone numbers.</li> <li>• For <b>After Hours Child Protection</b> Emergency Services, call <b>131 278.</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Have notes ready with your observations and child and family details.</li> </ol> <p>* <i>Non-mandated staff members who believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection are able to report their concerns to Child Protection</i></p>			

# Contact Numbers

## Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

METROPOLITAN REGIONS	
Eastern	(03) 9265 2400
Northern	(03) 9488 9488
Western	(03) 9291 6500
Southern	(03) 9794 3555
RURAL REGIONS	
Barwon South Western	5225 1000
Gippsland	5127 0400
Grampians	5337 8444
Hume	5761 2100
Loddon Mallee	5440 3111

### Office for Children and Licensed Children's Services:

METROPOLITAN REGIONS	
Eastern	(03) 9265 2400
Northern	(03) 9412 5333
Western	(03) 9275 7000
Southern	(03) 9096 9555
RURAL REGIONS	
Barwon South Western	5225 1000
Gippsland	5127 0400
Grampians	5337 8444
Hume	5761 2100
Loddon Mallee	5440 3111

### Important information for government schools

Principals of Victorian Government schools must report all incidents to the Emergency and Security Management Unit on **03 9589 6266**.

Victorian Government schools should contact the Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit (SCIAU), Student Wellbeing Division, for advice and support when responding to allegations of student sexual assault or inappropriate sexual behaviours.

The SCIAU can be contacted on **03 9637 2934** or **03 9637 2487**.

Victorian Government School Principals should refer to the flowchart – *Responding to Allegations of Student Sexual Assault Compulsory Actions for Principals* at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/childprotection/childprotection.htm>

## Department of Human Services Child Protection

METROPOLITAN REGIONS		METROPOLITAN REGIONS	
Intake Unit		Regional Office	
Eastern	1300 360 391	Box Hill	(03) 9843 6000
North and West	1300 664 977	Preston	1300 664 977
		Footscray	1300 360 462
Southern	1300 655 795	Dandenong	(03) 9213 2111
RURAL REGIONS			
Intake Unit		Regional Office	
Barwon South Western			
	1800 075 599	Geelong	(03) 5226 4540
Gippsland	1800 020 202	Traralgon	(03) 5177 2500
Grampians	1800 000 551	Ballarat	(03) 5333 6530
Hume	1800 650 227	Wangaratta	(03) 5722 0555
		Wodonga	(02) 6055 7777
Loddon Mallee	1800 675 598	Bendigo	(03) 5434 5555

### After hours Child Protection Emergency Services (AHCPEs)

Statewide number for all emergency child protection matters outside of normal business hours (24 hours, 7 days a week): **131 278**

**Victoria Police 000**

### Catholic Education Offices

Catholic Education Office, Melbourne	(03) 9267 0228
Catholic Education Office, Ballarat Diocese	5337 7135
Catholic Education Office, Sale Diocese	5622 6600
Catholic Education Office, Sandhurst Diocese	5443 2377

**Independent Schools Victoria (03) 9825 7200**

### Other

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association, Inc.	(03) 9481 0800
Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Unit	(03) 9247 6666
Centre Against Sexual Assault	1800 806 292
Gatehouse Centre, Royal Children's Hospital	(03) 9345 6391
(for specialist counselling and medical assistance)	
Child Safety Commissioner	(03) 8601 5884
Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency	(03) 8388 1855

## CHILD FIRST

Local Catchment Area	Contact	
Barwon South Western	Greater Geelong, Queenscliff, Surf Coast	1300 551 948
	Colac – Otway, Corangamite	5232 5500
	Warrnambool, Moyne, Glenelg, Southern Grampians	1300 889 713
Gippsland	East Gippsland	5152 0052
	Wellington	5144 7777
	La Trobe, Baw Baw	1800 339 100
	South Gippsland, Bass Coast	5662 5150
Grampians	Northern Grampians, West Wimmera, Hindmarsh, Yarrambat, Horsham	1800 195 114
	Ararat, Pyrenees, Hepburn, Ballarat, Golden Plains, Moorabool	1300 783 341
Hume	Wodonga, Towong, Indigo	1800 705 211
	Alpine, Benalla, Mansfield, Wangaratta	1800 705 211
	Greater Shepparton, Strathbogie, Moira	1300 854 944
Loddon Mallee	Mitchell, Murrindindi	1800 663 107
	Greater Bendigo, Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Mount Alexander	1800 260 338
Eastern Metropolitan	Buloke, Goonawarra, Swan Hill, Mildura	1800 625 533 1800 MALLEE
	Yarra Ranges, Knox, Maroondah	1300 369 146
North and West Metropolitan	Monash, Whitehorse, Manningham, Booroondarra	1300 762 125
	Nillumbik, Whittlesea, Banyule, Yarra and Darebin	(03) 9450 0955
	Brimbank, Melton	1300 138 180
	Hume, Moreland	1300 786 433
	Hobson's Bay, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Wyndham	1300 775 160
Southern Metropolitan	Casey, Cardinia, Greater Dandenong	(03) 9705 3939
	Aboriginal children and families (Casey, Cardinia and Great Dandenong)	(03) 9794 5973
	Frankston, Mornington Peninsula	1300 721 383
	Kingston, Bayside, Glen Eira, Stonington, Port Phillip	1300 367 441