

Making a Mandatory Report

(See also Policy 1030 MANDATORY REPORTING, Page 6,)

Who	Details
Mandated staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals • All teachers • School Counsellors • College nurses 	Must report to DFFH Child Protection as soon as practicable after forming a belief on reasonable grounds that a student or young person is at risk of significant harm, and the student's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the student.
Non-mandated college staff (section 183, CYFA 2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a student is in need of protection may make a protective report regarding their concerns to DFFH Child Protection. • College staff who form a belief on reasonable grounds should inform the Principal of any concerns.
All college staff: Forming a belief on reasonable grounds	<p>A belief is formed when a person has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than a suspicion • Is more likely to believe rather than disbelieve that a student is at risk. <p>Note: If a staff member has unresolved suspicions that do not lead them to form a belief, they should initially consult with the Principal, a member of the college's leadership team or DFFH Child Protection. A referral to Student First may also be appropriate to engage support for the family.</p> <p>Reasonable grounds are established when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 student may be talking about themselves) • Someone who knows the student or young person states that the student or young person has been physically or sexually abused. • A student shows signs of being physically or sexually abused • The staff member is aware of persistent family violence or parental substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability that is impacting on the student and young person's safety, stability or development • The staff member observes signs or indicators of abuse, including non-accidental or unexplained injury, persistent neglect, poor care or lack of appropriate supervision • A student's actions or behaviour may place them at risk of significant harm and the student's parents are unwilling or unable to protect the student.

College staff seeking consultation	<p>Consult with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College leadership or specialist staff • Network support staff (Student Support Services) • Regional wellbeing staff • DFFH Student Protection • Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit on (03) 9637-2934 or (03) 9637-2487. • See: Flowchart: <i>A step-by-step guide to making a report to Student Protection or Student FIRST</i> within Resources below
Teacher & Principal actions	<p>Teachers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only gather enough information to form the belief • Use open ended questions when talking to the student. <p>Teachers should not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct their own investigation • Ask leading questions that suggest the abuse took place • Interview witnesses • Take statements • Collect evidence • Conduct a physical examination. <p>College staff should keep comprehensive, chronologically ordered notes that describe the source of their concerns, e.g. from obvious injuries, behaviours or comments made outlining related events, actions taken and further considerations determine the need for help. Notes should also reflect who the staff member has been in contact with.</p>
Information required when making a report to Child Protection	<p>The following information is required to make the report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of family and student • Addresses, language spoken and student's date of birth • Factual and specific reason for concern • The reporter's involvement with the family • Any other people or agencies involved • Concerns about a student protection workers safety in visiting the family • Best time to find the parents/guardians at home • If the family knows the report is being made. <p>Note: An inability to provide all of this information should not delay the making of the report. Further information can be provided after the initial report is made.</p>
Professional Protection for Reporters	<p>Teachers and principals making mandatory reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are protected against legal, professional and civil actions by the CYFA as long as they are acting in good faith or for the best interests of the student • Cannot be held to have acted unprofessionally.
Confidentiality of identity	<p>Information about the identity of a person making a report to Child Protection must be kept confidential unless the reporter consents to it being disclosed.</p>
Reports involving Koorie students	<p>Where any report to the DFFH, Child Protection involves a Koorie student, the Principal must advise the Regional Office. The Regional Office, with the regional Koorie support officer, ensures support is arranged.</p>
Information Sharing	<p>Teachers and principals making reports or providing information to Child Protection, Child FIRST and Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Student Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCIT) are specifically protected against legal, professional and civil actions by the CYFA provided they are "acting in good faith" in the interests of the student.</p> <p>College staff are allowed to share information with Child Protection that may help them to make an initial assessment about a student. Any information that is relevant to the protection or development of a student when Child Protection is investigating a report, or during subsequent child protection intervention is allowed to be shared.</p> <p>See: Resources below</p>

Referral to Child First	<p>A referral to Child FIRST is the best way of connecting students, young people and their families to the services they need. College staff should make a referral to Child FIRST where college staff have concerns about a student's wellbeing but do not believe the student is in need of protection.</p> <p>Note: <i>Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people</i> provides full information for college staff about mandatory reporting, responsibilities of colleges and college staff and the roles and responsibilities of other agencies see: Resources below.</p>
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Protocol for responding to allegations of suspected child abuse.

Accurate documentation will be kept concerning reports made about possible student abuse, details of notification, actions within the college resulting from notification, and other details related to reported cases of abuse.

- All staff are to report any cases of suspected abuse to the Principal.
- Non mandated staff should report their concerns to the class teacher or the principal. But are able to make a notification themselves if they choose to.
- Reports to Child Protection are to be made in a timely manner -preferably on the same day as the disclosure.

In relation to this policy the following should be taken as guiding principles:

- In every action related to student abuse the best interest of the student is of paramount consideration;
- The value of the family unit and the Biblical responsibility for parental education of the student is to be respected but not to the detriment of the well being of the student;
- In proceeding to take action under the relevant Act, college staff must satisfy themselves that they are acting on reasonable grounds;
- All persons involved in situations where abuse is suspected or disclosed are to be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect;
- Staff who have access to information regarding suspected or disclosed student abuse are to observe strict confidentiality in relation to the matter;

The college provides for the support of students, families and staff directly involved with the issue of student abuse through the pastoral care and counselling structures of the college.

This policy is consistent with the following Mission of the College:

- To create safe relationships through being just and fair according to Biblical principles.
- To be compassionate and merciful as God is to us.
- To develop curriculum which explicitly addresses relational issues and empowers student and young people to speak out or seek help where abuse is occurring.

Appendix 5: Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Child Protection Contact List

Metropolitan Regions			
Intake Unit		Regional Office	
Eastern	1300 360 391	Box Hill	[03] 9843 6000
Northern and Western	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	
Hume	1800 650 227	Melbourne	[03] 9843 6000
		Wodonga	[02] 6055 7777
AFTER HOURS Student PROTECTION EMERGENCY SERVICES [AHCPEs]			
BUSINESS HOURS [24 HOURS, 7 DAYS A WEEK]: 131 278			