

# FIVE CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR **Responding to Incidents, Disclosures** and Suspicions of Child Abuse

# **YOU MUST TAKE ACTION**

# You must act, by following the 5 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.

\* A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

# **RESPONDING TO** AN EMERGENCY



# **REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES**

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
- calling 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.

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

### WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

**VICTORIA POLICE** You must report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor or volunteer to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to Mernda Hills Christian College **Child Protection Officers:** 

**PRINCIPAL** who will inform:

HEAD OF PRIMARY and/or

HEAD OF SECONDARY and/or

SAFETY OFFICER and/or

WELLBEING OFFICER

The Principal will also inform the

**ADVENTIST SCHOOLS VICTORIA CEO** 

**PROTECT** 

For suspected student sexual assault, please follow the Five Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending.

**DFFH CHILD PROTECTION** You must report to DFFH 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 has 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 also report internally to Mernda Hills Christian College Child Protection Officers:

**PRINCIPAL** who will inform:

HEAD OF PRIMARY and/or

HEAD OF SECONDARY and/or

SAFETY OFFICER and/or

WELLBEING OFFICER

The Principal will also inform the

**ADVENTIST SCHOOLS VICTORIA CEO** 

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing you must still act.

This may include making a referral or seeking advice from Child FIRST (now Orange Door) (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support), or to DFFH - Child Protection or Victoria Police.



Mernda Hills Christian College Principal or designee must consult with DFFH 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).

# CONTACT

### DFFH CHILD PROTECTION AREA

North & West Division 1300 664 977

After Hours weekends, public holidays 13 12 78

CHILD FIRST (Now Orange Door) www.dffh.vic.gov.au North & West Division

1800 319 355

VICTORIA POLICE 000 or Mernda Police Station (03) 9216 1200

ADVENTIST SCHOOLS VICTORIA (03) 9264 7730

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL VICTORIA (03) 9825 7200





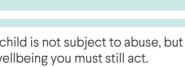












# As a Mernda Hills staff member, you play a critical role in protecting children in your care.

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.

# CONTACTING **PARENTS/CARERS**

### PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Mernda Hills Christian College **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 our duty of care requirements. Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals.



### **RECORDING**, RETAINING SECURING

You must record all instances of abuse or suspected abuse, using the Responding to Suspected Child Abuse digital template. This is an essential part of our duty of care requirements. A copy of the template is found in SEQTA Teach: Documents.

The completed recording document will be retained and securely stored in the affected student's records on SEQTA.

Only the executive leadership team will have access to the child or young person's record.

You **must** follow the **Five** Critical Actions every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.