

Title: PROCEDURE FOR RESPONDING TO REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse

1. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

The Geelong College has a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The College regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence. The Geelong College is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a comprehensive Child Protection Program designed to keep children safe.

2. RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

Child abuse can take many forms. The abuser may be a parent, carer, staff member, volunteer, another adult or even another child. The abuse may occur over time and potential risk indicators are often difficult to detect. Even our legal obligations for reporting allegations of child abuse can vary depending on the circumstances of the incident.

The College will take appropriate, prompt action in response to **all** allegations or disclosures of abuse, neglect, inappropriate behaviour or concerns about child safety by reporting all matters to the Victorian Child Protection Service, the Commission for Children and Young People, or the Police, depending on the allegation or disclosure made.

The Geelong College has established simple and accessible procedures for anyone to report, if appropriate, a child abuse concern internally to one of the College's **Child Protection Officers**. Please be aware that consulting with a Child Protection Officer does not change any obligation you have under legislation to report to an external authority.

The Geelong College has developed and implemented procedures for Council members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers for responding to allegations and disclosures of child abuse, or suspected child abuse, including procedures for support following a disclosure by a student.

Reporting procedures for Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Indirect Contact Volunteers, parents/carers and other community members are also included in our **Child Protection and Safety Policy**, available on our public website.

Age appropriate reporting procedures for students are developed through our **pastoral care program**.

This section describes our work systems, practices, policies and procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse both internally and externally. This includes:

Managing Your Initial Response to a Child Protection Incident

Responding to an Emergency

Reporting a Child Abuse Concern Internally

General Legal Obligation to “Act to Protect” and to Report Child Sexual Abuse

Mandatory Reporting

Reportable Conduct of Staff, Volunteers and Others

Responding to Other Concerns About the Wellbeing of a Child

Conduct that is Reportable to the Victorian Institute of Teachers (VIT)

Communication with Parents/Carers

Support for Students Interviewed at the College

Making Additional Reports

Child Protection Complaints Management

Confidentiality & Privacy

Child Protection Record Keeping

The College’s policies and procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse are made available to staff, students, parents/carers and the wider College community through our staff intranet and by request.

All of the College’s procedures for reporting and responding to allegations of child abuse are designed and implemented taking into account the diverse characteristics of the College community.

A summary of these procedures is made publicly available on the College’s website through our [Child Protection and Safety Policy](#) and is accessible to all children, College staff and the wider community.

The College will respond to all allegations of child abuse in an appropriate manner including:

informing the appropriate authorities and fully cooperating with any resulting investigation;

protecting any child connected to the allegation until it is resolved and providing ongoing support to those affected;

taking particular measures in response to an allegation that concerns a culturally diverse child or a child with a disability; and

securing and retaining records of the allegation and the College’s response to it.

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It is critical that all teaching staff, non-teaching staff, Council members, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers keep clear and comprehensive notes relating to incidents, disclosures and allegations of child abuse. This information may be sought at a later date if the matter is the subject of court proceedings. Your notes may also assist you later if you're required to provide evidence to support your decisions regarding the handling of child protection incidents.

For more information about how to record observations, disclosures or allegations refer to the [Child Protection Record Keeping](#) section of this Program.

Preserving Evidence

When an incident of suspected child abuse occurs at the College, consider all of the following:

- I. environment: do not clean up the area and preserve the sites where the alleged incident occurred;
- II. clothing: take steps to ensure that the person who has allegedly committed the abuse and the child who has allegedly been abused remain in their clothing. If this is not possible, ensure the clothes are not washed, handled as little as possible and stored in a sealed bag;
- III. other physical items: ensure that items such as weapons, bedding and condoms are untouched; and
- IV. potential witnesses: reasonable precautions must be taken to prevent discussion of the incident between those involved in the alleged incident.