



# Guidelines to responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse

## 1.0 Purpose

As an AE / Stott's College staff member, you play a critical, and legal, role in protecting children, which is defined as any individual under the age of 18 years, in your care.

- You **must** act, by following the [Four Critical Actions](#) within these guidelines, 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.
- You **must** act if you form a suspicion/reasonable belief<sup>1</sup>, 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** record clear and comprehensive notes using the [PROTECT template](#) and saving in the incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse SharePoint folder.

## 2.0 Four Critical Actions

### Action 1: Responding to an emergency

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
- notify the Welfare Support Officer (Janet Yoong) and the Registrar (Mandy Simons) who will liaise with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

### Action 2: Reporting to authorities

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.

#### ***If the source of suspected abuse is from within AE:***

You must report all instances of suspected child abuse to the relevant state or territory Police. You **must also** report **internally** to:

- VCE Coordinator
- Head of School
- Manager - English for Secondary Schools
- CEO
- Head of Quality and Risk

<sup>1</sup> A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action



***If the source of suspected abuse is from within the family or community***

You must report to the relevant state or territory Child Protection services 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:** [Child protection contacts - DFFH Services](#)

**New South Wales:** [Making the report to the Child Protection Helpline | Communities and Justice](#)

**Queensland:** [Child abuse | Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety](#)

**South Australia:** [Process for mandated reporters | Department for Child Protection](#)

**Western Australia:** [Child protection](#)

You must also report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to the relevant state or territory Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

- VCE Coordinator
- Head of School
- Manager - English for Secondary Schools
- CEO
- Head of Quality and Risk

**Action 3: Contacting parents/carers**

The relevant unit/senior executive must consult with the relevant state/territory Child Protection Service or Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- **not to contact** the parents/carers (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 parents/carers 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).

**Action 4: providing ongoing support**

AE must provide support for children impacted by abuse, as per the guidance in VCE-POL-01 Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

You must follow the [Four Critical Actions](#) every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.



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 the relevant state/territory Child Protection Service or Police.

### 3.0 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, readers should refer to the [Child Safe Standards – Definitions](#) provided by the Victorian Government for the definitions of terms used in relation to the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359.

### 4.0 Related policies

- VCE-POL-01 Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- VCE-GUI-06 Guidelines to responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse
- VCE-CC-03 Child Safety Code of Conduct.docx

### 5.0 Document Information

Document Name	Guidelines to responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse
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Approving Authority	CEO

### 6.0 Change Log

Date	Version	By	Notes
02/12/2025	2.0	HQR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stott's College has undertaken a comprehensive policy review and reset to ensure all policies and procedures are purpose-built for the school and under-18 context and aligned with applicable regulatory requirements, with existing materials consolidated, enhanced, or formalised as necessary.</li><li>• Updated position titles</li></ul>



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- Included links to Four Critical Actions information
  - Included requirement to complete PROTECT Reporting template
  - Included development of incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse SharePoint folder
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