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Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse

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 Department of Health and Human Services or the Police, depending on the allegation or disclosure made.

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

Sacred Heart College has developed and implemented procedures for Advisory Board members, staff and 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, Volunteers, parents/carers and other community members are also included in our **Child Safe Policy** which is available on our public website.

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

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

Managing Your Initial Response to a Child Protection Incident

Reporting a Child Abuse Concern Internally

The Obligation to Report a Sexual Offence and Failure to Protect

Mandatory Reporting

Reportable Conduct

Student Sexual Offending

Responding to Other Concerns About the Wellbeing of a Child

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

Communication with Parents/Carers

Support for Students Interviewed at the College

Making Additional Reports

Child Protection Complaints Management

Confidentiality and 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 College 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 Safe 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
- securing and retaining records of the allegation and the College's response to it.

Documenting Your Observations and Actions

All teaching staff, non-teaching staff, Advisory Board members, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers must 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:

- environment: do not clean up the area and preserve the sites where the alleged incident occurred
- 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
- other physical items: ensure that items such as weapons, bedding and condoms are untouched
- potential witnesses: reasonable precautions must be taken to prevent discussion of the incident between those involved in the alleged incident