

# CHILD SAFE REPORTING PROCEDURE

*Reporting improper behaviour, disclosures from children and young people, and allegation of abuse.*

<b>POLICY CODE</b> CH 1.2	<b>VERSION</b> 1.3.0 <small>Major version . minor version . draft</small>
<b>STATUS</b> Issued <small>Draft, Approved, Issued, In review</small>	<b>ISSUE DATE</b> 21 March 2022 <small>Date this exact version was released</small>
<b>AUTHORISED BY</b> Board <small>Who approves and reviews this policy</small>	<b>AUTHORISED ON</b> 18 May 2020 <small>Date the major version was approved</small>
<b>NEXT REVIEW</b> Jan – Mar 2023 <small>Quarter policy will next be reviewed</small>	<b>LAST REVIEW</b> 22 February 2022 <small>Date policy was last reviewed</small>

## PROCEDURE STATEMENT

VicSRC will not tolerate any abuse of children and young people. All staff and volunteers employed by VicSRC are responsible for the care and protection of children and young people who participate in our organisation and for reporting information about abuse, by following this procedure. The procedure should be read in conjunction with VicSRC's **Child Safe Policy** and **Child Safe Code of Conduct**.

### Definitions

*What do we mean when we use these words?*

**Child** means a person below the age of 18 years.

**Young person** means a person between the ages of 12 and 25 years.

**Adult** means someone aged 18 years or over.

## PROCEDURES

*When, what and how should things be done?*

### Reporting of abuse and legal responsibilities

Abuse against children is a crime. Any reasonable belief that a child has been sexually abused must be reported to police as part of "Failure to disclose" legislation.

Any reasonable belief that a child has been or is in danger of being abused and/or neglected in any other way should be reported to Child Protection services, or to family safety services such as [Orange Door](#).

While VicSRC is not covered by mandatory reporting requirements, it is strongly encouraged that all allegations or reasonable beliefs of physical, emotional and psychological abuse are reported to an appropriate organisation to ensure the child receives support to be safe.

**If you have concerns that a child or young person is at immediate risk of abuse or harm call the police on 000.**

## Reporting improper behaviour at work

If you are concerned about improper behaviour between any adult and a child or young person, you should immediately inform VicSRC's Designated Child Safety Officer/CEO (Nina Laitala, 0411 679 050).

If the incident is concerning the CEO, you can report to the VicSRC Board Chairperson (Howard Choo, [howard@board.vicsrc.org.au](mailto:howard@board.vicsrc.org.au)).

## What to do if a child or young person discloses an incident of abuse to you:

- Try and discreetly separate them from others and listen to them carefully.
- Let them use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure them that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, or the police/child protection.
- Do not make promises to them such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- If the disclosure includes an allegation of sexual abuse, explain to the child that this is a crime and must be reported to the police.
- If the disclosure is about any other non-life threatening abuse, explain to the child that we would like to report to child protective services.
- Explain to the child that the reporting authorities will investigate the allegation and take action needed to make sure that they are safe. Some children may be distressed about potentially being removed from their abuser so it's important to reassure them that authorities will do their best to keep them safe and help their abuser
- Do not leave them in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them. If you have to leave them, ensure they are handed over to a trusted adult.
- Take notes/complete a **Child Safe Incident Report** (Appendix A) with them.
- Explain to the child the immediate next steps that will be taken (as far as you are aware) and ask them what action they would like to take.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

## What to do if a parent/carer says their child has been abused while in VicSRC's care or raises a concern:

- Explain that we take all abuse allegations very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them that you may need to repeat what they have told you to authorities or others, such as VicSRC management, the police or child protection.
- Do not make promises, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Inform them that sexual abuse of children must be reported to the police and that VicSRC reports all other allegations of abuse to child protection services.
- Take notes/complete a **Child Safe Incident Report** (Appendix A) with them.
- Explain to them the immediate next steps that will be taken (as far as you are aware) and ask them what action they would like to take.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

## Reporting procedures if an allegation of abuse is made about a VicSRC staff member or volunteer

- Complete a Child Safe Incident Report (Appendix A).
- Phone the VicSRC CEO/Child Safety Officer (0411 679 050) immediately to report the incident.
- The VicSRC CEO/Child Safety Officer will commence an investigation into the incident immediately, which may involve contacting the police/child protection.

## As soon as possible after *any* disclosure:

- Complete a **Child Safe Incident report** (Appendix A), if you haven't already done so, recording the information using the words of the person making the disclosure;
- Report the disclosure to the VicSRC CEO or VicSRC Board Chair;
- The person who heard the disclosure must report to police or child protection as required, the CEO can support them;
- Update the incident report to ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately;
- Ensure the incident report is securely stored in a locked cabinet by VicSRC staff.
- Book a time with VicSRC CEO or Board Chair for a debrief.

## Considerations

- Be aware that some people from certain backgrounds may face unique barriers in reporting allegations of abuse.

- For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking with police, or have difficulty communicating in English. Be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a friend or family member).
- For example, children with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters. For advice on communicating with people with a disability, please refer to the [DFFH website](#).
- When responding to a report from a child or family member/parent that identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, from refugee or migrant backgrounds, who are LGBTIQ+, and/or have a disability, VicSRC, in partnership with the Child Safe Officer, will seek additional advice from external organisations as required, to ensure an appropriate response.

## Contact numbers

To make a report to Child Protection, consult [this information on the DHHS website](#).

For concerns about the safety of a child after office hours or on weekends or public holidays, call the after-hours Child Protection Emergency Service on 131 278 – toll-free for all Victoria.

### Other contacts:

- The [Sexual Assault Crisis Line Victoria \(SACL\)](#) is a state-wide, after-hours, confidential, telephone crisis counselling service for people who have experienced both past and recent sexual assault. SACL operates between 5pm weeknights through to 9am the next day and throughout weekends and public holidays. Call 1800 806 292.
- Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria - Tel: (03) 9486 9866.

If you or someone you know has experienced child sexual abuse in an institutional context, you can contact Victoria Police's SANO Task Force via email [sanotaskforce@police.vic.gov.au](mailto:sanotaskforce@police.vic.gov.au). You may also wish to make a free call to the task force on 1800 110 007 to report matters relating to child sexual abuse.

The [Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams](#) (SOCITs) are made up of specialist detectives who are training to investigate the complex crimes of sexual offences and child abuse. SOCITs are based around the state and deal with cases from the time of disclosure, throughout the investigation process and then on to court. To find your nearest SOCIT, [search by region here](#).

## Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. VicSRC have safeguards and practises in place to ensure any personal information is protected and will follow VicSRC's Privacy Policy.

Everyone is entitled to know how the personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.

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## RELATED

*What other VicSRC policies, procedures, guides and templates are associated with this policy or procedure? If something is not in this policy/procedure, it might be in one of them.*

Further information on Child Safety and fact sheets, please see the Commission for Children and Young People [website](#).

CH 1.1 Code of Conduct

CH 1.2 Child Safe Code of Conduct

RM 1.0 Risk Management Policy

VicSRC Privacy Policy

PR 2.0 Data Protection Policy

### Registers and Forms

Child Safe Incident Report (APPENDIX A)

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## REFERENCES

*What resources were used to create this policy, for example, example or other organisations' policies, legislation, government advice?*

[CCYP | Making children safe](#)

[Communicate and consult with people with a disability - DHHS Service Providers \(dffh.vic.gov.au\)](#)

[Department of Health and Human Services Victoria | Reporting child abuse and neglect \(dhhs.vic.gov.au\)](#)

[Sexual Assault Crisis Line » Sexual Assault Crisis Line \(sacl.com.au\)](#)

[Sexual offences and child abuse investigation teams \(police.vic.gov.au\)](#)

[Family violence support and extra help for children and families \(orangedoor.vic.gov.au\)](#)

### Legislation

*Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*

*Crimes Act 1958*

*Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015*

*Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012*

*Failure to disclose forms part of the Victorian Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014*

