

# FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

## Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

**YOU MUST TAKE ACTION** As a staff member at Siena College, you play a **critical role** in protecting children in your care.

- You **must** act, by following the Four 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.
- 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).
- It is strongly recommended that you use the **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template** to keep clear and comprehensive notes, even if you make a decision not to report.

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

### 2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES / REFERRING TO SERVICES

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.

#### Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?

#### WITHIN THE SCHOOL

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

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

- Your Principal and/or Leadership Team
- Dominican Education Australia (DEA) and Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS)

All allegations of 'reportable conduct' **must** be reported as soon as possible to DEA and MACS.

#### WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

You **must** report to **DHHS 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

You **must** also report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to **Victoria Police**.

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

- Your Principal and/or Leadership Team
- DEA and MACS

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

#### OTHER CONCERNS

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/The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support)
- DHHS Child Protection
- Victoria Police

### 3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your principal **must** consult with DHHS 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)
- **How to communicate** with all relevant parties with consideration for their safety

### 4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Siena 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 your duty of care requirements.

Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals and support.

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.

#### CONTACT

**VICTORIA POLICE:**  
000 or your local police station

**DHHS CHILD PROTECTION**  
East Division: 1300 360 391  
After hours: 13 12 78

**CHILD FIRST**  
services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/  
referral-and-support-teams

**ORANGE DOOR**  
www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/  
the-orange-door.html

**DET Incident Support and Operations Centre:**  
1800 126 126

**Incident Management and Support Unit:**  
1800 126 126

**Employee Conduct Branch:** (03) 9637 2595

**MACS:** (03) 9267 0228

**The LOOKOUT** has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence: www.lookout.org.au

Family violence victims/survivors can be referred to **1800 Respect** (1800 737 732)



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