**FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR VET and HIgher Education Providers**

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

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| **YOU MUST TAKE ACTION**  As an Organisation/Institution/University staff member, 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). * You **must** use the [INSERT RELEVANT TEMPLATE NAME] to keep clear and comprehensive notes.   \* A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action |

**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 in your organisation for future liaison 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 the organsiation, institute or university:

Victoria Police

You must report all instances of suspected child abuse to Victoria Police.

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

[INSERT RELEVANT INFORMATION]

* [INSERT RELEVANT INFORMATION]

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

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

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.

VICTORIA POLICE

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

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

[INSERT RELEVANT INFORMATION]

* [INSERT RELEVANT INFORMATION]

**ACTION 3: CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS**

The relevant unit/staff member **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/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**

Your Organisation, Institute or University **must** provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a ***Student Support Plan*** developed in consultation with Student Wellbeing professional and/or Counselling staff.

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

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 Child FIRST (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support), or to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police.

**CONTACT**

**DHHS CHILD PROTECTION**

*AREA*

North Division 1300 664 9777

South Division 1300 655 795

East Division 1300 360 391

West Division (Rural) 1800 075 599

West Division (Metro) 1300 664 9777

*AFTER HOURS*

After hours, weekends, public holidays 13 12 78

**CHILD FIRST**

www.dhs.vic.gov.au

**VICTORIA POLICE**

**000** or contact your local police station

**[INSERT ANY ADDITIONAL CONTACT DETAILS RELEVANT TO YOUR ORGANSATION]**