

Identify and respond to child abuse in a service, including grooming

Speak up! Always put the child's safety, rights, and best interests first.

Identify child abuse

All staff

You can identify abuse by:

- witnessing grooming behaviours or an incident
- receiving a disclosure from a child, or someone who knows them
- observing:
 - physical/behavioural signs of abuse
 - something concerning online or on a device.

Tell your service manager, nominated supervisor, and/or approved provider if you become aware of any allegation, complaint, disclosure, or concern that:

- an adult engaged by the service may be abusing a child, or
- a child is at risk of being abused.

At all times, you must also:

- **Respond to an emergency** – Call 000. Preserve evidence. Keep children safe.
- **Repeat/take different actions as circumstances change.**
- **Document your actions.**

Report abuse to authorities

Service management, nominated supervisors and/or approved providers are responsible for managing reports. However, if you suspect your service manager, nominated supervisor or approved provider of abuse, do not contact them without clearance from police.

Victoria Police

- If you believe a crime (e.g. physical or sexual assault or abuse, grooming, or threatening behaviour) may have been committed against a child, report to Victoria Police.

Victorian Early Childhood Regulatory Authority (VECRA)

- Your approved provider must notify VECRA:
 - **Within 24 hours** of a serious incident at an education and care service (or if someone makes a complaint that there was a serious incident at the service).
 - **Within 24 hours** of becoming aware of reportable sexual misconduct, including any sexual misconduct or sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of a child by a relevant staff member working or volunteering at the service (even if it did not happen at the service).¹
- If your service manager, nominated supervisor or approved provider does not notify VECRA of the concern, you can make a complaint to VECRA (including **anonymously**).

Social Services Regulator (SSR)

- Your approved provider must notify the SSR of any reportable allegations within three business days.
- Reportable allegations include the following allegations involving an adult working for/engaged by a service:
 - Physical violence, sexual offences, or sexual misconduct against, with, or in the presence of a child; behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm; and significant neglect.

Notify parents/carers

- If Victoria Police and/or VECRA are involved, seek their clearance on what can be shared before contacting parents/carers.
- Once you get clearance, contact parents/carers as soon as possible (same day preferred).

¹ This requirement is in effect from 12 August 2026.

Key contacts

Victoria Police

- **000** (emergencies)
- **131 444** or local police station (non-emergencies)

VECRA

- **Enquiries:** 1300 307 415 (9am–5pm, Mon–Fri)
- **Email:** vecra@education.vic.gov.au
- **Online complaint form**

SSR

- **Enquiries:** 1300 310 778
- **Email:** contact@ssr.vic.gov.au
- **Secure webform:** rsc.ssr.vic.gov.au

Local sexual assault service



vic.gov.au/protect-early-childhood

Support impacted children

- Engage children and parents/carers to find the best support.
- Arrange additional support for impacted children and staff.
- Tailor support to individual needs.
- Use **Child Link** and information sharing to better understand the situation for impacted children and to provide appropriate support.
- Support parents/carers to engage with their local Maternal and Child Health Service (MCH).
- Continue support for as long as necessary.

Refer to community services

Engage parents/carers and children to connect with services:

- **Local specialist support services** for dedicated support for young children.
- **First Nations people** can also be supported by an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO).
- **Local sexual assault services** for sexual offences/harmful sexual behaviour.