

A Step-by-Step Guide for Responding to Online Incidents of Inappropriate Behaviour Affecting Students

School Staff Duty of Care

Schools have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to protect students from any harm that should have reasonably been foreseen. The nature and scope of the duty in these circumstances will vary according to a number of factors, for example: the role and responsibilities of the employee, whether the incident occurred inside or outside of school hours, etc.

You are concerned about a student because you have:

- received a disclosure from the student who has been subjected to inappropriate behaviour that is occurring or has occurred in the digital world.
- received a report from an adult or another student about inappropriate behaviour that is occurring or has occurred in the digital world.

For further information visit about Duty of Care: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/dutyofcare.aspx>

Step 1

IDENTIFYING CONCERNS

An incident of concern may include one or more of the following:

An event which causes distress to a student

Including cyberbullying, sexting, exposure to pornographic images or a breach of the school's Student Engagement Policy.

A student has been EXPOSED to and affected by inappropriate behaviour online and:

The student is at risk of suffering significant physical, psychological or emotional harm and may be in need of immediate protection.

Go to Step 3

A student has ENGAGED in inappropriate behaviour online that:

a) May cause psychological or emotion harm to another student(s).

Go to Step 2

b) Could be deemed as criminal activity.

Go to Step 3C

c) Could be psychologically and/or emotionally damaging to themselves (e.g. sexting).

Go to Step 2

Legal Division: 03 9637 3146
Security Services Unit: 03 9589 6266

Step 2

FURTHER ACTIONS

If you suspect that inappropriate behaviour has occurred, it is important to make sure the student/s are in a safe environment. It is also important to take detailed notes of the action that may include one or more of the following:

A. Inquire into the inappropriate behaviour. This may include discussions with all staff/students who have been directly or indirectly in the incident and/or its effects.

B. If you become aware during your inquiry that a criminal offence may have occurred contact the relevant authorities.

Go to Step 3B & C

C. Where appropriate, contact the parents of all students involved.

*If a school is unsure whether parents should be contacted, the Department's Legal Division or Security Services Unit can assist to make a decision.

Go to Step 3D

D. Provide reasonable and ongoing wellbeing support to all students and staff who were involved in or witness to the incident.

Go to Step 4

E. Where appropriate, refer to the school's Student Engagement Policy and follow the appropriate processes and procedures.

Go to Step 5

Step 3

REPORTING

A. Report to School Leadership

Staff member immediately advises and consults a member of the school's leadership team to report the incident and plan the appropriate response.

B. Report to Security Services Unit

All reportable incidents should be reported to Security Services Unit (03 9589 6266). This will alert regional staff.

C. Report to Victoria Police

It is expected that an staff member will contact police if there has been possible criminal activity. In such cases seek advice about contacting the parents of ALL students involved in the incident.

*If a school is unsure whether an incident should be reported the Police will advise the school as to whether they will investigate or whether the school should handle the situation.

D. Report to Parents and/or Guardians

Contact the parents/guardians of the student who has been exposed to and/or engaged in inappropriate behaviour (where appropriate).

*If a school is unsure whether parents should be contacted, the Department's Legal Division or Security Services Unit can assist to make a decision.

E. Provide a Wellbeing Referral and Support

Consult with relevant regional staff as appropriate.

Go to Step 4

Step 4

WELLBEING REFERRAL

Wellbeing Referral

Contact your school's Leadership and/or Student Wellbeing Team to discuss strategies that can be used to respond to and support ALL students at risk from the inappropriate behaviour. This may include counselling and support or the development of an action plan to implement targeted strategies.

Keep a record of the action plan and make notes on any relevant observations. Review the action plan as necessary.

Step 5

ACTIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Each Victorian government school has developed a Student Engagement Policy that sets out the rights, responsibilities and shared expectations of everyone in the school community, including students, parents, teachers and school staff. The policy clearly defines the consequences for students who behave inappropriately. In responding to online incidents of inappropriate behaviour, principals and teachers should refer to their Student Engagement Policy for appropriate actions and consequences.

For additional information, see:
School Policy and Advisory Guide
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/bullying.aspx>