

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Responding to online incidents affecting students

Step 1: Identify concerns

An online incident can include:

- cyberbullying
- threats of violence and/or intimidation
- image-based abuse and/or sextortion
- exposure to graphic or pornographic images
- viral hoaxes
- other online breaches of the school's Bullying Prevention and Response Policy, Cybersafety or Student Engagement Policy.

Has a student's actions affected another student?

A student may have engaged in behaviour online that may cause psychological or emotional harm to another student.

Have a student's actions put themselves at risk of harm?

A student may have engaged in behaviour online that may cause psychological or emotional harm to themselves (such as sending explicit images).

Does the incident involve criminal behaviour?

A student may have engaged in behaviour online that could be deemed as criminal activity.

Step 2: Ensure safety

If an online incident is suspected or identified, it is important to first make sure the student/s involved are in a safe environment. **Respond to the immediate needs of students, staff and any other parties and contact emergency services on 000 if required.**

Inquire into the incident

This may include discussions with staff and students who have been directly or indirectly involved in the incident.

When talking to student(s) remember to:

- Stay calm and listen
- Reassure the student(s) that they will be supported and that the issue can be resolved
- Depending on the incident, ask the student(s) how they would like to resolve the issue
- Refer to relevant school policies and ensure to record the incident
- Seek advice and input from the wellbeing team or others members of school leadership as needed about addressing the issue
- Refer the incident to the wellbeing team, year level coordinator or other member of school leadership if the incident is complex, ongoing, involves numerous students, you are concerned a criminal offence may have occurred and/or you are concerned about the safety and wellbeing of students or others who may be involved.

Step 3: Take action

The incident, student(s) involved and whether it has been referred will determine next steps. In some instances, classroom teachers may feel confident and comfortable addressing an incident. In other instances, further action may be required as per your school's Bullying Prevention and Response Policy, Cybersafety or Student engagement policy. Follow appropriate processes and procedures.

If a criminal offence may have occurred, contact Victoria Police.

A member of the school's leadership team is often best placed to lead contact with the police.

Seek advice from the police if unsure whether an incident is a criminal offence. Depending on the incident, the police may also provide advice about contacting the parents of all students involved in the incident.

Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC)

The incident may need to be reported to ISOC.

Incidents rated as Extreme, High, or Medium must be **reported to ISOC for immediate advice and coordination of Area-based supports**; and recorded by the school on CASES21 or equivalent records management system

Contact ISOC on 1800 126 126 for further advice about incident ratings.

Step 4: Provide support

Provide support as needed to all students and staff who were involved in or witness to the incident. This could include:

- Parent/carer meetings
- School based wellbeing support
- Referral to external supports
- Ongoing monitoring and other targeted strategies
- Development of a Behaviour Support Plan
- Education on the acceptable use of technology

Contact your local regional office for further advice if required

Recording information

Remember to:

- Keep records of the incident (such as screenshots where appropriate, notes from the interviews)
- Record the process taken to resolve the incident (such as steps taken to remove content, mediation attempts).
- Be aware that there may be issues around the collection of images of people under 18 who are victims of sexual abuse, in a sexual pose or activity or who is naked and that may be offensive. It is illegal to possess or distribute this material unless you possess it in good faith, in the course of your official duties and to assist a police investigation.

- If you are concerned that a mobile phone, laptop, other device or document may contain child abuse material, seek advice from Victoria Police and follow any directions they give you about confiscating, handling, possessing or dealing with the device and its contents. Record carefully the advice from Victoria Police and the steps taken after receiving that advice.

For more information on ways to record the incident, or to support a student to do so, see the eSafety Commissioner's [Collecting Evidence](#) page.

Key contacts and additional resources

ISOC

Contact ISOC to report incidents or for advice and coordination of Area-based supports on 1800 126 126

More information on mandatory reporting and the Severity Rating Decision-making Matrix is available on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library.

Regional Office contacts

North Eastern Victoria

1300 333 231 - nevr@education.vic.gov.au

North Western Victoria

1300 338 691 - nwvr@education.vic.gov.au

South Eastern Victoria

1300 338 738 - sevr@education.vic.gov.au

South Western Victoria

1300 333 232 - swvr@education.vic.gov.au

Other resources

Bully Stoppers

For more information about bullying and cybersafety, search for [Bully Stoppers](#).

PROTECT

For more information on Child Safe Standards and identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian Schools, search for [PROTECT](#).

The eSafety Commissioner

The office provides a range of up-to-date information and resources, coupled with a complaints system to assist children who experience serious cyberbullying and image-based abuse. See: www.esafety.gov.au

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636

headspace: headspace.org.au

Reach out: au.reachout.com