



Getting the best from and for our students.

CHILD SAFE

Community Information

THE CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

Preventing child abuse is our collective responsibility; it must be embedded into our thinking, attitudes and practices. Narre Warren South P-12 College continues in its development towards an organisational culture that protects children from abuse and reflects its commitment to child safety. This is underpinned by Ministerial Order 870 – Child Safe Standards- Managing the risk of child abuse in schools; outlining the seven Child Safe Standards:

1. Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety
2. A child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety
3. A child safety code of conduct
4. Screening, supervision, training and other HR practices that reduce the risk of child abuse
5. Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
6. Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
7. Strategies to promote child participation and empowerment

To further meet our legal and moral requirements, Child Safe Standards (1-7) will be continually reflected upon, developed and discussed for refinement to ensure that it is easily accessible, easy to understand and user friendly to children and equally, the wider community.

Our College will reflect and re-fine its policies to ensure that these cater for our legislative obligations under Ministerial Order 870 and ongoing needs of our community. All school staff and people working in a child connected capacity will have an awareness of children's rights and adults' responsibilities regarding child appropriate behaviour. The College also meets the guidelines as set out in Ministerial Orders 382 (Work Experience) and 55 (SWL).

The College will meet its obligation under the Ministerial Order through a variety of actions outlined in this information package.

1. STRATEGIES TO EMBED AN ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE OF CHILD SAFETY

COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

- In liaison with the wider school community, College leaders have created create a statement of commitment to Child Safety and Child Safety Code of Conduct that addresses the College's vision, mission, values and objectives in regards to child safety and incorporated measures to prevent child abuse.
- Have nominated child safe representatives who are appropriately trained and supported.
- Establish, in consultation, the processes for induction and training for the College community in recognising and responding to child abuse and new legislative requirements affecting processes, policies and protocols for staff, volunteers and contractors.
- Building responsibility for embedding an organisational culture of safety; including knowledge and understanding of staff obligations and what to do if an allegation is made.
- Advertising of employment positions on Recruitment Online will include reference to our Child Safe Standards and Code of Conduct; including reference that Narre Warren South P-12 College promotes the safety, participation and empowerment of all children, including those with a disability. That our school is culturally safe for Aboriginal children and those from culturally and / or linguistically diverse backgrounds. In addition, that we encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples and those from a culturally and / or linguistically diverse background.
- To investigate partnerships with family / community group to enhance and develop a culture of shared responsibility on organisational child safe policies and the empowerment and inclusiveness of all our students including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children with disabilities and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Institute and maintain adequate record keeping of child safety issues and responses to any incidents. Strict processes of communication and associated paperwork linked to DET processes and protocols.
- Publish information and Child Safe documentation on the College website and making the school community aware of child safety strategies via the school newsletter.
- Where opportunities for improvement are identified, then leadership or in conjunction with any other agencies (e.g. DHHS / DET) will adjust processes and protocols and inform the wider community to said change.

SCHOOL COUNCIL

- The School Council communicates that it has zero tolerance of child abuse in any form.
- Child safety is listed for discussion at all formal meetings (e.g. School Council / Consultative Committee).
- Child safety strategies are developed, rigorously reviewed and adjusted to meet legislative needs.
- Effective reporting processes are developed, with identified people in the school to oversee outcomes.

- School Council and identified staff of the College will communicate with the wider school community about the Child Safety Code of Conduct policy and child protection reporting requirements.
- The school will report on child safety in its Annual Report.
- The school will report on child safety (and risk minimisation) in its Risk Registry.

SCHOOL STAFF (INCLUDING CONTRACTORS, VOLUNTEERS AND ANYONE WORKING IN A CHILD-CONNECTED CAPACITY)

- The College will maintain awareness of Child Safety Code of Conduct policy and child protection reporting requirements to all school staff; including ongoing training and induction of new staff to the College.
- Ensuring all staff have current VIT (with Criminal History validation) and Working with Children checks, with a register to current validity and photocopies of staff VIT / WWCC cards placed on file.
- Probation periods for employment will assist the College in determining a new staff member's performance and suitability in working with children.
- Clear processes on child safety practices are widely communicated and understood.
- All CRTs listed for local employment at the College to supply VIT registration in advance of offer of work.
- All CRTs sourced through an agency are to supply the agency VIT registration in advance of offer of work.
- Child safety is listed for discussion regularly at team meetings.
- Staff are provided with professional development to detect inappropriate behaviour.
- Positive behaviours are recognised and encouraged.
- Provide an environment of openness, transparency and approachability on child safety processes.
- Any CRTs, volunteers and / or contractors to be provided with a College 'Child Safe Code of Conduct' document, affirming our commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people at our College. The document will outlay the parameters of our commitment to child safety and list appropriate and inappropriate behaviours within this context. All CRTs, volunteers and / or contractors will need to sign a register acknowledging their reading and understanding of requirements prior to commencing their child-connected work within the College.

STUDENTS

- Students will be made aware on how to report inappropriate behaviour.
- Students will be encouraged to report inappropriate behaviour.
- The school will identify people that children can approach and discuss issues associated with child safety; including the appointment of a Child-Safety Officer.
- The school will create clearly understood and widely publicised child safety reporting procedures.
- The school employs Student Wellbeing Co-ordinators and psychologists who provide counselling and resources to support children

2. A CHILD SAFETY POLICY OR STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Below is a copy of our statement of commitment to Child Safety as found in the Policies section of our website.

Rationale:

Narre Warren South P-12 College is wholly committed to child safety. We desire all our children to be safe, happy and empowered. Support of and respect for all members of the College community, especially children, is at the core of our College values. As such, we are committed to ensuring the safety, engagement and empowerment of all children. We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with all our policies and procedures. We have a duty of care and legal obligation to report serious concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing, which we follow.

Narre Warren South P-12 College is committed to preventing child abuse, the early identification, removal and reduction of risks to the safety and wellbeing of children. The College has human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the students in our care in addition to regular professional development for our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks and reporting processes.

Narre Warren South P-12 College is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children in the College community, and is inclusive of the many diverse cultural backgrounds and individual needs of all our students. The policies and procedures of the College support our staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

Aims:

This policy is intended to empower all children, who are vital and active participants of Narre Warren South P-12 College. As appropriate, we involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say. We promote respect as a core aspect of our College values. This includes respect for self and others, respect for the diverse cultural backgrounds of students in the College community, respect for the individual needs of all members of the College community and respect for the right that we all have to feel safe and supported at all times.

This policy guides staff and volunteers on the duty of care and legal obligations we have to our students. All staff must abide by the [Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees](#) and volunteers must abide by the conditions and expectations of our Volunteers Policy. Teaching staff must abide by the [VIT Code of Conduct for Teachers](#)

Guidelines:

- All staff are to abide by the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees.
- Volunteers must abide by the Volunteers Policy.
- Anyone working with children in the College must provide evidence of their current Working With Children Check (Non-Teaching Staff) or VIT Registration (Teaching Staff).
- Staff are required to participate in and remain up-to-date with all relevant professional development related to the prevention of and response to child abuse, in addition to the legal requirements of [Mandatory Reporting](#).

- The College uses appropriate selection criteria and processes for recruitment in line with [DET policies and guidelines for recruitment in schools](#) to ensure the staff employed at Narre Warren South P-12 College will actively work towards ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the children at the College.
- If a staff member forms a belief on reasonable grounds that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse, and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect the child from harm of that type, the staff member has a legal obligation to make a report to the appropriate authority. In Victoria, this is Child Protection, however it can include calling 000 if the child is deemed to be at immediate and serious risk or harm.
- The College will arrange for an interpreter, when required, to support the safety of our students.
- Staff members will make this report in conjunction with a member of the Wellbeing Team and a Principal Class Officer (PCO).
- The reporting of child sexual abuse is a community responsibility. In addition to the mandatory reporting obligations of staff at the school, it is a requirement under Victorian law that any adult who holds a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child (aged under 16) disclose that information to police. Failure to disclose this belief is an offence that applies to all adults in Victoria, not just professionals who work with children, unless they have a reasonable excuse.

A reasonable belief can be formed on the following basis:

- a child states that they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed o someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- direct observation of suspicious behaviour

Reported concerns for the safety and wellbeing of all students are recorded using Compass and involve the relevant members of the Wellbeing and Principal Class Officers.

For guidance in relation to the privacy and security of information recorded, please refer to the College Privacy Policy.

This statement was last approved by School Council in Term 2, 2018 and is scheduled for review in Term 2, 2020

3. CHILD SAFE CODE OF CONDUCT

Below is a copy of our Child Safe Code of Conduct as found in the Policies section of our website

All staff and volunteers of Narre Warren South P-12 College are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

All personnel of Narre Warren South P-12 College are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- upholding the College Statement of Commitment to Child Safety at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone with respect
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Indigenous children (for example, by never questioning an Indigenous child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the Wellbeing Leader and a Principal Class Officer, and ensure any allegation is reported to the police or child protection
- reporting any child safety concerns to the relevant Wellbeing Leader and Principal Class Officer
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe
- encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.
- Staff and volunteers must not:
 - develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
 - exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps. Sitting on laps could be appropriate sometime, for example while reading a storybook to a small child in an open plan area)
 - put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
 - do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
 - engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
 - use inappropriate language in the presence of children
 - express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
 - discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability
- have contact with a child or family who are part of the College community outside of our College context without the knowledge and/or consent of the College

Principal (for example, no babysitting). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, or contact through existing relationships (e.g. Parent volunteers with students who are friends) is appropriate

- have any online contact with a child or their family outside of the College context (with the exception of previously existing relationships)
- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

By observing these standards, you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to the Wellbeing Leader and Principal Class Officer. If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse, call 000

This document was last approved by School Council in Term 3, 2018 and is scheduled for review in Term 3, 2020

4. SCREENING, SUPERVISION, TRAINING AND OTHER HR POLICIES THAT REDUCE THE RISK OF CHILD ABUSE BY NEW AND EXISTING PERSONNEL

The College will ensure that newly recruited and existing staff and volunteers understand the importance of child safety, are aware of current policies, procedures and are trained to minimise the risk of child abuse.

These protocols will assist our College to identify the most suitable persons to work with children but will also act as a screening tool to deter unsuitable persons from applying or being appointed (paid / voluntary) basis. Importantly the College also observes the guidelines as set out in Ministerial Orders 382 (Work Experience) and 55 (SWL).

Ministerial Order No. 870 provides the framework for how schools will be required to comply with the Standards. Overall responsibility for ensuring compliance rests with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA). Accountability to compliance rests with the College.

The Ministerial Order specifies the following requirements for schools regarding recruitment. The following information has been taken from DET's PROTECT documents on Child Safe (Standard 4), which the College will utilize to ensure our compliance to this standard and recruitment of staff to the College.

Each job for school staff which involves child connected work must have a clear statement that sets out:

- The job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety; and
- The job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety.

All applicants for jobs that involve child connected work for the school must be informed about the school's child safety practices (including the Code of Conduct).

In accordance with any applicable legal requirement or school policy, the school must make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child connected work:

- Working with Children Check status, or similar check;
- Proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
- The person's history of work involving children; and
- References that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.

The school need not comply with the requirements in step (2) above if it has already made reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the information set out in steps (3)(a) to (3)(d), above about a particular individual within the previous 12 months.

The school must ensure that appropriate supervision or support arrangements are in place in relation to:

- The induction of new school staff into the school's policies, codes, practices, and procedures governing child safety and child connected work; and
- Monitoring and assessing a job occupant's continuing suitability for child connected work.

The school must implement practices that enable the school governing authority to be satisfied that people engaged in child-connected work perform appropriately in relation to child safety.

In order to meet these obligations, Narre Warren South P-12 College commits to undertaking the following actions:

- Advertising of employment positions on Recruitment On-line will include reference to our Child Safe Standards and Code of Conduct; including reference that the College promotes the safety, participation and empowerment of all children, including those with a disability. That our school is culturally safe for Aboriginal children and those from culturally and / or linguistically diverse backgrounds, where we encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples and those from a culturally and / or linguistically diverse background.
- Ensuring all staff have current VIT (with Criminal History validation) and Working with Children checks, with photocopies of such placed on file.
 - The College will liaise with VIT on any staff identified as not having registered by the required period.
- The College will inform volunteers, contractors and the wider school community about the parameters of requiring a Working with Children's Check (if required) if they intend to undertake child-connected work.
- Utilise probation periods for staff new to the College.
- Monitoring and Review provisions will be undertaken at the College, checking that the Working with Children Checks of relevant staff and volunteers are still valid. These will be linked to a register held at the College.
- Narre Warren South P-12 College is committed to pro-actively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our entire school environment and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. We will document, implement, monitor and periodically review our risk management strategies for child safety and ensure that the strategies change as needed as new risks arise. All risks to child safety will be listed on our **Risk Register** and reviewed annually.

The College will consider the following when recruiting new staff / volunteers:

- Relevant and verifiable experience in working with a diversity of children.
- The College will conduct a fair and transparent interview of all short-listed applicants for employment positions; allowing (where able) opportunities to draw on the applicant's real-life experiences to assess their skills and suitability in working with children.
- Understanding of children's physical, emotional needs.
- Understanding professional boundaries.
- Communication skills.
- Application of non-discriminatory attitudes or behaviours towards any child, for any reason.
- Responses from referees (2 x referee's minimum will be requested for each position). One referee must be the current or most recent employer; including the applicant's direct employer.
- Require evidence of identity (e.g. driver's licence / passport)
- Applicant provide a true copy of their qualifications.

5. PROCESSES FOR RESPONDING TO & REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

Duty of Care

- All school staff members have a duty to take reasonable steps to protect children under their care and supervision from harm that is reasonably foreseeable. The question of what constitutes "reasonable steps" will depend on the individual circumstances of each case.
- Staff may breach their duty of care towards a student if they fail to act in the way a reasonable or diligent professional would have acted in the same situation. In relation to suspected child abuse, reasonable steps may include:
 - Acting on concerns and suspicions of abuse as soon as practicable
 - Seeking appropriate advice or consulting with other professionals or agencies when the school staff member is unsure of what steps to take.
 - Reporting the suspected child abuse to appropriate authorities such as Victoria Police and DHHS Child Protection.
 - Arranging counselling and/or other appropriate welfare support for the child
 - Providing ongoing support to the child – this may include attending DHHS Child Protection Case Planning meetings, and convening regular Student Support Group meetings.
 - Sharing information with other school based staff who will also be responsible for monitoring and providing ongoing support to the child.

College staff need to liaise with the Child Safety Officer in all cases of suspicion or reasonable belief that child abuse has occurred, or is at risk of occurring.

See Duty of Care Policy

Student Understanding of Reporting

The College will institute processes and protocols to make students aware of child safety / child abuse and their need to report matters of child abuse to authorities.

Child safe information will be developed and shared through a variety of platforms at the College, including but not limited to the HPE curriculum, Home group, wellbeing and safety programs

MANDATORY REPORTING

RATIONALE

The protection of children and young people from abuse and neglect is our collective moral duty as a society. At Narre Warren South P-12 College, this includes staff, students, parents, guardians, volunteers, visitors and the wider community. DET Victoria strongly encourages all school staff to protect and preserve the safety, health and wellbeing of all children and young people.

This policy should be read in conjunction with Ministerial Order 870- Child Safe Standards, and the College's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety.

AIMS

To protect children and young people from abuse and neglect by ensuring school staff undertake the following-

- Part 4.4 of the Children, Youth and families Act, 2005, Section 184 imposes an obligation on teachers, principals and other persons listed in section 182, to make a mandatory report if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection on the grounds that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm because of physical injury or sexual abuse, and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.
- Understand mandatory reporting responsibilities and duty of care obligations to protect children and young people from child abuse including physical and sexual abuse.
- Know how to make a mandatory report to the Department of Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection or Victoria Police when they have formed a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm.
- Are able to identify and be aware of the indicators of abuse.

IMPLEMENTATION

Any person who is registered as a teacher under the Education and Training Reform Act (2006), or any person who has been granted to teach under the Act, including principals, is mandated to make a report to the Department of Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection.

DUTY OF CARE

All school staff members have a duty to take reasonable steps to protect the safety, wellbeing and health of children under their care and supervision from harm that is reasonably foreseeable. The question of what constitutes "reasonable steps" will depend on the individual circumstances of each case.

If a staff member has concerns about the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care it is important to take immediate action.

In the case of a child who may be in need of protection or therapeutic treatment, or where there are significant concerns about the wellbeing of a child, school staff can discharge this duty of care by taking action which includes the following:

- Reporting their concerns to Child Protection, Victoria Police or another appropriate agency.
- Notifying a member of the PCO Team and the Wellbeing Team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

Duty of care obligations are separate and additional to mandatory reporting and 'failure to disclose' reporting obligations and can be found in the College Duty of Care policy.

Staff may breach their duty of care towards a student if they fail to act in the way a reasonable or diligent professional would have acted in the same situation. In relation to suspected child abuse, reasonable steps may include:

- Acting on concerns and suspicions of abuse as soon as practicable.

- Seeking appropriate advice or consulting with other professionals or agencies when the school staff member is unsure of what steps to take.
- Reporting the suspected child abuse to appropriate authorities such as Victoria Police and DHHS Child Protection.
- Arranging counselling and/or other appropriate welfare support for the child.
- Providing ongoing support to the child – this may include attending DHHS Child Protection Case Planning meetings and convening regular Student Support Group meetings.
- Sharing information with other school-based staff who will also be responsible for monitoring and providing ongoing support to the child.

All College staff need to liaise with the Child Safety Officer (Wellbeing Co-Ordinator/s) in all cases of suspicion or reasonable belief that child abuse has occurred, is occurred or is at risk of occurring.

STUDENT UNDERSTANDING OF REPORTING

Narre Warren South P-12 College will institute processes and protocols to raise student awareness of child safety / child abuse and their need to report matters of child abuse to authorities. Child safe information will be shared through a variety of College programs, including but not limited to the Health and PE curriculum, Wellbeing and Engagement Programs.

MANDATORY REPORTING

All staff who are Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered teachers (including Principals) or who have been granted permission to teach by the VIT are 'mandatory reporters'. This means that in the course of undertaking their professional duties, they must report to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from significant harm as a result of sexual abuse or physical injury and the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child. They must report as soon as practicable after forming the belief.

There may be times when two or more mandated staff members, for example a teacher and a principal, have formed a belief about the same child or young person on the same occasion. In this situation it is sufficient for only one of the mandated staff members to report to Child Protection. The other staff member is obliged to ensure that the report has been made and that all of the grounds for their own belief were included in the report made by the other staff member.

If one staff member has a different view from another staff member about making a report and the staff member continues to hold the belief that a child is in need of protection, that person is obliged to make a report to Child Protection.

NON-MANDATED STAFF MEMBERS

Any person, who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection, may report their concerns to Child Protection. This means that any person, including non-mandated school staff, is able to make a report to Child Protection or Victoria Police when they believe that a child or young person is at risk of harm and in need of protection, and the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

In order to discharge duty of care, staff members, whether or not mandated, need to report a belief formed in the course of undertaking their professional duties. A report must

be made as soon as practicable after forming the belief, and on each occasion on which they become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief.

FAILURE TO DISCLOSE OFFENCE

In addition to mandatory reporting and duty of care obligations, any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 must report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence except in limited circumstances, such as where the information has already been reported to Child Protection or the child is older than 16 when the belief is formed.

FAILURE TO PROTECT OFFENCE

This applies where there is substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a school will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that school. A person in a position of authority in the school will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so. Organisations other than schools are also covered by the offence.

All College staff must act as soon as they witness an incident that breaches student safety or when they form a reasonable belief that a child has been or is at risk of being abused.

The College will record any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Code of Conduct (and subsequent action) and store these to DET and College security and privacy conventions. To make processes, understandings and obligations clear, our College has appointed dedicated Child-Safety Officers (Wellbeing Co-ordinators) with whom staff must liaise on all child safety areas.

RECEIVING A DISCLOSURE (CURRENT STUDENT / FORMER STUDENT)

If a child discloses that they have been, are being, or are in danger of being abused, College staff must treat the disclosure seriously and take immediate action by following the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse. (Appendix A)

If a former student discloses historical abuse, all staff must act. If the former student is currently of school age and attending a Victorian school, staff must follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse. (Appendix A) If the student is no longer of school age or attending a Victorian school, staff must still act by contacting Victoria Police.

All disclosures MUST be documented utilising the Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template (Appendix B)

** Additional strategies and advice on how to handle a disclosure can be found in the PROTECT resources section of the DET Website, linked in the 'Additional Resources' Section of this policy.

This information has been taken from DET's PROTECT documents- Identifying and Responding to ALL Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools to address Child Safe Standard 5

FORMING A REASONABLE BELIEF

If any Narre Warren South P-12 College member of staff witnesses behaviour, has a suspicion or receives a disclosure of child abuse, that staff member needs to determine whether they have formed a Reasonable Belief that a child is being abused or is at risk of being abused. A reasonable belief does not require proof (but needs to be more than a rumour or a hunch).

SIX DIFFERENT IDENTIFIED TYPES OF ABUSE

All staff who believe that a child is being abused by any type of abuse or at risk of being abused must follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools (Appendix A)

Detailed information on each area (and physical / behavioural indicators) can be gained from the PROTECT website

Physical Abuse which is any non-accidental infliction of physical violence on a child by any person.

1. Sexual

When a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity (which can also include non-contact offences). It may not always involve force, as in some circumstances, a child may be manipulated.

2. Grooming

When a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. This may involve communicating and / or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent / carer.

3. Emotional

Emotional child abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated, or frightened by threats or by witnessing family violence.

4. Neglect

Serious neglect significantly impairs the health or physical development of the child or places this development at serious risk.

5. Family Violence

Family violence can include physical violence or threats, verbal abuse, emotional and physical abuse, sexual abuse and financial and social abuse.

When identifying child abuse, it is critical to remember that:

- The trauma associated with child abuse can significantly impact upon the wellbeing / development of a child.
- All concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a child, or the conduct of a staff member, contractor or volunteer must be acted upon as soon as practicable.

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse -Taking Action

All staff members of Narre Warren South P-12 College play a critical role in protecting children in their care; including:

- Following the four critical actions, as soon as they witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.

- Acting if they form a suspicion / reasonable belief, even if they are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells them about the abuse).
- Using the Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template to keep clear and comprehensive notes.

Please note: Staff do not require the permission of parents, carers or guardians to make a report to Child Protection, nor are they required to tell parents, carers or guardians that they have done so.

Reports to Child Protection and Victoria Police are confidential unless you consent, or a court or tribunal decides that it is necessary in the interests of justice for your identity to be disclosed.

ACTIONS

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, the staff member 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
- Liaising with The relevant Child Safety Officer and PCO Team Member who will confer with Police on the specific incident.

ACTION 2: REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, the staff member 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 our College, all staff members must report all instances of suspected child abuse and sexual abuse involving a school staff member, contractor or volunteer to Victoria Police. School staff must also report the incident internally to:

- School Principal and/or leadership team
- Employee Conduct Branch
- DET Security Services Unit

Please refer to information on the Reportable Conduct Scheme listed in the 'Additional Resources' section of this policy.

If the source of suspected abuse is from within the family or community, all staff 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.

ACTION 3: CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

The College Principal or delegate 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

Narre Warren South P-12 College will provide ongoing support for children impacted by abuse via Student Support Plans, liaison with DET / External agencies, SSGs and wellbeing strategies.

If a staff member believes that a child is not subject to abuse, but still holds significant concerns for their wellbeing, they 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, all of which can be done with the support of a College Child Safety Officer (Wellbeing Co-Ordinator).

Strategies in support of a child may include liaison and communication with, but not limited to, the following:

- DHHS Child Protection and Victoria Police;
- Regional Office and engagement of Student Incident and Recovery Unit (SIRU);
- Parents/carers of all impacted students (where appropriate, following advice from authorities);
- If an international student is impacted, liaison with International Education Division (Government schools);
- If an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Student is impacted, liaison with Koorie Education Officer;
- Liaison with Victoria Police;
- Ongoing communication and action as set out by the Employee Conduct Branch (Government schools).

Strategies of ongoing support of a child may include (but not limited to), the following:

- Overseeing the development of a short-term action plan for all children impacted by suspected abuse in consultation with the Region and the Student Incident and Recovery Unit (SIRU);
- Ensuring ongoing education and support services are provided for all children involved via formation of a Student Support Group (SSG), overseen by the Child Safety Officer and representatives from a number of support agencies, including Student Incident and Recovery Unit (SIRU);
- Developing, implementing and reviewing a Student Support Plan in partnership with children and their parents/carers, allied health workers and external support agencies where appropriate (this plan should list appropriate school-level and non-school based supports and should assist students in returning to school);
- Addressing concerns as they arise.
- Provision of school-based wellbeing services for a child may include (but not limited to), the following:

- Continued monitoring of the situation and the health and wellbeing of impacted children and staff members;
- Ensuring the provision of ongoing support for the children, families and staff members involved.

The Principal (or delegate) will undertake a review process between 4-6 weeks after a report is made.

STAFF TRAINING

As part of their initial induction to the school, staff will be informed of child protection reporting requirements, relevant DET policies and College policies

Staff will be provided with additional support and guidance through:

- Annual Professional Development in Mandatory Reporting obligations and Managing Disclosures
- Annually completing DETs E-Learning module on Mandatory Reporting
- Reading the College policy on Child Safety Code of Conduct and Statement of Commitment annually, then signing a register to acknowledge such and their commitment to adhering to its obligations.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR STAFF

- DHHS - Child Protection: South Division: 1300 655 795; Dandenong (03) 8765 5444; A/H: 13 12 78
- Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team: (SOCIT) Dandenong: (03) 8769 2200
- Regional Office: Dandenong: (03) 8765 5600
- (DET) Security Services Unit: (03) 9589 6266
- (DET): Student Incident and Recovery Unit: (03) 9637 2934
- Child First (Casey): (03) 9705 3939 www.dhs.vic.gov.au
- (Casey) Aboriginal children and families: (03) 9794 5973
- Victoria Police: 000
- [eHeadspace](http://eheadspace.org.au) (online and a 9am-1am telephone support service) www.eheadspace.org.au or 1800 650 850
- KidsHelp Line on 1800 55 1800 or visit <https://kidshelpline.com.au/> for 24-hour support

In the case of international students, the Principal must notify the International Education Division on (03) 9637 2990 to ensure that appropriate support is arranged for the student.

In the case of Koorie students, the Principal must notify the Regional Office to ensure that the Regional Koorie support officer can arrange appropriate support for the student.

Please note: whilst staff members may need to gather information to make a report, it is not the role of College staff to investigate abuse- leave this to Victoria Police and / or DHHS Child Protection.

Information contained in this policy has been taken, in part, from DET's PROTECT documents- Identifying and Responding to ALL Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools

6. STRATEGIES TO IDENTIFY AND REDUCE OR REMOVE RISKS OF CHILD ABUSE

The College has developed and will annually review the following risk register:



CHILD SAFE STANDARDS RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk Event or Environment	Existing risk management strategies or existing controls	Likelihood	Consequence	Current risk rating	New risk management strategies or treatments	Who is responsible?	Target risk rating
No organisational culture of child safety – lack of leadership, public commitment and frequent messaging	Child safety code of conduct Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety	Possible	Severe	Extreme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies to embed organisational culture of child safety are reviewed Statement of commitment to child safety is publicly available 	Principal, School Council President, AP Accountability, AP Head of Primary, AP Engagement & Wellbeing	Low
Inappropriate behaviour is not reported and addressed	Child safety code of conduct Clear child safety reporting procedures Performance management procedures	Unlikely	Severe	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies to embed organisational culture of child safety are reviewed Refresher training for staff – see eLearning mandatory reporting module 	Principal, School Council President, AP Accountability, AP Head of Primary, AP Engagement & Wellbeing	Low
Unquestioning trust of long term employees and contractors or norms	Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety Clear child safety reporting procedures	Possible	Major	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresher training for staff – see eLearning mandatory reporting module 	Principal, School Council President, AP Accountability, AP Head of Primary, AP Engagement & Wellbeing,	Low

Risk Event or Environment	Existing risk management strategies or existing controls	Likelihood	Consequence	Current risk rating	New risk management strategies or treatments	Who is responsible?	Target risk rating
Recruitment of an inappropriate person	WWCC or Victorian Institute of Teaching registration	Unlikely	Major	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes updated to require: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criminal history search Pre-employment reference check includes asking about child safety 	Facilities Manager Principal, School Council President, AP Accountability, AP Head of Primary, AP Engagement & Wellbeing, HR Manager	Low
Engagement with children online	Child safety code of conduct Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety	Possible	Moderate	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train students and staff to detect inappropriate behaviour Ensure appropriate settings on all student technologies 	Principal, School Council President, AP Accountability, AP Head of Primary, AP Engagement & Wellbeing	Low
Unknown people and environments at excursions and camps	Child safety code of conduct Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety Clear child safety reporting procedures	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of new or changed environments for child safety risks Ensure Code and strategies apply in all school contexts 	Principal, School Council President, Teacher in charge of camp/excursion	Low
Ad-hoc contractors on the premises (eg maintenance)	Child safe environments Information and awareness for visitors,	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresher training for frequent contractors 	Principal, School Council President,	Low

Risk Event or Environment	Existing risk management strategies or existing controls	Likelihood	Consequence	Current risk rating	New risk management strategies or treatments	Who is responsible?	Target risk rating
	staff, volunteers and contractors Adequate monitoring					Facilities Manager	

7. STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE CHILD EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Narre Warren South P-12 College acknowledges within our statement of commitment that it is our moral and legal responsibility to create a nurturing school environment where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard and they are safe and feel safe. All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

Within this context it is vitally important that all staff promote the participation and empowerment of all children. When children have an environment in which they feel safe, respected and comfortable, they are more likely to speak on issues of safety and wellbeing.

The College will, having regard to recommendations established through the Royal Commission for Children and Young People and strategies adapted from DHHS booklet- An Overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards and published by Victorian Govt. 2015 refine and further develop our processes and protocols, specifically:

- Empowering students to have a formal voice of what needs to occur at the College from their perspective, with an identified forum and scheduled timeframe of when this will occur.
- Continually building upon the opportunities and avenues for participation and empowerment of all children within the College.
- Celebrating diversity and continually developing our capacity to be a culturally and linguistically safe community, where respect and equality is enhanced in all things we do.
- Liaising with student groups within the College to establish standards of care, their rights, how to raise concerns, consulting mechanisms and the various manners that they can have a voice in this area as student leaders / student mentors. Creating strategies and processes for this occur.
- Information and processes for reporting concerns are accessible to all children, for example by having policies and procedures that are able to be accessed and understood by children with a disability.
- Ensure information and processes for reporting concerns are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. As required, the school will engage with parents of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or an Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisation to review information and processes. Additionally, the Regional Koorie support officer can arrange appropriate support for a student.
- Provide culturally appropriate language, photographs and artwork for Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability when drafting communications materials.
- Translate organisational information (including information about children's rights, child safe policies, statements of commitment and reporting and response procedures) into relevant community languages, as required or upon request.
- Gather strategic feedback from children (for example, through surveys, focus groups, Pastoral Care) about student safety, modes of raising concerns and suggested improvements for the school.
- Enable children to express their views and make suggestions on what child safety means to them, and on child safe policies, reporting and response procedures, and acknowledge and act upon these where possible. (For example, student views could be gathered through Sub-School / Year Level leaders, or via direct communication with the Child Safety Officer.

- Ensure services are accessible for people with a disability, for example provide appropriate communication aids such as hearing loops through classrooms.
- Provide relevant training to all staff on methods of inclusiveness to encourage the participation of all children, in all activities, through:
 - Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children;
 - Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and / or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
 - Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability;
 - Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children living in Out-of-Home Care;
- Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are accepted when identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and that staff and volunteers understand appropriate responses to children identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- Provide a physical environment that is visually inclusive and welcoming for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture, such as by displaying symbols that indicate support and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Promoting a school environment where the past is acknowledged and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural diversity is respected, such as by including an Acknowledgement of Country at each meeting or event.

In meeting our obligations under Child Safe (Standard 7), Narre Warren South P-12 College will institute appropriate curriculum and a delivery platform providing students with education on:

- What child abuse is;
- Student rights to make decisions about their body;
- Privacy;
- Forms of child abuse;
- How students raise concerns about abuse;
- Student Engagement;
- School wide positive behaviour support;
- Safe Schools Hub for students;
- Respectful relationships education;
- Health education;
- Sexuality education;
- Mental Health;
- Visible Wellbeing (supporting resilience);
- Standards of behaviour for students attending the College;
- Healthy and Respectful relationships (including sexuality);

To further meet our legal and moral requirements, Child Safe Standards (1-7) will be continually reflected upon, developed and discussed for refinement to ensure that it is easily accessible, easy to understand and user friendly to children and equally, the wider community.

The College will reflect and re-fine its policies to ensure that these cater for our legislative obligations under Ministerial Order 870 and ongoing needs of our community.

The College will develop a policy that has a specific focus on the promotion of student empowerment to ensure children feel safe and comfortable in reporting concerns or allegations of abuse. All school staff and people working in a child connected capacity will have an awareness of children's rights and adults' responsibilities regarding child appropriate behavior.