



MANDATORY REPORTING POLICY

Introduction

The Mandatory Reporting Policy of Penola Catholic College follows the guidelines published by Health and Community Services, Victoria, in their booklet, 'Reporting Child Abuse'.

"The Law (p 3 Reporting Child Abuse)

- Under Section 64(1A) of the **Children and Young Persons Act (1989)**.... 'Registered teachers and principals' ('in the course of practising your profession')... are obliged by law to notify Child Protection Victoria if they believe, based on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection because the 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 such harm
- **New grounds for report to Child Protection:**
Any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child over 10 years and under 15 years who is in need of therapeutic treatment for sexually abusive behaviours, may make a report to Child Protection (introduced October 2007, Therapeutic Treatments Reports and Orders).
- You must make your report without unnecessary delay.
- You are required to report each time you become aware of any further reasonable grounds for your belief.
- You do not have to be able to prove that the abuse has occurred.
- It is your personal responsibility to report your belief. If you are one of a group of mandated notifiers who share a belief ... then only one mandated notifier needs to make the report.
- Child Protection may authorise any professional to provide relevant information regarding a child protection investigation.

What Is Child Abuse (p 6 Reporting Child Abuse)

- Child abuse is an act by parents or caregivers that endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development.
- In Victoria, a child or young person is a person under seventeen years of age.

Child First

Information Sharing

- When unsure whether to make a mandatory report to Child Protection, certain professionals e.g. teachers and psychologists can consult with CHILD FIRST and Family Services to complete a risk assessment, without prior family consent.
- Following a risk assessment, information sharing with Child First or Family Services requires family consent except where information sharing authorised by Information Privacy Act (2000) or Health Records Act (2001) or when consulting with Child Protection about risk assessment.

Consideration

It is clear from the H & CS guidelines that where teaching staff believe there is child abuse, teaching staff are legally obligated to report the case. While non-teaching staff are not mandated to report abuse it is an expectation of the College that all staff report child abuse concerns. The purpose of the Penola Catholic College policy is not to deny College teaching staff their responsibility to report, but to offer them support and protection from possible difficulties associated with being the reporter in a school.

This policy provides the opportunity for staff to discuss and analyse a situation with the Campus Psychologist and/or Head of Student Services and/or Deputy Principal.

When talking with students who ask for confidence about their situation, staff should always let students know that they will not keep secret or confidential a situation where the student involved or others may be harmed.

Procedure

- When a staff member has come to a belief about a case of possible abuse they must notify the Campus Psychologist and Head of Student Services on the day they come to the realisation. It is recommended that teaching staff discuss all cases with the aforementioned personnel even if the matter seems minor.
- The Campus Psychologist and Head of Student Services may need to confer with others as appropriate, and they will keep the relevant teacher, Principal and Deputy Principal appropriately informed throughout the reporting process.
- All documentation regarding the report will be collected and stored in Student Services.
- Whilst acknowledging the ultimate responsibility for mandatory reporting is the teacher who holds the belief, the College strongly encourages staff to allow the Deputy Principal or Head of Student Services to make the report to the Dept. of Human Services - Child Protection Unit, for the protection of teachers and the school.

- The Deputy Principal or Head of Student Services will report to Child Protection when they come to a similar belief. The Head of Student Services will inform the teacher of the outcome. The staff member is however still mandated to report their belief if the Principal or Head of Student Services does not share their belief.
- At all times all College staff must ensure that what is done both serves to protect the child concerned whilst also respecting their rights and privacy.