### Five Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

1. **DETERMINE WHEN TO ACT**
   - You must act as soon as you witness an incident or become aware that a child has or is at risk of being abused.
   - You must act, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse or you form a suspicion).

2. **RESPOND TO AN EMERGENCY**
   - As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, you must report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

   **Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?**
   - **WITHIN THE SCHOOL**
   - **WITHIN FAMILY OR COMMUNITY**
   - **VICTORIA POLICE**
   - **DHHS CHILD PROTECTION**
     - You 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.
   - **CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
     - You must also report to:
       - School Principal and/or leadership team
       - Diocesan office

3. **INFORM AUTHORITIES**
   - If the child is at immediate risk of harm you must ensure their safety by:
     - separating alleged victim and others involved
     - administering first aid
     - calling 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance
     - identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with police

4. **CONTACT PARENTS/CARERS**
   - Your Principal must consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents. They may advise:
     - not to contact the parent/carer (e.g. in situations where the parents are alleged to have engaged in abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parent/carer to be contacted)
     - to contact the parent/carer and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicions).

5. **PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORT**
   - You must provide support for students impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a Student Support Plan in consultation with wellbeing professionals.
   - Strategies may include direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals and community services.
   - You must make additional reports if you become aware of further instance or risk of abuse.

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**FIVE CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS**

Document current as at 15 August 2016. Updates to content may have been made since this date. Refer to intranet for latest version.

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