Student

Child Protection Policy

Vision, Mission and Core Values

VISION

Our Vision at Dale is to offer affordable, quality education within the framework of a Christ-Centred Biblical World View as we strive to equip our students with skills and strong values that encourages them to pursue excellence in all areas.

MISSION

Every student at Dale Christian College will clearly hear the claims of Christ on their life through management, curriculum and teaching practices and see the love of God at work in the College community.

CORE VALUES

At Dale Christian College, our focus is on digging wells of wisdom and truth instead of building fences of exclusion. As staff, we pledge to infuse Christian principles into our activities and educational approaches, aiming to illuminate Christ's light in our community by embodying our core values in practical ways.

Honouring God and the Bible

- We commit to centering our practices and teachings on a Christ-focused biblical worldview. Our reverence for God and His Word permeates our daily devotions and curriculum. We work towards cultivating a community that seeks to Glorify God in all things.
  "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." (Deuteronomy 6:5)

Respect: Others & Ourselves

- Respect is crucial in our college community, mirroring God's view of each individual as His beloved creation. Shown through courteous communication and acknowledging inherent value, we foster a Christ-centred, nurturing environment.
  "So, in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12)

Stewardship & Responsibility

- We instill responsibility in our students through the care of College resources and personal belongings. Leadership roles and community service opportunities foster a sense of duty and environmental responsibility, aligning with our commitment to stewardship of God's creation.
  "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much." (Luke 16:10)

Justice & Mercy

- Our College maintains just rules and consequences, echoing Jesus' teachings of justice and mercy. We inspire students to pursue fairness and exhibit compassion in their interactions, cultivating a community that values both justice and forgiveness. Students are encouraged to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.
  "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

Pursuing Excellence

- At Dale Christian College, excellence transcends academics, focusing on personal growth in line with Christian teachings. We celebrate progress, embrace a growth mindset, and view mistakes as learning opportunities, encouraging efforts as if serving the Lord.
  "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." (Colossians 3:23-24)

Contents

Purpose **5**
Scope
Duty of Care
Recruitment
Required Registration, Clearances, Checks and Training
Prevention Programs **6**
Definitions **6**
Understanding and Identifying child abuse and neglect **7**

Examples of specific indicators for different types of abuse:

Physical Abuse: Unexplained bruising, fractures, burns, fear of going home, or wearing inappropriate clothing to cover injuries.

Emotional Abuse: Extreme withdrawal, aggression, delayed development, low self-esteem, or an apparent lack of attachment to the parent or carer.

Sexual Abuse: Knowledge of sexual matters inappropriate for the child's age, unexplained genital injuries, fear of being alone with a specific person, and sexually transmitted infections.

Neglect: Malnutrition, poor hygiene, unattended physical or medical needs, and being left alone in unsafe situations.

Psychological Abuse: Anxiety, depression, confusion, or an inability to distinguish right from wrong, and struggles with cognitive functions like memory and attention.

Self-Harm: Deliberate self-harm can be defined as "the deliberate harming of oneself either with or without suicidal intent". Deliberate self-harming behaviours vary in severity but at the extreme end include behaviours that lead to suicide.

- Flowchart for reporting self-harm **12**
- Types of Mandatory Reporting **13**
  Mandatory Reporting of child sexual abuse **13**
- Procedure for Mandatory Reporters to consider when suspecting or receiving disclosure of abuse **14**
- Procedures for Non-Mandatory Reporters to consider when suspecting or receiving disclosure of abuse **15**

Non-mandatory reporters, such as non-teaching staff and volunteers, are encouraged to report any concerns about a child's welfare, even if they are not mandated by law to do so.

Non-mandatory reporters should:
1. Confidentially consult with the School Psychologist or Principal.
2. Document the concern, including any observed indicators or disclosures.
3. Submit a written report to the Principal, who will take further action as necessary.

- Reporting child abuse and neglect concerns – concerns for a child's wellbeing **17**
- How do I submit a mandatory report **17**
- Breach of Child Protection Policy **18**

- **Disclosures** **19**

Types of Disclosure:
Full Disclosure: Allow the child to speak without interruption, ensuring they feel heard and supported.

Direct Disclosure: Listen attentively and do not push for additional details; report immediately.

Partial Disclosure: Acknowledge the child's feelings and gently encourage them to share more if they feel comfortable.

Indirect Disclosure: Be observant of non-verbal cues such as drawings or play, and document these signs carefully.

Slow Disclosure: Recognize that the child may need time to fully disclose their experience, and provide consistent support.

- Confidentiality **21**
- **How does a staff member make a report about abuse or neglect** **21**

Reporting following disclosure
Documentation

All records related to child protection concerns must be documented promptly and accurately. These records should include dates, the nature of the concern, actions taken, and outcomes.

Documents should be placed in a sealed envelope marked 'Confidential - Principal' and stored in the student's file within the college's secure database. Access to these records should be limited to authorized personnel only.

- **Debriefing** **22**

After managing a child protection issue, staff members are encouraged to debrief with the Principal or a designated safeguarding officer. This debriefing is essential for emotional support and to ensure all necessary actions have been taken.

During the debrief, it is crucial to maintain the confidentiality of the student and the details of the case. The focus should be on the well-being of both the student and the staff member.

- **Grooming Behaviour** **23**

Online grooming is when an older person tricks someone under 18 into thinking they're in a close relationship, intending to sexually abuse them. This can include activities such as convincing a child to send sexual images, engage in sexual conversations, or meet in person.

Signs of online grooming may include a child receiving unexplained gifts, spending excessive time online, especially in chat rooms or on social media, becoming secretive about their online activities, or showing reluctance to share information about new friends they've made online.

Staff should educate students about the risks of online communication, encourage open conversations about online interactions, and report any suspicious behaviour immediately to the designated safeguarding officer.

- **Grooming Behaviour with children** **23**

Online grooming is when an older person tricks someone under 18 into thinking they're in a close relationship, intending to sexually abuse them. This can include activities such as convincing a child to send sexual images, engage in sexual conversations, or meet in person.

Signs of online grooming may include a child receiving unexplained gifts, spending excessive time online, especially in chat rooms or on social media, becoming secretive about their online activities, or showing

reluctance to share information about new friends they've made online.

Staff should educate students about the risks of online communication, encourage open conversations about online interactions, and report any suspicious behaviour immediately to the designated safeguarding officer.

- **Grooming Behaviour with adolescents** **23**

  Online grooming is when an older person tricks someone under 18 into thinking they're in a close relationship, intending to sexually abuse them. This can include activities such as convincing a child to send sexual images, engage in sexual conversations, or meet in person.

  Signs of online grooming may include a child receiving unexplained gifts, spending excessive time online, especially in chat rooms or on social media, becoming secretive about their online activities, or showing reluctance to share information about new friends they've made online.

  Staff should educate students about the risks of online communication, encourage open conversations about online interactions, and report any suspicious behaviour immediately to the designated safeguarding officer.

- Online Grooming **23**
- Preventing and Interruption of the grooming process

- Resources **25**

The following resources are available to support mandatory and non-mandatory reporters:

- Mandatory Reporting Service: 1800 708 704
- Crisis Care: 1800 199 008
- Central Intake Team: 1800 273 889
- Department of Communities Child Protection and Family Support Division: https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-communities/child-protection
- E-Safety Commissioner Resources: https://www.esafety.gov.au/

Related Policies **26**

Version Management **27**

Purpose

Dale Christian College is committed to the duty of care and obligation to ensure that children under our care and supervision are safe and protected from harm.

All teaching and non-teaching staff, volunteers and everyone employed by Dale Christian College is responsible for the care, safety, and protection of all students and for reporting any concerns regarding the welfare of the student.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors and volunteers of the college whether employed or visiting on a permanent, temporary, or casual basis. The policy covers information about the reporting of child abuse or neglect and mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse.

Duty of Care

All members of the college community, (employees, Board members, parents/carers, students, volunteers, and visitors including contractors and consultants), have a duty of care to the students. This applies during time on campus, at afterhours activities and off-site college events.

After-School Procedure

Purpose: To ensure the safety and well-being of students who are not collected by the end of the school day or after extracurricular activities.

Supervision:

- Students are supervised until 3:30pm.
- It is important that parents make every effort to collect their child before this time.

Procedure for Uncollected Students:

1. **3:10 pm - 3:30 pm:**
   - Students who are not picked up by 3:10pm will wait in the undercover area (circle) until 3:30pm.

2. **3:30 pm - 4:00 pm:**
   - If not collected by 3:30pm, students will be accompanied to Student Services.
   - Supervision will continue in Student Services until 4:00pm.

3. **After 4:00 pm:**
   - If students are still not collected by 4:00pm, they will wait in reception.
   - Efforts to contact the student's family or emergency contacts will be made.

Contact Procedures:

All processes must be followed to reach the student's family or emergency contacts if the student remains uncollected by 4:00pm.

Recruitment

- Recruitment practices are in place to ensure all new employees and volunteers are adequately screened, inducted, trained, and supervised.
- Recruitment practice seeks to ensure the engagement of only those suitable for work with children and young people and make every attempt to assess commitment to the Staff Code of Conduct.
- The Induction/interview process will be clear about the role requirements and the college's child-safe processes for supervision and accountability.

Pre employment screening will include:
- Working with Children Check (WWC)
- Police Check
- Registration with Teacher Registration Board (TRBWA)
- Referee Checks

Required Registration, Clearances, Checks and Training

Teachers - includes casual (relief) and temporary teachers.
- Registration with the TRBWA
- Current WWCC (working with children check)
- Police Clearance
- Each staff member is responsible for the currency of these documents; however, the bursar maintains a record and will remind employees.
- Annual completion of Mandatory Reporting/Grooming Training via AISWA.
- Staff starting after the beginning of the year needs to complete the online course with AISWA

Non-Teaching Staff
- Current WWCC
- Police Clearance
- Each staff member is responsible for the currency of these documents; however, the bursar maintains a record and will remind employees.
- Annual completion of Mandatory Reporting/Grooming Training via AISWA.

Contractors and Visitors (where applicable)
- Current WWCC
- Police Clearance

Recurring visitors/guardians need to produce a WWCC. This includes guardians who attend overnight camps, day camps, excursions.

Prevention Programs

Implementing prevention programs in primary and secondary school is an essential step in fostering a culture of health and wellbeing among students. These programs serve multiple purposes, including educating students about recognizing and reporting abuse, understanding power dynamics in relationships, and developing strategies to seek help when needed. By integrating such initiatives into the curriculum, we empower students with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate challenging situations and protect themselves and others from harm.

Definitions

Mandated Reporter
A person who has been mandated by legislation to report child sexual abuse. This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including TAFE lecturers), police officers, boarding supervisors, ministers of religion, out-of-home care workers, assessors and departmental officers of the Department of Communities.

This policy is aligned with the following legislative frameworks:
- Children and Community Services Act 2004
- Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008
- Criminal Code Act (1913)
- Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004
- Criminal Code Amendment (Cyber Predators) Act 2006

All staff members are required to comply with these laws as part of their duty of care, ensuring the safety and well-being of all students.

Non-Mandatory reporter
A person who does not fall into the Mandatory Reporting category, but feels the need to report a concern, eg, non-teaching staff, social workers, education assistance, a school governing body member. When reporting child sexual abuse, non-mandatory reporters are required to follow the procedures for allied professionals or school psychologists.

Child
A child is defined as "under 18 years of age and in the absence of positive evidence of age, means a person apparently under 18 years of age".

Child Abuse and Neglect
Maltreatment of a person under the age of 18 years. It is the result of action or inaction on the part of a person who has responsibility to care for a child resulting in harm or injury to the child. The harm may include delayed physical and/or intellectual development. The maltreatment experienced is normally described in six categories. Each category of maltreatment is described by a range of indicators.

- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual
- Neglect
- Psychological
- Self-harm

Understanding and Identifying child abuse and neglect

Examples of specific indicators for different types of abuse:

Physical Abuse: Unexplained bruising, fractures, burns, fear of going home, or wearing inappropriate clothing to cover injuries.

Emotional Abuse: Extreme withdrawal, aggression, delayed development, low self-esteem, or an apparent lack of attachment to the parent or carer.

Sexual Abuse: Knowledge of sexual matters inappropriate for the child's age, unexplained genital injuries, fear of being alone with a specific person, and sexually transmitted infections.

Neglect: Malnutrition, poor hygiene, unattended physical or medical needs, and being left alone in unsafe situations.

Psychological Abuse: Anxiety, depression, confusion, or an inability to distinguish right from wrong, and struggles with cognitive functions like memory and attention.

Self-Harm: Deliberate self-harm can be defined as "the deliberate harming of oneself either with or without suicidal intent". Deliberate self-harming behaviours vary in severity but at the extreme end include behaviours that lead to suicide.

Physical abuse
Physical abuse is when a child is deliberately hurt or is at serious risk of being hurt by someone, they know such as a family member, relative, carer, another adult or child. The signs of physical abuse may be subtle and may be easier to spot if a child has no way of concealing the injury.

Examples of possible signs or indicators of physical abuse include (but are not limited to)

- broken bones, unexplained bruising and/or burns in different stages of healing

- being unable to explain an injury or giving inconsistent, vague or unlikely explanation for an injury
- unusual or unexplained internal injuries
- a history of family violence
- a delay between the injury and seeking medical assistance
- repeated visits to the doctor with injuries, poisoning or minor complaints
- habitual absences from school and other usual activities
- being unusually frightened of a parent or carer
- wearing inappropriate clothing in warm weather to hide bruises, cuts or marks
- avoiding physical contact.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated, threatened, or humiliated. Emotional abuse also includes exposure to family and domestic violence, which causes serious emotional, physical, and psychological harm to children, as well as placing them an increased likelihood of other kinds of abuse and neglect.

The term emotional abuse also includes psychological abuse which involves behaviours such as isolating, discrediting, and disregarding.

A child can be emotionally abused when they experience hostility, derogatory name-calling and put downs, repeated physical or social isolation, and persistent rejection or coldness from a person over an extended period.

Examples of possible sings or indicators of emotional abuse include (but are not limited to)

- unexplained mood swings between aggressive and passive behaviour
- significant delays in emotional, mental and physical development, including gross and fine motor skills
- language delay or stuttering
- whole self-image and low self-esteem
- reluctance to go home
- fear of someone they know
- Self-harming, overeating or starving themselves.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse covers a wide range of behaviour or activities that expose or subject a child to sexual activity that is exploitative and/or inappropriate to his/her age and developmental level.

Child sexual abuse is when a child is forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This may involve physical contact or non-contact activities and can happen online or offline.

Children who are sexually abused have often been groomed into trusting their abuser and many do not understand they are being abused. Sexual abuse can cause harm to the child including significant emotional trauma, physical injury, infections and impaired emotional and psychological development.

Examples of sexual abuse include (but are not limited to)

- sexual touching of any part of the body whether a child is wearing clothes or not including kissing, holding or touching the child in a sexual way
- forcing or encouraging the child to take part in sexual activity
- making a child take off their clothes or touch someone else's genitals
- exposing genitals to a child
- encouraging or forcing child to watch or hear sexual acts

- not taking proper measures to prevent a child being exposed to sexual activities by others.
- encouraging or making a child masturbate while others watch.

- **Examples of possible signs or indicators of sexual abuse include (but are not limited to)**
- knowing more about sexual activities than other children their age
- involving other children in concerning sexual behaviours
- refusing to undress for activities or often wearing layers of clothing
- difficulty walking or sitting
- being afraid of being alone with a particular person
- frequent headaches and stomach pains
- being frequently depressed, feeling suicidal or attempted suicide
- creating stories, poems or artwork about abuse
- Bruises, lacerations, redness, swelling or bleeding in genital, vaginal or anal area
- Blood in urine or faeces
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Unusual or excessive itching or pain in the genital or anal area

Harmful sexual behaviours
Sexual behaviour exists on a continuum, from mutually agreed experimentation to serious sexual offending behaviours. Some form of sexual exploration in children is normal and healthy at all developmental stages.

Developmentally normal sexual behaviour in childhood and adolescence tends to be:
- socially acceptable and aligned with community expectations
- consensual, mutual and reciprocal.

Harmful sexual behaviours that involve other children are a form of child sexual abuse. Where a mandatory reporter forms the reasonable belief that harmful sexual behaviour has occurred and a child is subject to child sexual abuse as a result of this, then there is an obligation to submit a mandatory report.

Where the harmful sexual behaviour does not meet the requirements of a mandatory report, the matter will still require some form of intervention. Harmful sexual behaviours are not part of usual development, indicate the child engaging in them has or is experiencing adversity of some kind, and can lead to future safety concerns for the child engaging in the behaviour and those around them.

Neglect
Neglect is when a child does not receive adequate food or shelter, medical treatment, supervision, care, or nurturance, to the extent that their development is harmed, or they are injured.

Examples of neglect include (but are not limited to)
- showing signs of malnutrition and hunger
- persistent and cleanliness and poor personal hygiene such as matted hair, dirty skin, sores, and /or body odour
- often being tired, late for school or non-attendance
- lack of weather appropriate clothing
- being left without appropriate supervision for their age, development and or for the environmental circumstances
- frequently ill, untreated medical problems or lack of routine medical care.

Psychological abuse
Is the sustained, repetitive, inappropriate, ill treatment of a child or young person. This abuse damages a child's intellectual faculties and processes, including intelligence, memory, recognition, perception, attention, imagination, and moral development.

Examples of psychological abuse include (but are not limited to)
- constantly belittling, shaming and humiliating a child
- calling the child names to minimise their self-worth
- threatening a child
- keeping a child isolated from other people or friends
- constantly ignoring a child
- encouraging a child to act inappropriately.

Possible signs of psychological abuse include when a child:
- feels worthless, unloved, unwanted
- feels dumb
- has difficulties remembering or recognising information
- has difficulties paying attention
- has difficulty knowing what actions are right or wrong
- is highly anxious.

Self-harm
Deliberate self-harm can be defined as "the deliberate harming of oneself either with or without suicidal intent". Deliberate self-harming behaviours vary in severity but at the extreme end include behaviours that lead to suicide. Other behaviours more commonly seen in the school environment include cutting and burning. However, any risk-taking behaviours that place young people at increased risk may be classed as deliberate self-harm

Examples of possible signs or indicators of self-harm include (but are not limited to)
- Unexpected reduction of academic performance
- Ideas and themes of depression, death, self-harm and suicide
- Change in mood
- Grief about a significant loss
- Experience of trauma
- Withdrawal from relationships
- Physical symptoms without emotional cause
- High risk behaviour

Reporting self-harm
If a teacher notices these signs of risk, they are asked to discuss the matter with the Deputies who will in turn seek support from the pastoral care team or chaplain.

The possible levels of risk are:

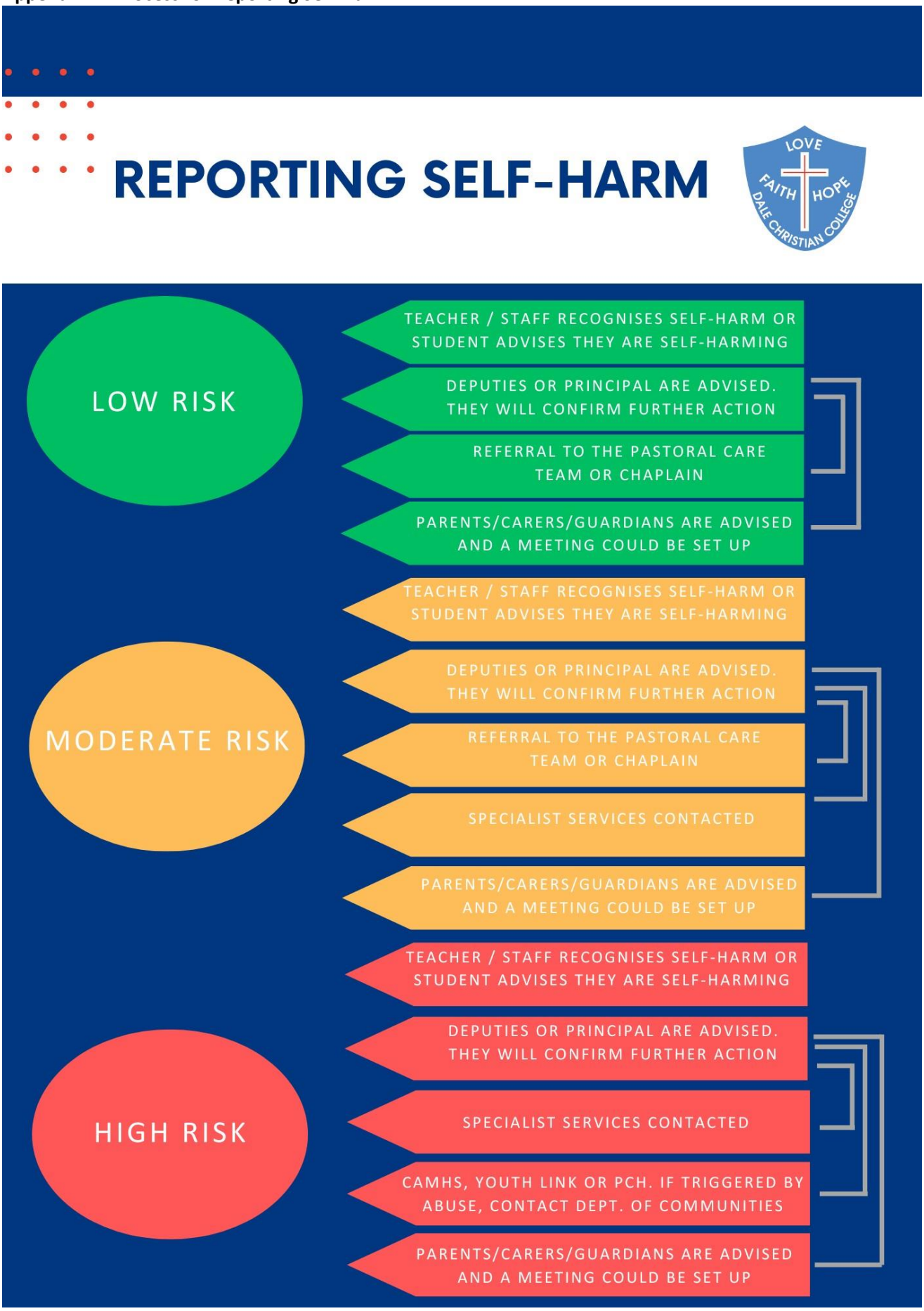
- **Students at low risk:** should be monitored and supported within the college's resources for up to 6 weeks. If a low risk persists for over 4 weeks, then it should be regarded as moderate and specialist opinion sought.

- **Students at moderate risk:** should be managed together with specialist services, family and deputy principals or principal.

- **Students at high risk:** should be referred **immediately** to specialist services with the school taking a supportive role.

Should the pastoral team or chaplain feel they are not able to provide the necessary support, they are to write a report, make a recommendation to receive external assistance and report back to the deputies. The deputies or the principal will further advise as to the appropriate action that needs to take place.

Appendix 1 - Process for Reporting Self-Harm



There are two types of reporting of child abuse and neglect:

- Mandatory Reporting for Child Sexual Abuse
- Reporting child abuse/concerns (physical and emotional abuse and neglect)

Regardless of the type of abuse or neglect, you need to take action even if you feel you haven't formed a belief but have a concern for a child. The focus should always be on the safety of the child/ren. You might be the only person the child has told or that is aware of the circumstances so please act and report as soon as is practicable.

Mandatory Reporting of child Sexual Abuse

Introduction
"The belief behind mandatory reporting legislation is that children have the right to be safe. This right can only be ensured if adults take responsibility for children's safety. Mandatory reporting gives a clear message to the community that child abuse is a crime and that it will not be tolerated or accommodated by the professional community." From an exhibit of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2017) titled 'Mandatory Reporting'.

This policy is aligned with the following legislative frameworks:

- Children and Community Services Act 2004
- Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008
- Criminal Code Act (1913)
- Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004
- Criminal Code Amendment (Cyber Predators) Act 2006

All staff members are required to comply with these laws as part of their duty of care, ensuring the safety and well-being of all students.

The following principles underpin the mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse in WA:

- The best interests of the child must be the paramount consideration.
- Every child has a right to be heard, believed, and protected from sexual abuse.
- Keeping children safe from abuse is the responsibility of individuals, families, communities, and the society as a whole. This is best achieved through a collaborative approach.
- If anyone has a concern regarding the safety of a child, it is their responsibility to notify the relevant authorities.
- Child sexual abuse affects everyone. Early detection is critical to reducing child sexual abuse in our community.
- Child sexual abuse is not condoned by any culture or religion. Cultural practices or traditions cannot be used as an excuse for sexual abuse or sexual exploitation.

Mandatory Reporting in Western Australia
Section 124B of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 requires certain persons in WA to make a mandatory report if the person forms a belief on reasonable grounds in the course of their paid or unpaid work (on or after commencement day) that a child:

- has been the subject of sexual abuse that occurred on or after the commencement day; or
- is the subject of ongoing sexual abuse.

Commencement day means the day on which the person became a mandatory reporter under the law. Commencement day varies for different mandatory reporter groups. Under the Children and Community Services Act 2004, a mandatory report must be made as soon as practicable after the reporter forms their belief. This is important as the earlier a report is received, the earlier steps can be taken to protect a child, where this is necessary.

A mandatory report can be made in writing or orally. If an oral report is made, it must be followed by a written report as soon as practicable after making the oral report (ideally within 24 hours).

Mandatory reporters must specify the grounds on which they formed the belief that a child has been, or is being, sexually abused. If you are a mandatory reporter and you have not formed a belief that a child has been or is being sexually abused but are sufficiently concerned, it is recommended that you consult with your internal support areas, such as Child Protection Consultants within your organisation. Alternatively, you can contact **Communities' Central Intake Team.**

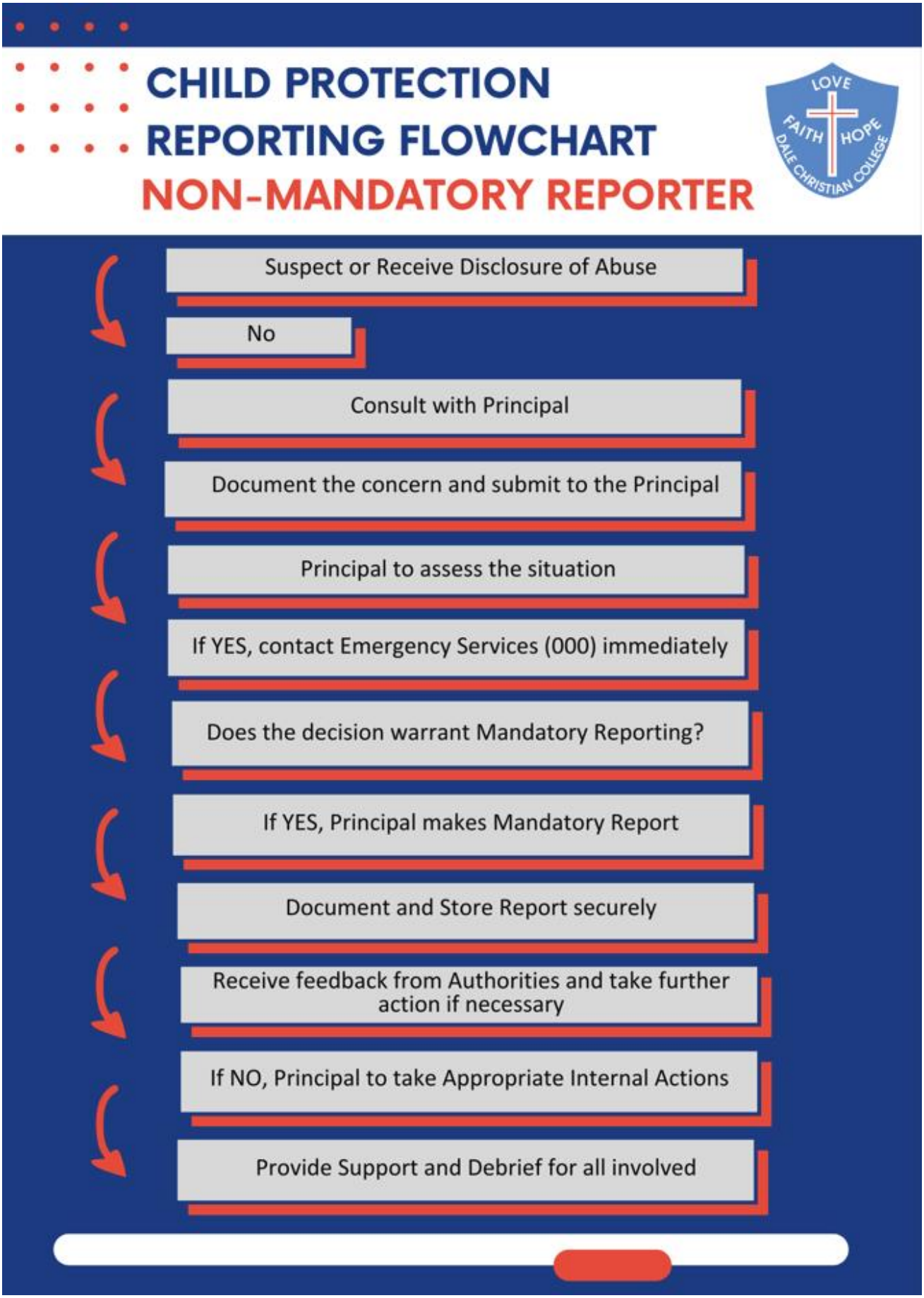
Department's Central Intake Team: 1800 273 889
Email: cpduty@cpfs.wa.gov.au

The following resources are available to support mandatory and non-mandatory reporters:

- Mandatory Reporting Service: 1800 708 704
- Crisis Care: 1800 199 008
- Central Intake Team: 1800 273 889
- Department of Communities Child Protection and Family Support Division: https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-communities/child-protection
- E-Safety Commissioner Resources: https://www.esafety.gov.au/

Appendix 2 - Procedure for Mandatory Reporters to consider when suspecting or receiving Disclosure of Abuse

Appendix 3 - Procedure for Non-Mandatory Reporters to consider when suspecting or receiving Disclosure of Abuse



Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect Concerns - concern for a child's wellbeing

There are various ways you may form a belief or have a concern for a child:

- You may have observed indicators regarding abuse and neglect. This may include a change in behaviour.
- Observations of the behaviour of an adult interacting with the child
- Disclosure of abuse neglect from the child/ren concerned
- Information from another source such as a family member, sibling, friend etc.

If you believe a child is in immediate danger or life-threatening situation, contact the Western Australia Police Force immediately by dialling 000.

If you are concerned about a child's wellbeing (and it doesn't require immediate Police attention), please contact the Department of Communities Central Intake Team on 1800 273 889.

Crisis Care: Provides Western Australia's after-hours response to reported concerns for a child's safety and wellbeing and information and referrals for people experiencing crisis.

Crisis Care free call: 1800 199 008

How do I submit a mandatory report?

There are strict procedures for all Dale's employees in relation to making a mandatory report about child sexual abuse, whether mandated (teacher) or non-mandated.

Where a staff member has concerns for the wellbeing of a child, but has not yet formed a belief, it is important that this be discussed with an appropriate person within the college. If the teacher concerned wishes, the principal and other relevant staff may be involved in discussions with the teacher in relation to a specific child, prior to the teacher forming a belief based on reasonable grounds.

It is the teacher's responsibility to make the report directly to the Mandatory Reporting Service. The principal and other relevant staff are there to provide support if required and the teacher may advise the principal of the report, but there is no obligation on the teacher to do so.

During such a discussion, should the principal or other staff member, themselves then form a belief, the person forming the belief would be obliged to make a Mandatory Report. Any such discussions or documentation must remain highly confidential and the protection of the identity of the reporter as discussed above must be kept. However, throughout the process, the wellbeing of the child must be of paramount concern.

All records related to child protection concerns must be documented promptly and accurately. These records should include dates, the nature of the concern, actions taken, and outcomes.

Documents should be placed in a sealed envelope marked 'Confidential - Principal' and stored in the student's file within the college's secure database. Access to these records should be limited to authorized personnel only.

The college will not inform parents until they have sought advice from CPFS or WA Police, so as not to hinder / impede a possible investigation.

Breach of child protection policy

All educators and staff working with children have a duty of care to support and protect children. A duty of care is breached if a person:

- does something that a reasonable person in that person's position would not do in a particular situation
- fails to do something that a reasonable person in that person's position would do in the circumstances or acts or fails to act in a way that causes harm to someone the person owes a duty of care.

Managing a breach in child protection policy

Management will investigate the breaches in a fair, unbiased, and supportive manner by:

- discussing the breach with all people concerned and advising all parties of the process
- giving the educator/staff member the opportunity to provide their version of events
- documenting the details of the breach, including the versions of all parties
- recording the outcome clearly and without bias
- ensuring the matters in relation to the breach are kept confidential
- reach a decision based on discussion and consideration of all evidence.

Outcome of a breach in child protection policy

Depending on the nature of the breach outcomes may include:

- emphasising the relevant element of the child protection policy and procedure
- providing closer supervision
- further education and training
- providing mediation between those involved in the incident (where appropriate)
- disciplinary procedures if required
- reviewing current policies and procedures and developing new policies and procedures if necessary.

Disclosures

Type	Description
Full Disclosure	The child states verbally what has happened to them in detail. This may include details of the person alleged responsible and a history of abuse. In this instance just let the child get to the end of their disclosure and do not interrupt them at any point, unless they are in the company of others, and you feel protective interrupting is appropriate.
Direct Disclosure	The child verbally communicates their experience of being abused, very brief and to the point, and establishes perhaps 'what happened' and 'by who' without many other details. There is no need to question further about the actual incident; however, the Mandatory Reporting Service will require information around the child's safety, in particular if the abuse is historical or current and if the perpetrator has access to the child.
Partial Disclosure	The child gives a hint that they may have been abused or the child may begin a disclosure and stop part way through. The child may test to see how you react and/or the child may not be ready to disclose more. It would be appropriate to gently prompt with 'tell me more about that'.
Indirect Disclosure	The child may use other methods of communicating (drawing/ behaviour/play) in a manner that lets you know that something may have happened to them. They may also talk about being worried about the behaviour of an adult and 'checking' with you if this is 'okay' or tell you about a 'friend' that abuse or neglect has happened to (but referring to themselves). Please document the conversation or child's drawing/behaviour/play and the context, and if appropriate, gently prompt the child, 'tell me about your drawing/behaviour/play'.
Slow Disclosure	The child may make small disclosures over a longer period of time, only providing snippets of information initially. This may be part of testing your reaction or may be dependent on their developmental stage as well as their proximity to the person allegedly responsible of the abuse.

Given the often-secretive nature of child sexual abuse, disclosure is sometimes the only way that another person can become aware that abuse has occurred or is occurring. Some children may not be aware that behaviour they have disclosed is abusive or inappropriate. Disclosure is rarely a one-off event; it is usually a process and can take many forms. It can be verbal or non-verbal, direct, or indirect and can include emotional or behavioural cues.

Children do not often disclose abuse the first time something happens. They may experience a sense of helplessness and hopelessness and may take weeks or years before making their abuse known.

Understanding disclosure as a process may help adults to be patient and allow the child to speak in their own way and their own time.

A child may disclose information purposefully or accidentally.

You may have to accept that the child might only tell you a bit of the story. Once you have enough information to form the belief, you may allow the child to continue talking but do not attempt to draw out any further information from them as this may complicate any investigation that occurs in the future. You might be asked to follow up with some clarifying questions by the Mandatory Reporting Service once they receive your report.

Student Disclosure in Private

- If a student discloses a situation of abuse to a Staff Member, their role is to reassure the student and support the student in their decision to disclose. They must assure the student that she has a right to feel safe.
- Maintain a calm appearance.
- The Staff Member is not responsible for investigating his or her suspicions or the child's disclosure and the minimum amount of information is to be collected. Other agencies or individuals have this responsibility.
- It is not easy for students to disclose abuse or neglect as they may previously have been coerced, bribed or threatened into secrecy. They may need repeated reassurance that they are believed and that it was right to tell.
- Sometimes students will try to elicit a promise that the Staff Member not tell anyone about the disclosure. Do not make this promise. If this happens it is important to explain that you have concerns about their safety and that you have to take action to ensure that they will be protected from further abuse.

Note: A disclosure can often arouse strong feelings in the person to whom the disclosure is being made. Such reactions may include shock, anger, and helplessness. It is important for the staff member to be aware and in control of these feelings and ensure that they are dealt with following the disclosure.

Student Disclosure in Public – Protective Interruption

- It is possible that a student may start to disclose in class or with a group of other students. If disclosure begins in a public arena it is important to use the strategy of protective interrupting:
- acknowledge that you have heard the student and stop the student from disclosing any further, be supportive and gently indicate that the student may want to talk to you about it in a more private situation
- quietly arrange to see the student as soon as possible, away from other students
- do not allow other children or adults to ask questions or make judgments.

A teacher's or other staff member's role is to listen actively to what the student is saying but not push for details.

Staff Member Concern

Perceived concern

If a Staff Member suspects or perceives abuse or neglect may be occurring, they should discuss the matter with the principal.

Evidence based concern

If the Staff Member's concern is serious and/or based on evidence, they must report immediately to the principal.

In all cases sexual abuse must be reported.

Confidentiality

in cases of child sexual abuse, the legislation provides protection for the person reporting. Disclosure of the reporter's identity or identifying information to parents or any other party can incur a **fine or imprisonment.**

This policy is aligned with the following legislative frameworks:

- Children and Community Services Act 2004
- Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008
- Criminal Code Act (1913)
- Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004
- Criminal Code Amendment (Cyber Predators) Act 2006

All staff members are required to comply with these laws as part of their duty of care, ensuring the safety and well-being of all students.

There are exceptions where disclosure of a reporter's identity is permitted. In such cases, consideration will be given to ensuring the reporter's safety has been taken into account.

Examples of when a reporter's identity may be revealed include:

- The Mandatory Reporting Service must send a copy of every written report to the WA Police
- The WA Police may need to reveal a reporter's identity in order to investigate or prosecute a suspected offence
- A Department for Child Protection officer may need to reveal the reporter's identity when certain child protection, family law or adoption proceedings are taking place
- The reporter may have provided written permission for their identity to be disclosed.

A mandated reporter who is normally governed by a code of confidentiality or secrecy, professional ethics, standards, or principles of conduct (eg. Doctor/patient) is protected from a breach of this code if they are making a report in good faith. The legislative requirements of the Act override internal school policies, professional codes, or confidentiality requirements.

A mandated reporter is also protected from liability. If a report is made in good faith, they will not incur any civil or criminal liability by making a report.

How does a staff member make a report about abuse or neglect?

Reporting following Disclosure

Once disclosure has been made, the staff member needs to determine the student's emotional state and immediate safety.

The staff member needs to:

- Ensure the student is safe in the immediate future
- Refer the student to the Principal as soon as possible
- In some cases it is not appropriate for the student to be left alone after a disclosure. This will depend on the severity and nature of the abuse. If that is the case the staff member should accompany the student to the Principal and ensure the student is left with a staff member in a private area.

Documentation
All records related to child protection concerns must be documented promptly and accurately. These records should include dates, the nature of the concern, actions taken, and outcomes.

Documents should be placed in a sealed envelope marked 'Confidential - Principal' and stored in the student's file within the college's secure database. Access to these records should be limited to authorized personnel only.

- At the earliest opportunity (within 24 hours) the Staff Member must write brief notes about the incident including dates, the nature of the indications or disclosure, and action taken. These should be placed in a sealed envelope marked "Confidential - Principal" in the student's file on the college's database system.
- Ensure that any records made before reporting and while waiting for initial concerns or suspicions to be supported, remain confidential.
- In the case of sexual abuse, a written report must follow within 24 hours. This should be completed on a Mandatory Report form by the reporter and will be forwarded to the Mandatory Reporting Service or Department for Communities, Child Protection and Family Support Division. The person lodging the report will receive and acknowledgment receipt – it is important to retain this document. The mandatory reporter will receive a feedback letter advising if any further action is to be taken.

Further Action
Once you have reported the situation further action rests with the principal, who will:

- Contact the local Mandatory Reporting Service or Department for Communities, Child Protection and Family Support Division.
- Contact parent or parents, (if advised by the DC-CPFS).
- In some cases, the situation may be seen as a family issue that may be best dealt with by contact with the family in the initial stages and this will be after the principal has sought advice from DC-CPFS or the Police, prior to informing the parent/carer of a concern of abuse or neglect.
- Where the perpetrator of the abuse is not a parent or family member it is appropriate for the parents to be informed as soon as possible and involved in the support of the student. Generally, the Principal will make this contact.

Debriefing
After managing a child protection issue, staff members are encouraged to debrief with the Principal or a designated safeguarding officer. This debriefing is essential for emotional support and to ensure all necessary actions have been taken.

During the debrief, it is crucial to maintain the confidentiality of the student and the details of the case. The focus should be on the well-being of both the student and the staff member.
It is imperative for staff's well-being that after a disclosure, she or he seeks an opportunity to talk to somebody as soon as possible. The principal is the most suitable person, however, if staff prefer to debrief with someone else, they must be mindful that the issues of confidentiality are paramount to protect the student.

Grooming Behaviour

Online grooming is when an older person tricks someone under 18 into thinking they're in a close relationship, intending to sexually abuse them. This can include activities such as convincing a child to send sexual images, engage in sexual conversations, or meet in person.

Signs of online grooming may include a child receiving unexplained gifts, spending excessive time online, especially in chat rooms or on social media, becoming secretive about their online activities, or showing reluctance to share information about new friends they've made online.

Staff should educate students about the risks of online communication, encourage open conversations about online interactions, and report any suspicious behaviour immediately to the designated safeguarding officer.

Grooming refers to 'actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child, to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child' (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017, p. 9).

Grooming:

- Grooming is a gradual and escalating process building trust with a child and those around them, including both children and adults.
- The primary goal of grooming is the sexual gratification of the perpetrator, often involving engaging in sexual activity with the child.
- Grooming is deliberate and purposeful, occurring both before and after the abuse.
- Abusers may groom children and supporting adults over extended periods, spending weeks, months, or even years before any sexual abuse occurs.
- Grooming can take place in person or online.

By virtue of their role, teachers have access to children at school, and sometimes in other locations. Therefore, it is important that teachers maintain professional boundaries and refrain from conduct which may be identified as grooming.

It is also important that teachers are able to identify unacceptable conduct in others, identify warning signs and report it to appropriate authorities if they observe it.

Grooming Behaviour with children may include, but is not limited to:

- selecting, befriending a child and gaining his or her trust, exploiting the child's vulnerabilities;
- testing a child's boundaries through telling inappropriate jokes, roughhousing, backrubs, tickling, or sexual games; moving from non-sexual touching to "accidental" sexual touching. This typically happens during play so the child may not even identify it as purposeful, inappropriate touching. It is often done slowly so the child is gradually desensitized to the touch;
- manipulating the child to not tell anyone about what is happening. The abuser may use a child's fear, embarrassment, or guilt about what has happened. Sometimes, the abuser uses bribery, threats, or coercion; causing the child to feel responsible for the abuse. Children may not notice or may become confused as the contact becomes increasingly intimate and sexual

Grooming Behaviour with adolescents may include additional strategies, such as:

- identifying with the adolescent. The abuser may appear to be the only one who understands him/her;
- displaying common interests in sports, music, movies, video games, television shows, etc;
- recognizing and filling the adolescent's need for affection and attention;
- giving gifts or special privileges to the adolescent;
- allowing or encouraging the adolescent to break rules (e.g., smoking, drinking, using drugs, viewing pornography);

- communicating with the adolescent outside of the person's role (e.g., teacher, or coach). This could include, for example, texting or emailing the teen without the parents' knowledge. In addition to grooming the child, the groomer will use deflection strategies to remain unchallenged. Some of these strategies may include where the perpetrator:
- promotes self and creates a reputation as caring, child-loving, competent, available, trustworthy, truthful;
- raises doubts about the motives, mental health, reliability of the child or anyone else who might approach support services with allegations.
- fosters dependency as someone the family can rely on; and
- positively represents child to others so as to be perceived as someone who would never harm the child.

Online Grooming

Online grooming is when an older person tricks someone under 18 into thinking they're in a close relationship so they can sexually abuse them, which includes child sexual abuse online. This is illegal and should be reported to the police and the online platform or service where contact was made.

E-safety commissioner research shows one in four young people have been contacted by someone they don't know online. Usually, this contact is harmless but at times it can be inappropriate, unwanted, or unsafe. This can happen even if they initially welcomed the contact.

At worst, the contact could involve grooming a child to sexually abuse them. This abuse can happen in a physical meeting, but it increasingly occurs online when young people are tricked or persuaded into sexual activity on webcams or into sending or posting sexual images.

Preventing or interrupting the grooming process:

Schools unfortunately provide a vast array of opportunities for groomers to enact the grooming process. Some abusers have a particular preference for children within particular age bands and some studies have shown that groomers will take child focussed employment primarily to get access to a particular cohort of children.

Within a college context, holding all staff members accountable to the College Code of Conduct and challenging boundary crossings and violations is one of the most effective strategies to combating grooming behaviour.

Resources

The following resources are available to support mandatory and non-mandatory reporters:

- Mandatory Reporting Service: 1800 708 704
- Crisis Care: 1800 199 008
- Department of Communities Child Protection and Family Support Division: [Website link]
- E-Safety Commissioner Resources: [Website link]

Legislation

This policy is aligned with the following legislative frameworks:

- Children and Community Services Act 2004
- Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008
- Criminal Code Act (1913)
- Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004
- Criminal Code Amendment (Cyber Predators) Act 2006

All staff members are required to comply with these laws as part of their duty of care, ensuring the safety and well-being of all students.

The Criminal Code Amendment (Cyber Predators) Act 2006 is the legislation in Western Australia that protects children under the age of 16, or that the offender believes is under the age of 16, from an adult who uses electronic communications with the intent to procure the child to engage in sexual activity; or to expose the child to any indecent matter.

- AISWA
- Website: https://mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au/Pages/Home.aspx
- Mandatory Reporting – FAQ's May 2024 https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2024-05/mandatory_reporting_faqs.pdf
- Mandatory Reporting Guide WA May 2024 https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2024-05/mandatory_reporting_guide_western_australia.pdf
- Mandatory Reporting Information Sheet 1 https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2024-05/mandatory_reporting_information_sheet_1_glossary.pdf
- Mandatory Reporting Information Sheet 2: harmful sexual behaviours https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2023-03/Mandatory-Reporting-Information-Sheet-2-Harmful-Sexual-Behaviours.pdf
- Mandatory Reporting Information Sheet 3: impacts of child sexual abuse https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2023-03/Mandatory-Reporting-Information-Sheet-3-Impacts-of-Child-Sexual-Abuse.pdf
- Mandatory Reporting Information Sheet 4: child sexual abuse in the online context https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2023-03/Mandatory-Reporting-Information-Sheet-4-Child-Sexual-Abuse-in-the-Online-Context.pdf
- Mandatory Reporting Information Sheet 5: responding to disclosures https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2023-03/Mandatory-Reporting-Information-Sheet-5-Responding-to-Disclosures.pdf

Related Policies

Mental Health policy (Draft)
Pastoral Care Policy
Chaplain Policy
Critical Incident Policy
Guidelines for Individual Education Planning
How to care for High Risk Students Procedure
Staff Recruitment
Staff Training
Staff Handbook
Staff Code of Conduct

DALE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

(08) 9497 1444
150 Forrest Road, Armadale WA 6112
PO Box 273 Armadale 6992
dale@dalecc.wa.edu.au
www.dalecc.wa.edu.au