

Early Childhood Management Services

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety Early Childhood Education

Child Safe Procedure

Purpose

This procedure relates to the Child Safe Policy and should be read in conjunction with this.

Responding to a serious incident, complaint, or alleged/actual abuse

In the event of a serious incident, complaint, or alleged/actual abuse the following procedures are to be followed.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of harm phone triple zero (000).

In line with the Department of Education and Training ([DET PROTECT procedure](#)), the following are the four critical actions in responding to incidents, disclosures, and suspicions of child abuse.

1. Responding to an emergency

If the child is at immediate risk of harm:

- Separate the alleged victim and others involved
- Administer first aid (if required)
- Call 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- Contact the ECMS Child Safety and Early Childhood Compliance line and inform the Area Manager Immediately.

2. Reporting to authorities

If the suspected/alleged abuse has occurred within the service, staff will immediately:

- Ensure the children in the service are safe from harm
- If a staff member is alleged perpetrator, they need to be moved from the children's environment and follow the ECMS Reportable Conduct Policy and Procedure
- Report the alleged incident to the police immediately
- Report to the ECMS Child Safety and Early Childhood Compliance line on 1300 61 51 91 (must be within 2 hours of allegation/incident) and the Area Manager

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- Notify parents
- Commence documentation on the Incident/Injury/Trauma/Illness template (this needs to be timely, accurate, and concise)
 - Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director will assist staff to commence documentation process on relevant templates provided by ECMS Child Safety and Early Childhood Compliance:
 - Alleged Abuse Template
 - Serious Incident Template
 (documents located on Inside Play/Templates/Compliance templates)
- Send all documentation to ECMS Child Safety and Early Childhood Compliance at compliance@ecms.org.au

If the suspected abuse has occurred within the family or community setting, staff will immediately:

- Report to DHHS Child protection if:
 - The child is in immediate need of protection from abuse
 - Is at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has or is likely to have a serious impact on the child's safety, stability, or development
- Report to Victoria Police triple zero (000) if immediate assistance is required and/or Sexual offences and child abuse investigation team (SOCIT), contact details can be found [here](#)
- Report to the ECMS Child Safety and Early Childhood Compliance line on 1300 61 51 91 (must be within 2 hours of allegation/incident) and the Area Manager
- Commence documentation on the Incident/Injury/Trauma/Illness template and (this needs to be timely, accurate, and concise)
 - Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director will assist staff to commence documentation process on relevant templates provided by ECMS Child Safety and Early Childhood Compliance: :
 - Alleged Abuse Template
 - Serious Incident Template
 (documents located on Inside Play/Child Safety and Compliance/Compliance templates)
- Send all documentation to ECMS Child Safety and Early Childhood Compliance at compliance@ecms.org.au.

3. Contacting parents/carers

Prior to contacting parents/carers, you must consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police/SOCIT to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers.

They may advise you:

- a. Not to contact – on the basis the parent/carer are alleged to have engaged in the abuse or the child is a “mature minor” and does not wish for the parent/carer to be contacted

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- b. To contact the parents/carers and provide agreed information as soon as possible. As an approved provider it is a requirement that the parent/carer is notified within 24hrs if the suspected abuse has occurred within our service.

Please note: It is essential that staff feel comfortable and confident in speaking to parents about Child Protection matters. Should assistance and support be required, staff can contact the Child Safety and Early Childhood Compliance staff, a Child Safety Advisor, or their Area Manager.

4. Providing ongoing support

ECMS staff will take steps to ensure all children feel safe and supported whilst attending ECMS services. This includes making referrals to wellbeing professionals as is required.

ECMS staff must follow the Four Critical Actions every time they become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting the new information to authorities on each separate occasion.

Procedure in responding to a disclosure – Educator

- Provide the child with a quiet space away from others, tell them you are listening to them. Be warm and reassuring but do not ask leading questions
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred and if appropriate you can repeat what they have said to you back to them. For example: ‘My mummy shouted at my baby brother’ – your response – ‘So, you heard your mummy shouting at your baby brother’
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, it is not their fault, and that they are doing the right thing
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others that will be able to help
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information on the relevant template provided by ECMS Child Safety and Early Childhood Compliance, using the child’s words, and immediately report the disclosure to the Nominated Supervisor Submit the incident report to and any notes to the Nominated Supervisor

Documenting and reporting a disclosure - Nominated Supervisor

- Contact the ECMS Child Safety and Early Childhood Compliance line on 1300 61 51 91 (must be within 2 hours of allegation/incident) to inform them of the disclosure and seek advice
- Contact Child Protection at the Department of Health and Human Services
- Contact Victoria Police and/or SOCIT (contact details [here](#))

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- Check the relevant Compliance template report details with the staff member and add information on what authorities have been notified
- Email the relevant Compliance template and any other documentation to compliance@ecms.org.au

Child Safety and Early Childhood Compliance

- Contact the Area Manager and Director Early Childhood Education immediately to inform them of the disclosure
- Make a notification to DET as required
- Manage the communication and information sharing as is required

Contacting ECMS Child Safety Advisors

ECMS has a number of trained Child Safety Advisors who can provide support, clarification, and guidance in relation to child safety and reportable conduct matters. Child Safety advisors will also act to raise awareness of the principles of Child Safety Standards including those from an Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander background, children with disabilities, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Details of the ECMS Child Safety Advisors can be found on Inside Play.

Contacting Child FIRST

Child FIRST is an easily accessible, community-based point of entry for children, young people, and families needing support. Contact details for Child FIRST are based on local government areas. If you are unsure or require advice regarding the level of concern, contact Child FIRST for advice. Contact details can be found [here](#).

Child FIRST will be able to direct your query either to Child Protection Services, Victoria Police/SOCIT, or possibly back to the parents for voluntary family support if required.

The toll-free Child Wise National Child Abuse Helpline can also be contacted for advice and support on Child Safety Matters from Monday to Sunday, 9 am to 5 pm AEST: 1800 991 099

Orange Door

Child FIRST, as the access point for family services, is progressively transitioning to The Orange Door throughout some local government areas.

The Orange Door is the new access point for women, children, and young people who are experiencing family violence, or families who need assistance with the care and wellbeing of children to access the services they need to be safe and supported. Contact details can be found [here](#).

How to make a Notification to Child Protection Services

1. The Educator/Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director is required to telephone the following Child Protection Services according to area:

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Northern and Western suburban LGAs Banyule, Brimbank, Darebin, Hobsons Bay, Hume, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Melton, Moonee Valley, Moorabool, Moreland, Nillumbik, Whittlesea, Wyndham, Yarra.	1300 664 977
Eastern suburban LGAs Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Monash, Whitehorse, Yarra Ranges.	1300 360 391
Southern suburban LGAs Bayside, Cardinia, Casey, Frankston, Glen Eira, Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Mornington Peninsula, Port Phillip, Stonnington	1300 655 795
Western Division Intake – Rural Northern and Southern Grampians	1800 075 599

2. Ask to speak to the INTAKE WORKER regarding a REPORT. Write down the worker's full name and direct line phone number.
3. The following information needs to be provided to the intake worker, where possible:
 - Your name, the organisation you work for, and the address of the service
 - Child's name, age, gender, address, and cultural background
 - Child's current location
 - The reason for the report. Detail your protective concerns in a factual and specific manner
 - Family composition with name and address of parents/carers and detail of any siblings
 - Parental status (i.e. single parent, guardian, foster carer, etc.)
 - Any relevant custody status e.g. intervention/supervision orders, family law court access conditions, etc.
 - Other significant adults (e.g. living with the family, authorised persons, etc.)
 - Other agencies involved in the care and/or support of the child and family (i.e. MCHN, Child FIRST, Orange Door, disability services, schools, etc.)
 - Any concerns you might know about regarding the protective worker's safety in visiting the home (e.g. aggressive dogs, firearms, violence)
 - The time the child is due to be collected and/or the best time to find the parents at home
 - Whether the family knows the notification is being made (seek advice from DHHS on who informs parents).

How to respond to a parent/carer/other allegation of abuse/neglect in the service

The Nominated Supervisor/Educator will:

1. Ask about the immediate wellbeing of the child
2. If required, remove the alleged perpetrator from the children's environment

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3. Allow the person making the allegation to talk through the incident in their own words
4. Document the alleged complaint/allegation on the relevant templates provided by ECMS Child Safety and Early Childhood Compliance (eg: Alleged Abuse template)
5. Ensure the person reads and signs the form as an accurate and truthful portrayal of the issue
6. Co-sign the incident report form and give a copy to the person making the allegation/complaint
7. Explain the process of reporting the alleged incident/complaint to the Area Manager, ECMS Child Safety and Early Childhood Compliance, and other relevant authorities such as DET, the Victoria Police/SOCIT, and child protection
8. Report to Area Manager and relevant authorities as is required.

Creating a safe environment for children during an investigation

There may be situations where an investigation from Victoria Police/SOCIT or Child Protection is required at a service. Educators have a responsibility to ensure that they remain the primary advocate for children at all times and should:

- Help to create a safe and private space for the interview which preserves the dignity of the child and family
- Acknowledge the child's feelings
- Introduce the Police/Child Protection workers to the child
- Educators should be able to remain in the room during the interview (although not intervene)
- Educators can make requests of visiting authorities in regards to timing to minimise the risk of disruption to the program and the involvement/awareness of other families to the activities occurring
- Maintain the child's routine as much as possible before and after the interview
- In the lead up to and following the interview, answer any questions from the child as honestly as possible
- Reassure the child through your words and actions.

Supports for ECMS Staff

ECMS is committed to ensuring that all employees have a safe workplace. In situations where teams are experiencing a child protection matter, many options are available to assist to reduce workplace stress. These options are to be assessed on an individual basis and remain at the discretion of the Area Manager:

Options include:

- Access to Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Access to Critical Incident Debriefing (team and service level where applicable)
- Training and educational opportunities
- Staff rotation opportunities (where applicable)

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Sources

Sources Reading	and	Further	<p>Child Safe Standards</p> <p>Child FIRST and Orange Door</p> <p>Department of Education and Training (DET) PROTECT procedure.</p> <p>ECA Code of Ethics</p> <p>Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010</p> <p>Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011</p> <p>ECMS Child Safety Advisors</p> <p>Guide to the National Quality Framework</p>
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