



## 4.2.1 Child Protection Policy – Whole School

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### Child Protection

South Coast Baptist College believes that every child is significant and unique.

*"For you created my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made". Psalm 139:13-14*

South Coast Baptist College works cooperatively with The Department of Child Protection and Family Support, and other appropriate agencies to ensure that all students thrive physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

South Coast Baptist College actively seeks to provide a safe and positive environment for all children and young people. The importance of protecting all students from potentially harmful situations motivates staff members.

The Duty of Care to all students underpins South Coast Baptist College policies and practices. All staff and volunteers are screened (WVCC, Police Clearances), trained and supervised in accordance with Duty of Care standards.

At South Coast Baptist College curriculum is actively engaged to support a comprehensive, realistic and age-appropriate personal safety component (e.g. Protective Behaviours; Kids Matter; Cyber Safety Student Workshops). These components of the curriculum enable students to recognise and report abuse, understand power in relationships and to develop protective strategies, including seeking help. South Coast Baptist College believes that prevention of abuse is vital in a child's learning and protective environment.

### Definition of Child Maltreatment

Child maltreatment refers to any non-accidental behaviour by adults or children that is outside the norms of conduct and entails a substantial risk of harm to a child or young person. The behaviours may be intentional or unintentional.

It may be 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 five categories. Each category of maltreatment is described by a range of indicators listed below:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional including psychological
- Neglect
- Family and domestic violence

## Physical Abuse

Physical abuse occurs when a child or young person has experienced severe and/or persistent ill-treatment. It can include, but is not limited to injuries such as cuts, bruises, burns and fractures caused by a range of acts including beating, shaking, illicit administration of alcohol and other drugs, attempted suffocation, excessive discipline, physical punishment of other forms.

## Sexual Abuse

Covers a wide range of behaviour or activities that expose or subject a child to sexual activity that are exploitative and/or inappropriate to his/her age and developmental level. These behaviours include observation or involvement with inappropriate fondling of a child's body, making a child touch an adult's genitalia, showing pornographic material or sexual acts to a child, and sexual penetration of the child. Harm from sexual abuse may include significant emotional trauma, physical injury, infections and impaired emotional and psychological development.

## Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is a sustained, repetitive, inappropriate, ill treatment of a child or young person through behaviours including threatening, belittling, teasing, humiliating, bullying, confusing, ignoring and inappropriate encouragement. Children who have been emotionally abused are likely to have a reduced capacity to experience a range of emotions, to express emotion appropriately and to modulate their emotional experience. Children who have been emotionally abused are likely to be fearful, withdrawn and/or resentful, distressed and despairing.

Included under emotional abuse is psychological abuse. This abuse damages a child's intellectual faculties and processes, including intelligence, memory, recognition, perception, attention, imagination and moral development. Children are likely to feel worthless, flawed unloved, unwanted, endangered or only of value in meeting another's needs.

## Neglect

Neglect is the failure of a parent/caregiver to provide a child with the basic necessities of life. These include adequate supervision, adequate food or shelter, suitable clothing, effective medical, therapeutic or remedial care and emotional security. Neglect can be acute, chronic or episodic, and can result in detrimental effects on the child or young person's social psychological, educational or physical development and/or physical injury. Neglect should be considered in the context of physical, emotional or psychological abuse.

## Family and Domestic Violence

Domestic violence refers to violence, abuse and intimidation between people who are or have been in an intimate relationship. The perpetrator uses violence to control and dominate the other person. This causes fear, physical harm and/or psychological harm. Domestic violence is a violation of human rights.

Domestic violence in Australia can include:

- emotional abuse
- physical assault
- sexual assault
- verbal abuse
- psychological abuse

Family violence refers to violence between family members (for example children and parents) as well as intimate partners.

### Note

The definitions of child maltreatment as mentioned in this section can be used to describe some of the behaviour that can occur within a school by one child to another. These events are treated seriously by South Coast Baptist College with the aim to help both parties. However, the treatment of such behaviour will be managed with through the relevant Bullying and Behaviour Management Policy.

## Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect

The following list of indicators is not exhaustive, and students frequently show indicators from more than one category; and the examples listed are not necessarily exclusive to a single category of abuse. It is important to consider when there has been a deviation from normal or baseline behaviour of a child. A child who has been abused experiences mixed emotional and physical responses to abuse and may be confused by disconnect between respect/love for the abuser and abhorrence or ambivalence to the abuse itself.

<b>PHYSICAL ABUSE</b>	
<p><b>Physical Indicators:</b>                      Bruises;                      Burns;                      Hair missing in tufts;                      Lacerations and abrasions (especially to the eyes, lips, gums and mouth)                      Missing or loosened teeth;                      Self-mutilation; and                      Welts.</p>	<p><b>Behavioural Indicators:</b>                      Fear of adults;                      Frequent absences, with or without explanation from parents/caregivers;                      Guarded or evasive answers to questions about the causes of obvious injury;                      Injuries that are not consistent with a child's explanation of them;                      Disclosure of abuse directly to an adult or indirectly to a friend;                      Fear of going home.</p>
<b>EMOTIONAL ABUSE</b>	
<p><b>Physical Indicators:</b>                      Depression;                      Eating disorders (anorexia or bulimia);                      Lethargy or fatigue;                      Symptoms of stress;                      Evidence of drug abuse or dependence;                      Wetting, soiling, smearing; and                      Psychosomatic complaints.</p>	<p><b>Behavioural Indicators:</b>                      Aggressive or delinquent behaviour;                      Attempted suicide;                      Excessively compliant or passive behaviour;                      Excessive shyness or withdrawal;                      Low self-esteem;                      Fire setting;                      Truancy or school avoidance;                      Deliberate harming of animals; and                      Poor peer relationships.</p>

<b>SEXUAL ABUSE</b>	
<p><b>Physical Indicators:</b> Bruises or bleeding from external genitalia, vagina or anal regions; Blood stained underwear; Pregnancy or fear of pregnancy; Signs of pain, itching or discomfort in the genital area; and Urinary tract infections.</p>	<p><b>Behavioural Indicators:</b> Sexualised behaviours inappropriate to their age (including sexually touching other children or themselves); Knowledge of sexual behaviour inappropriate to their age; Disclosure of sexual abuse either directly or indirectly through drawings, play or writing that describes abuse; Possession of pornographic materials. Pain or bleeding in the anal or genital area with redness and swelling; If the child or young person implies that he/she is required to keep secrets. Reluctance to change clothes in front of others; Wearing of inappropriate clothing; Fear states e.g. anxiety, depression, obsessively neat, socially withdrawn or overly compliant behaviour; Poor peer relationships; and Inability to concentrate in school</p>
<b>NEGLECT</b>	
<p><b>Physical Indicators:</b> Abandonment; Poor hygiene; Lack of adequate or suitable clothing; Inadequate nutrition; Lack of medical or dental care; Constant fatigue; Developmental delays; Untreated sore, boils or lice; and Lack of adequate supervision</p>	<p><b>Behavioural Indicators:</b> Falling asleep in school; Poor school attendance or alternatively always attends school, even when sick; Poor academic performance; Steal or begs for food or eats food from bins; Dull, apathetic appearance; Engages in vandalism; Engages in sexual misconduct; Uses drugs or alcohol; and Early arrival at school or reluctance to leave.</p>

## The Facts about Child Abuse

Children or young people are at significant risk of developing psychological and emotional problems later in life, and at risk of repeating the pattern of abuse with their own children through an inter-generational mechanism.

- A child abuser can be a member of the family or someone close to the family or the child.
- A child abuser usually spends sufficient time grooming the child with the child being made to feel that they are in some way complicit in the acts, thus making disclosure a difficult process.
- Many child sex abusers hold positions of trust within the community with ready access to children and their families.
- In Australia a case of child abuse is report every 2.5 minutes
- Sexual abuse is more common among girls, other types of abuse are slightly more common among boys (Child Protection, Australia (2010-11)).
- Two thirds of substantiations for abuse or neglect are for children aged 9 years old and under (Child Protection, Australia (2010-11)).

## Myths about Child Abuse and its Prevalence

An accurate understanding of the dynamics underlying child abuse is important because the impact of any form of abuse on the victim can be life long and life changing.

Some common myths about sexual abuse:

- Sex between children and adults is not damaging if it is in the context of a loving relationship.
- Those abused turn into abusers
- Children frequently lie about sexual abuse
- Only men sexually abuse children
- Sexual abusers are easily identified by the average person
- Sexual abuse is more common in lower socio-economic areas and families.

## Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse

### The Legislation

Since 1 January 2009, the *Children and Community Service Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008* has been in effect and covers mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse in Western Australia. This amendment forms part of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*.

Who are mandatory reporters?

- ✓ Teachers
- ✓ Boarding Supervisors
- ✓ Nurses
- ✓ Midwives
- ✓ Doctors
- ✓ Police Officers

The *Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008* mandates that all teachers, make a report to the Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support, in the following instance:

- If he/she believes on reasonable grounds that a child has been the subject of sexual abuse or is the subject of ongoing sexual abuse; and
- He/she forms the belief in the course of his/her work.

### Core principles underpin the mandatory report of child sexual abuse in Western Australia

- The primary focus is always upon the child
- Every child and young person has a right to be protected from sexual abuse.
- Keeping children safe from abuse is the responsibility of individuals, families, communities and society as a whole.
- Children have a right to be heard and to be believed.
- If anyone has reasonable grounds for concern regarding the safety of a child, it is their responsibility to make a report.
- Child sexual abuse affects everyone.
- Child sexual abuse is not condoned by any culture or religion. Cultural practices and traditions cannot be used as an excuse for sexual abuse or sexual exploitation.

## Definition of 'Teacher'

The definition of teacher in section 124A of *The Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008* defines 'teacher' in a school as:

- a) Person who is registered under the Teacher Registration Act 2012
- b) A person who provides instruction in a course that is –
  - i. Mentioned in the School Education Act
  - ii. Prescribed for the purposes of this definition.
- c) A person who instructs or supervises a student who is participating in an activity that is:
  - i. Part of an educational programme of a school under an arrangement mentioned in the School Education Act 1999 and
  - ii. Prescribed for the purposes of this definition
- d) A person employed by the chief executive officer as defined in the Young Offenders Act 1994 to teach detainees at a detention centre as defined in that section.

## Definition of 'Nurse'

Nurse means a person registered under the Health Practitioners Regulation National Law (Western Australia) in the nursing and midwifery profession whose name is entered on the Register of Nurses kept under that Law.

## Definition of 'child'

The definition of 'child' is defined in section 3 of *The Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008*, as a person who is under the age of 18 years. In the absence of positive evidence as to age, a child is a person who is apparently under 18 years of age. Young people aged 18 and over are considered to be adults and are not covered by this legislation. However South Coast Baptist College has a duty of care to all students enrolled at the college. In these instances, police should be informed of any assault or crime against the young person.

## Definition of sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is defined by *The Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008* section 124A as:

'Sexual abuse' in relation to a child, includes sexual behaviour in circumstances where:

- The child is the subject of bribery, coercion, a threat, exploitation or violence; or
- The child has less power than another person involved in the behaviour; or
- There is a significant disparity in the developmental function or maturity of the child and another person involved in the behaviour.

## Role of Non Mandatory Reporters and Other Reporters:

Education Assistants, School Chaplains and School Psychologists also work with children in schools but are not mandated reporters.

However at South Coast Baptist College, all staff working with children, whether mandatory reporters or not, should continue to report reasonable beliefs and suspicions or concerns about all forms of abuse.

## What is reasonable Grounds for a Report?

Professional judgement and objective observation which identifies warning signs or possible indicators of child sexual abuse informs and contributes to 'reasonable grounds'. Knowledge

of child development and consultation with colleagues or other professionals may also contribute to 'reasonable grounds'. Note: The choice to report sexual abuse does not necessitate consultation with colleagues, including the Principal or senior staff. If a reasonable belief is formed it is the individual teacher that is required to make a written report to CPFS, not the school principal.

Staff may wish to consider the following questions to assist them in deciding if their belief is based on reasonable grounds:

- Can you describe the reasons why you believe a child has been, or is being sexually abused?
- What has the child said or done to suggest they are being sexually abused?
- Have you observed, or been told about, the presence of any of the possible indicators of sexual abuse?
- Did the child disclose sexual abuse? What did they say happened? Who did they disclose to and when?
- What other behaviours have you observed and/or interactions with the child are of concern to you? What is the frequency and severity of the behaviour? How long has it been occurring?

## How Does a Mandatory Reporter Make a Report?

A centralized Mandatory Reporting Service has been established to receive all reports of child sexual abuse in Western Australia. The service is operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

A report is to contain:

- a) The name and contact details of the reporter;
- b) The name of the child
- c) If, or to the extent the child is known to the reporter –
  - i. The child's date of birth
  - ii. Information about where the child lives
  - iii. The names of the child's parents or other appropriate persons
- d) The grounds for the reporter's belief that the child has been subject of sexual abuse or is the subject of ongoing sexual abuse
- e) If, or to the extent, known to the reporter:
  - i. The name of any person alleged to be responsible for the sexual abuse;
  - ii. The person's contact details
  - iii. The person's relationship to the child

Mandatory Reporters are required to submit a written report to the Mandatory Reporting Service as soon as practicable (ideally within 24 hours). A report may be oral or written, however in the case of an oral report the reporter must make a written report as soon as practicable after the oral report has been made. Where a teacher has formed a belief that the child is at imminent risk of being abused, they should consider calling the Western Australian Police first, whether through the 000 or the 131444 numbers. This does not fulfil the legal obligation to report a child sexual abuse belief and the individual who has formed the belief should also make a Mandatory Report through the following link:

<https://mandatoryreportingweb.communities.wa.gov.au/>

*Failure to make a verbal report can incur a penalty of up to \$6000. Failure to follow up a verbal report with a written report may result in a fine of \$3000.*

Reporters may report beliefs to CPFS on a web based form which can be accessed at the mandatory reporting website [www.mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au](http://www.mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au).

Please note that this is a timed form for security reasons and cannot be saved to a local device.

After a report is lodged, the reporter will receive a standardized letter. This letter is proof that a report has been made, so it is important that the response is retained and securely stored.

## Processing of the Report

Once the report has been lodged, the Mandatory Reporting Service will assess the immediate risk to the child, and determine the need for further child protection assessment and investigation. A copy of the report is sent to the WA Police. The police determine if they need to be involved on a case by case basis.

The mandatory reporter will receive a feedback letter advising them of the CPFS District Office to which the report has been referred. It is important to note that all reports are actioned by CPFS, but it may not be the response that the reporter expects.

If new information becomes available to the reporter, the information should be submitted to CPFS. If a new concern of belief is formed, a new mandatory report should be submitted.

## Confidentiality and Legal Protection

The identity of the reporter is required to be kept confidential, except in limited and very specific circumstances. Section 124F(2) (*Children and Community Services Act 2004*) protects a reporter's identity from being disclosed. This includes information where a reporter's identity could be deduced.

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 of Communities Child Protection and Family Support Officer may need to reveal the reporter's identity when certain child protection, family law or adoption proceedings are taking place.
- The reporter has provided written permission for their identity to be disclosed.

## Where to go for Information and Assistance

The Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support, is responsible for administering the Children and Community Services Act, which is the legislation managing mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse. The Mandatory Reporting Service has been established by the Department to receive and investigate reports of sexual abuse.

The Department has established a website [www.mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au](http://www.mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au) which provides information around Mandatory Reporting and is the portal for making an online written report, but includes a downloadable copy.

The Mandatory Reporting Service can be contacted through the following ways:

Telephone: 1800 708 704

Email: [mrs@dcp.wa.gov.au](mailto:mrs@dcp.wa.gov.au)

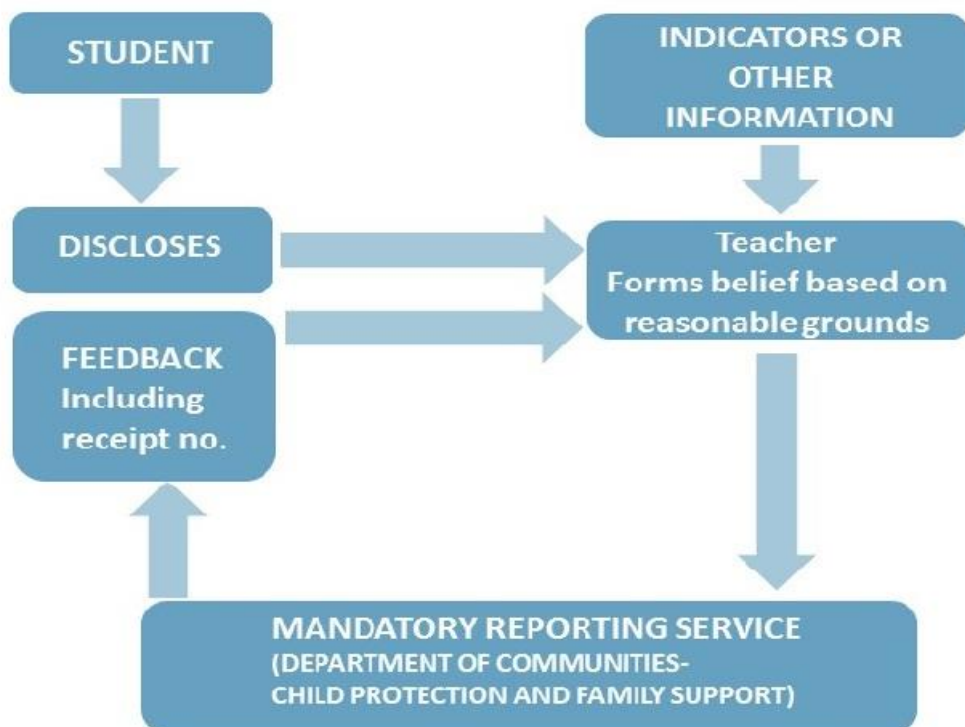
Post: PO Box 8146  
Perth BC, WA 6849



## Mandatory Reporting Procedure

The flowchart below shows what a teacher must do **ONCE** a belief has been formed on **reasonable grounds**. It does not include any consultation process **PRIOR** to a teacher forming a belief: see Mandatory Reporting Guide on the next page.

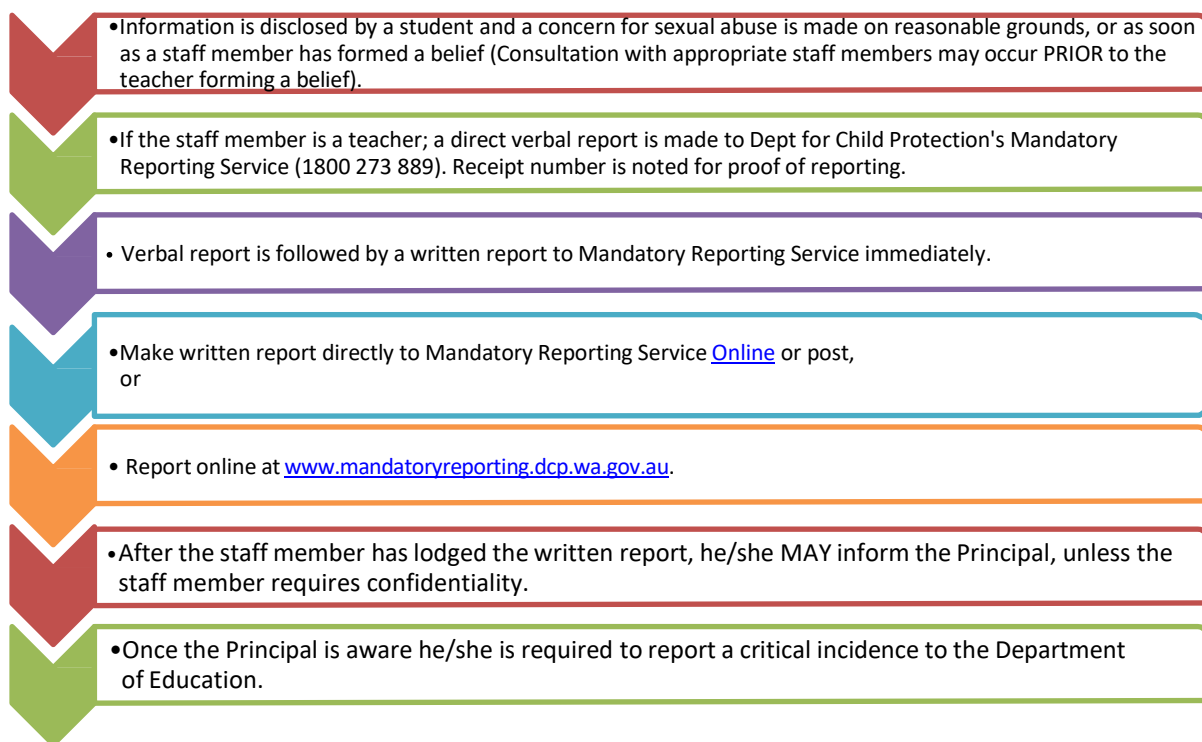
### REPORTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MANDATORY REPORTING PROCEDURE



(Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia. Policies and procedures Guidelines for Schools: Child Protection Guidelines, page 13).

## Mandatory Reporting Guide

The chart below is a guideline in how a teacher may go through a process of considering possible child abuse and a mandatory report following a disclosure by a student. **This guideline is PRIOR to forming a reasonable belief and is only intended to provide assistance to establishing a reasonable belief.**



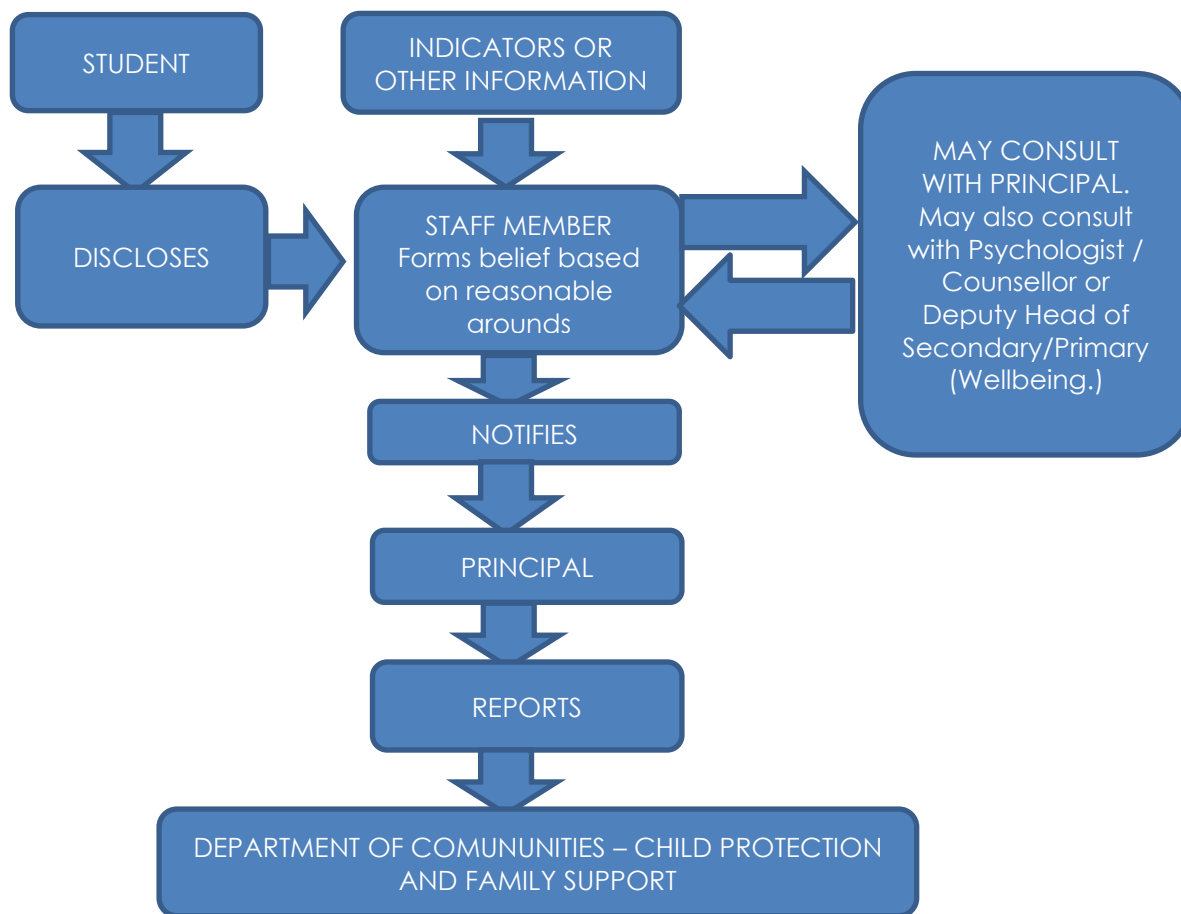
## Non-Mandated Student Protection Plan (Physical, Emotional, Neglect)

Physical, emotional or psychological abuse or neglect

The teacher's observations or the child's disclosure should be discussed with the Principal, and/or School Counsellor/Psychologist and/or Deputy Head of Primary/Secondary (Wellbeing). Ensure that the student is advised that due to the serious nature of the disclosure confidentiality cannot be maintained, and that specific staff members must be advised of the concerns. It is not the role of the teacher to investigate child abuse or neglect matters. The concerns must be reported to the above-mentioned staff members, and an outcome regarding a possible report to CPFS will be made by the staff member to whom disclosure has been made, with support from other consulting staff members. *Note: it is vital to remember that confidentiality of the disclosed information should only be discussed with those staff members who are required to know.*

**The following flow chart highlights the most appropriate response to concerns received about abuse, harm, or risk of harm to a child, emotionally, physically or by neglect. The significant harm when a child is subjected to any form of abuse requires that all steps are responded to immediately.** The chart immediately below is **general only** each student's needs will be assessed individually.

N.B. Mandatory Reporting for Sexual Abuse is legislated in WA, please **refer to the prior section** if sexual abuse is being considered, and follow the appropriate directions.



(Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia. Policies and procedures Guidelines for Schools: Child Protection Guidelines, page 27).

## Responses to Disclosure of Abuse or Neglect

The following responses toward the disclosure of abuse or neglect are important to be aware of:

- Use 'protective interrupting' if students begin to disclose in class or in a public area to protect them from sharing the information with too many other people.
- Acknowledge that you have heard them and stop them from disclosing any further.
- Be supportive and gently indicate that they might tell you about it in a more private situation.
- Quietly arrange to see them as soon as possible, in a situation away from other students.
- Establish clear limits on confidentiality by telling the child that a report will be made to a person who will be able to provide help and protection and that you will help them throughout the process.
- Put your own feelings aside and listen as if the information is not sensational.
- Provide reassurances that you believe them, that it is right to tell and do not think that they are to blame or make judgements about what has happened.
- Listen to students in a private location within the school.
- Be supportive and understanding.
- Be empathic to student feelings.
- Acknowledge that it is difficult to talk about such things.
- Try to identify students' fears.
- Let students tell the details in their own words.
- If you are unable to answer all the questions of the child, it is OK to let them know.
- Once you have established that they have been harmed or are at risk of being harmed,

do not pursue the conversation any further. This is important to ensure that questions cannot be raised later about possible manipulation of disclosure.

- Allow students the option of support during any agency interview and reassure them of the availability of continuing support.
- Document the conversation that you have had remembering as accurately as you can, the words and phrases used by the child to describe what has happened to them.
- Document the disclosure and subsequent discussions and actions.
- Explain what will happen next.
- Try and stay with the student after the disclosure to provide a sense of security until necessary steps have been taken to ensure the safety and support.

## Grooming

South Coast Baptist College has very clear expectations and boundaries around behaviours for all staff and volunteers, and people within the school community (refer Policy 6.1.0 Staff Code of Conduct- Staff; Policy 6.1.0a Code of Conduct – Coaches/Prac Students/Volunteers/etc; and Policy 4.3.3 Managing Professional Boundaries between Students and Staff). All staff are expected to have a clear understanding and awareness of how to provide a safe environment for all children, and to be able to raise concerns around unprofessional behaviour and inappropriate behaviour within the wider South Coast Baptist College community.

Grooming in a child protection context refers to deliberate actions undertaken to engage in sexual activity with a child. It differs from sexual abuse in that it is primarily a preparatory activity occurring before abuse occurs, but is continued during and after the abuse to ensure the safety of the groomer.

Grooming is a subtle, gradual, and escalating process of building trust with a child and those around the child, both children and adults, with the expressed purpose of the sexual gratification of the perpetrator and generally involves engaging in sexual activity with the child. It is deliberate and purposeful and occurs both before and after the abuse. Abusers may groom children and supporting adults for weeks, months, or even years before any sexual abuse actually takes place. The grooming may occur in person or via cyber media.

In the early stage, a committed offender will employ grooming behaviour and because it is so subtle and gradual the child may not be aware of the actual abuse when it occurs and that it is wrong or harmful. The grooming occurs not only with the child but also with those supporting networks around the child which might act as a deterrent or protective element. The perpetrator will invest significant energy and patience to minimize the risk of detection and exposure.

The groomer will employ manipulation, guilt, shame, bribery, coercion or exploit low self-esteem to psychologically manipulate the child and as a result the child becomes increasingly dependent on the groomer and increasingly alienated from protective elements including possible sources to disclose to. Plausible deniability is part of the strategy that the groomer employs to ensure that staff don't take seriously the possible disclosures of a child. This is a deliberate strategy employed to maintain the secrecy of the abuse, so that the abuse is concealed and to ensure the silence of the child.

The groomer will exploit vulnerabilities of the protective elements around the child, including parents and family circumstances, organizational and systemic weaknesses. Groomers are very adept at identifying anomalies, boundary ambiguities, and the lack of systemic awareness; at deflecting attention from their own actions and intentions.

## Grooming Behaviour with Children MAY include

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, rough housing, 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. Child may not notice or may become confused as the contact becomes increasingly intimate and sexual.

Date Reviewed: 5/11/2021

Next Review Date: Term 1, 2022