

Warragul Regional College



Child Safety Standards



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Warragul Regional College Child Safety Standards Organisational Structure

Review:

Warragul Regional College will review the school's child safe practices across each of the Standards and identify priorities.

Address:

Warragul Regional College will address gaps and priorities by developing an Action Plan, including allocating responsibilities to school leaders for completing the actions.

Determine:

Warragul Regional College will determine timeframes for meeting gaps identified. This will include allowing time for new policies or procedures to be considered and approved by School Council.

Update:

Warragul Regional College will update their school statement of philosophy, mission and vision to acknowledge the importance of child safety and protecting children from abuse.

Create:

Warragul Regional College will create a child safety officer/leader position or role in the school to promote the Action Plan and review and report on its delivery.

Conduct:

Warragul Regional College will conduct briefing sessions for school staff members to ensure a high degree of awareness of the Standards and school strategies.



Warragul Regional College Child Safety Policy

Purpose

The child safe environments policy sets out the school's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe; and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

Scope

All staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people. This policy will apply across a range of school forums (e.g. camps, online) and outside of school hours.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Warragul Regional College is committed to safety and wellbeing of all young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making. Warragul Regional College is committed to providing a child safe environment where all young people are safe and feel safe and are encouraged to speak up and be part of safety and wellbeing decisions that affect their lives. Attention is paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Warragul Regional College has Zero Tolerance for Child Abuse

Warragul Regional College is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Every person involved in Warragul Regional College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

"In its planning, decision-making and operations Warragul Regional College:

1. Takes a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
2. Values and empower young people to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Fosters a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
4. Respects diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provides written guidance on appropriate conduct, action and behaviour towards children;
6. Engages only the most suitable people to work with young people and have high quality staff, volunteer supervisors and professional development;

7. Ensures young people know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
8. Reports suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to appropriate school leaders and welfare staff who will inform authorities where necessary;
9. Shares information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations in consultation with appropriate school leaders and/or welfare staff where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Values the input and communicates with families and carers to develop knowledge and strategies to support the safety and wellbeing of young people.

Policy and Procedures

Policies and procedures outlining the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below.

- Code of Conduct Standard 3 Child Safe Standards
- Human Resources Practices Standard 4 Child Safe Standards
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Responding and Reporting Standard 5 Child Safe Standards
- Risk Management
- Empowerment of Children
- Visitor Policy

Further information can be obtained from the Child Safety Officer. At Warragul Regional College, the Child Safety Officer is the Assistant Principal in charge of Wellbeing.

A Child-Safe Culture

Warragul Regional College's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden. The school places our work in these values: Community Achievement Respect Effort. Our mission is to provide for active, creative engagement in learning within a safe, caring environment.

The following are the strategies that Warragul Regional College will implement to ensure a culture of child safety at our school:

- All members of the teaching service are mandated by law to report signs of physical and sexual abuse and neglect (see Mandatory Reporting policy and Responding and Reporting Standard 5);
- Warragul Regional College will engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
- All employed teachers must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT);
- All employed Education Support staff require a 'Working with Children Check' and 'Police Check' before the commencement of their duties;
- All volunteers and contractors require a 'Working with Children Check' before the commencement of their duties;
- All staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our 'Code of Conduct' particularly as they relate to child safety (See Code of Conduct Standard 3) which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children;

- We are committed to regular mandatory reporting training and educating our staff about child abuse risks;
- We will work to ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
- We are committed to listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child;
- To support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse the school will:
 - establish regular communication between staff and the child's parent/ guardian/carer (if this is appropriate) to discuss a child's wellbeing and the effectiveness of planned strategies;
 - convene a Student Support Group to plan ongoing monitoring, support, and follow-up of the child's health and wellbeing; and
 - develop and implement a Student Support Plan, which documents the planned support strategies and includes timeframes for review (where possible, these support strategies should be informed by allied health and wellbeing professionals with expertise in addressing child abuse and trauma).
- All allegations of abuse and safety concerns will be reported to a member of the Leadership Team. The information will be documented using our 'confidential summary form' and stored securely. Updates will be added to this document and relevant stakeholders informed;
- We have specific policies, processes and training in place that support our staff and volunteers to confidently make a report based on holding a 'reasonable belief' that a child is at risk of child abuse (see Mandatory Reporting Policy, Cyber Safety Policy and Bullying Prevention Policy);
- Allegations of abuse or safety concerns will be made to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in accordance with mandatory reporting procedures; and
- The Leadership Team will ensure appropriate supervision for all classes, excursions, camps and activities within the school environment in adherence with relevant school and DET policies and procedures.

Personnel Understand their Roles and Responsibilities / Code of Conduct

School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Code of Conduct. The school's Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Refer to the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Victorian Teachers Professional Codes of Conduct and Ethics. All new staff are required to sign the Code of Conduct within 7 days of starting and existing staff are required to sign annually. The Principal will monitor and keep records of this.

The Code of Conduct is located Standard 3 of the Child Safe Standards. All volunteers and maintenance workers will be provided with a copy and sited at sign in at the office.

Human Resources Practices and Training

Warragul Regional College applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo a National Criminal History Records Check and maintain a valid Working with Children Check.

Warragul Regional College's approach to human resources practices that ensure child safety can be found in the Human Resources Practices Standard 4.

Reporting a Child Safety Concern or Complaint

Warragul Regional College has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency and notifying the Principal or a member of the School Leadership Team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns. The school will take action to respond to a complaint.

The school's policy and procedures for reporting a child safety concern or complaint can be found in the Mandatory Reporting Policy and Responding and Reporting Standard 5.

Risk Reduction and Management

The School believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures. Risk management processes are reviewed annually or pre/post events/excursions/incidents.

The school's approach to Child Safety risk reduction and management can be found in the Risk Management Policy Standard 6.

Listening to Children

The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities. Warragul Regional College promotes student voice through School Council, Student Focus Groups, Student Representative Council and Student Curriculum Team.

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with, or abuse of, a child the school will listen to the complainant's account of things and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parents/carers) informed about progress.

The school's approach to empowering the student voice can be found in Empowerment of Children Standard 7

Confidentiality and Privacy

Warragul Regional College collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian Privacy Law. The collection, use and storage of information is included in school policies. See School Privacy Policy.

Policy Evaluation and Review

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.

Definitions

A full list of definitions for Ministerial Order No. 870 is available at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe

Child Abuse Includes

Any act committed against a child involving –

- a sexual offence or
- an offence under section 49B(2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (grooming)
- The infliction, on a child, of-
 - Physical violence or
 - Serious emotional or psychological harm
 - Serious neglect of a child

Child Safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

School Environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events)

School Staff means:

In a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:

- employed under Part 2.4 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETR Act)* in the government teaching service or
- employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act or
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)

Related Policies and Documents

[School Policy Advisory Guide – Duty of Care](#)

[School Policy Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations](#)

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed in consultation with the whole school community.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in May 2021	Review Date: May 2023
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Warragul Regional College Code of Conduct

Warragul Regional College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development. This commitment is integral to Warragul Regional College's mission of developing students as adaptable, confident, successful learners and citizens.

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, Department policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

The Principal and school leaders of Warragul Regional College will support implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide inclusive, safe and orderly schools and other learning environments. The Principal and school leaders of Warragul Regional College will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

All staff, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps and in the use of digital technology and social media.

The College's values are COMMUNITY, ACHIEVEMENT, RESPECT and EFFORT our actions must be guided by these values.

Acceptable Behaviours

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-connected work individually, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- Upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times including adhering to the school's child safe policy
- Treating students and families in the school community with respect both within the school environment and outside the school environment as part of normal social and community activities.
- Listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds

- Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability
- Reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the school's leadership
- Understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse.
- If child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.
- Reporting to the Victorian Institute of Teaching any charges, committals for trial or convictions in relations to a sexual offence by a registered teacher, or certain allegations or concerns about a registered teacher.
- Reporting to the relevant authority any charges, committals for trial or convictions in relation to a sexual offence by a non-teaching staff person, volunteer or student or certain allegations or concerns regarding sexual offence.

Unacceptable Behaviours

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-connected work we must not:

- Ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- Develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- Exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical
- Exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context
- Ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
- Discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting
- Treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity.
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc.) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to school work or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- Photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with school policy or where required for duty of care purposes¹
- In the school environment or at other school events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to school policy² or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.

¹ PAL:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/photoandfilm.aspx>.

The policy says the school should get consent before taking and publishing photos of a student. This applies every time a photo is taken. The same policy applies for excursions and school activities.

² PAL:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/alcohol.aspx>.

The policy says the school must obtain school council approval before alcohol can be consumed on school grounds or at a school activity. The policy says staff members should not consume alcohol during camps and excursions. It is silent on whether they can consume alcohol at other school events where students are present, this is a matter that the school needs to decide upon.



Warragul Regional College Staff Selection

Rationale:

Strong human resources practices promote child safe school environments and reduce the risk of child abuse. Child Safe Standard 4 requires schools to use policies and procedures for recruitment, supervision, training and managing performance that support a child safe school environment. These must comply with Ministerial Order 870.

Implementation:

Warragul Regional College will:

- ensure that position descriptions for all new positions advertised from 1 August 2016 include the standard 'Child Safe Environments' clause as provided in the 'Recruitment in Schools' Guide.
- identify the actions the school proposes to take, per Standard 1, to promote and embed the Child Safety Code of Conduct in accordance with Standard 3 [this is to address Requirement 1 for existing staff] and articulate the timeframe for this.
- determine the timeframes for the School Council to oversee and review Standard 4 as part of the school's Action Plan [Standard 1] and School Child Safe Environments Policy [Standard 2].
- adhere to all DET requirements listed in the table below

Requirement	Departmental action	School action
<p>1. <i>Each job or category of jobs for school staff that involves child connected work must have clear statements regarding the child safety requirements of the role and the expectations of the occupant</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 'Recruitment in Schools' Guide has been updated and requires that position descriptions for all new positions advertised from 1 August 2016 include the following standard 'Child Safe Environments' clause: "Victorian government schools are child safe environments. Our schools actively promote the safety and wellbeing of all students, and all school staff are committed to protecting students from abuse or harm in the school environment in accordance with their legal obligations including the Child Safe Standards. The school's Child Safety Code of Conduct is available on the school's website." • In the near future, position descriptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that position descriptions for all new positions include the standard 'Child Safe Environments' clause as provided in the 'Recruitment in Schools' Guide. • For existing staff, the school will promote and embed the Child Safety Code of Conduct in accordance with Standard 3. • Note that the Principal Class Contract of Employment has been updated to include reference to the Standards, and all contracts offered on or after 1 August will include the revised wording.

Requirement	Departmental action	School action
	<p>generated in Recruitment Online (ROL) will be automated to include a standard clause regarding child safety.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Principal Class Contract of Employment has been updated to include the text italicised in the below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preamble: The aims of the Department include: " ... the provision of a child safe environment" - Schedule B – Accountabilities of a principal – Student Support: "Pt 2) Plan, implement and monitor arrangements to ensure the care, safety, security and general well-being of all students in attendance at the school including compliance with the Child Safe Standards " <p>This will apply for future contracts.</p>	
<p>2. <i>All applicants for jobs that involve child connected work for the school must be informed about the school's child safety practices (including the code of conduct).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above
<p>3. <i>In accordance with any applicable legal requirement or school policy, the school must make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child connected</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 'Recruitment in Schools' Guide has been updated to include that, the Principal, prior to an external applicant person commencing employment, must be satisfied that the person: <i>"meets the Child Safe Standards."</i> (insert link to CSS site) <p>This can be found here.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals implement practices to ensure that they are satisfied an external applicant <i>meets the Child Safe Standards</i> prior to the applicant's employment.

Requirement	Departmental action	School action
<p>4. <i>The school need not comply with the requirements in step (3) above if it has already made reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the information about a particular individual within the previous 12 months</i></p>		
<p>5. <i>The school must ensure that appropriate supervision or support arrangements are in place in relation to induction and continuing suitability for child connected work</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on alignment of/changes to Induction will be developed in 2016. • Advice on alignment of/changes to Performance and Development will be developed in 2016, with changes to be determined for the 2017-18 Performance and Development cycle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note that further advice on requirements related to Induction and Performance and Development will be developed in 2016 to ensure schools fully meet this Standard.
<p>6. <i>The school must implement practices that enable the school governing authority to be satisfied that people engaged in child-connected work perform appropriately in relation to child safety</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Councils to oversee and review Standard 4 as part of the school's Action Plan [Standard 1] and School Child Safe Environments policy [Standard 2]

Resources and References:

- Commission for Children and Young People (2015) *A Guide For Creating A Child Safe Organisation*, Version 2.0.
- Department of Education and Training (2016) *Recruitment in Schools*
- Department of Education and Training (2016) *Suitability for Employment*
- Victorian Government, Education & Reform Act 2006, Gazette No. S2, January 2016, *Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools*, Ministerial Order No. 870.
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (2016) *Child Safety Standard 4: Staff Selection Checklist*



Warragul Regional College Responding to and Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

Rationale:

As professionals who work with children, staff at Warragul Regional College play a vital role in protecting children from abuse by responding and reporting any incidents, disclosures or suspicions. Staff are often best placed to identify signs and behaviours that may indicate that a child has been subject to abuse, or that a school community member or a school staff member may be a perpetrator of abuse.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff and members of our school community understand the various legal and other reporting obligations related to child safety that apply to Warragul Regional College. The specific procedures that are applicable at our school are contained at Appendix A.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all school staff, volunteers and school community members. It also applies to all staff and students engaged in any school and school council-run events, activities and services (such as the Presentation Ball).

POLICY

All children and young people have the right to protection in their best interests.

Warragul Regional College understands the important role our school plays in protecting children from risk of harm and all forms of child abuse including:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Medical neglect
- Family violence
- Human trafficking (including forced marriage)
- Sexual exploitation (including pornography and prostitution)

The staff at Warragul Regional College are required by law to comply with various child safety reporting obligations. For detailed information about each obligation, please refer to the resources included in the body of this policy. At Warragul Regional College we also recognise the diversity of the children and young people at our school and take account of their individual needs and backgrounds when considering child safety.

MANDATORY REPORTING

Principals, registered teachers, registered medical practitioners, nurses and all members of the police force are mandatory reporters under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic).

Mandatory reporters are required by law to make a report to DHHS as soon as practicable if, in the course of practicing their profession or carrying out their duties, they form the **reasonable belief** that a child or young person is in need of protection as a result of physical injury, sexual abuse, emotional harm or psychological harm and the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child from that abuse.

A mandatory reporter who fails to comply with this legal obligation may be committing a criminal offence. It is important for all staff at Warragul Regional College to be aware that they are legally obliged to make a mandatory report on each occasion that they form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection and they must make a mandatory report even if the principal does not share their belief that a report is necessary.

At our school, all mandated school staff must undertake the *Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations eLearning Module* annually. We also encourage all other staff to undertake this module, even where they are not mandatory reporters.

For more information about Mandatory Reporting see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: [Child Protection – Reporting Obligations](#).

CHILD IN NEED OF PROTECTION

Any person can make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection (131 278 – 24 hour service) if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection.

The policy of the Department of Education and Training (DET) requires **all staff** who form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection to report their concerns to DHHS or Victoria Police, and discuss their concerns with the school leadership team.

For more information about making a report to DHHS, see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: [Child Protection – Making a Report and Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#).

At Warragul Regional College we also encourage all staff to make a referral to DHHS Child FIRST when they have significant concern for a child's wellbeing but do not believe that the child needs protection. For more information about making a referral to Child FIRST see the *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: Child Protection – Reporting Obligations.

REPORTABLE CONDUCT

Our school must notify the Department's Employee Conduct Branch (9637 2594) if we become aware of an allegation of 'reportable conduct'.

There is an allegation of reportable conduct where a person has formed a reasonable belief that there has been:

- a sexual offence, sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child;
- behaviour causing significant emotional or physical harm to a child; or
- significant neglect of a child, or misconduct involving any of the above.

The Department, through the Employee Conduct Branch, has a legal obligation to inform the Commission for Children and Young People when an allegation of reportable conduct is made.

Our principal must notify the Department's Employee Conduct Branch of any reportable conduct allegations involving current or former teachers, contractors, volunteers (including parents), allied health staff and school council employees.

If school staff become aware of reportable conduct by any person in the above positions, they should notify the school principal immediately.

For more information about Reportable Conduct see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#).

FAILURE TO DISCLOSE OFFENCE

Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults (i.e. persons aged 18 years and over), not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police, as soon as practicable to do so, where they form a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 by another person aged 18 years or over.

Failure to disclose information to Victoria Police (by calling 000 or local police station) as soon as practicable may amount to a criminal offence unless a person has a 'reasonable excuse' or exemption from doing so.

"Reasonable belief" is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed when:

- a child states that they have been sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child, states that the child has been sexually abused
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a mandated professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually abused
- signs of sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

"Reasonable excuse" is defined by law and includes (a) fear for the safety of any person including yourself or the potential victim (but not including the alleged perpetrator or an organisation) or (b) where the information has already been disclosed, for example, through a mandatory report to DHHS.

For more information about this reporting obligation, see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: [Failure to disclose offence](#).

FAILURE TO PROTECT OFFENCE

This reporting obligation applies to school staff in a position of authority. This can include principals, assistant principals and campus principals. Any staff member in a position of authority who becomes aware that an adult associated with their school (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under their care, authority or supervision, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk.

This may include removing the adult (i.e. persons aged 18 years and over) from working with children pending an investigation and reporting your concerns to Victoria Police.

If a school staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence.

For more information about this reporting obligation, see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: [Failure to protect offence](#).

RELATED POLICIES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Child Safety Policy, Mandatory Reporting Policy.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed in consultation with the whole school community.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in May 2021	Review Date: May 2023
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Appendices:

- Child Safety Reporting Procedures
- Mandatory Reporting Policy

APPENDIX A

CHILD SAFETY REPORTING PROCEDURES AT WARRAGUL REGIONAL COLLEGE

For Students

- All students should feel safe to speak to any staff member to raise any concerns about their safety or any other concerns that they have.
- If a student does not know who to approach at Warragul Regional College they should start with their Care Group Teacher, Team Assistant or Student Advocate.

Disclosures made by Students to any Person

If a child discloses abuse to you:

- Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and 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, such as their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, or the police.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to your Principal or nominee, police or child protection.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.
- If the child agrees, have a second person as a witness present for the report.
- If a student makes a disclosure to any person connected to the school environment, including staff, visitors, volunteers or other community members, the person to whom the disclosure is made must speak to a Principal, Cohort Leader or Welfare Officer so that they can contact the relevant authority and take appropriate steps to protect the student, so that prompt action can be taken which, depending on the disclosure, may involve contacting Victoria Police and/or DHHS (Child Protection).
- At Warragul Regional College a Principal or Welfare Officer will be responsible for ensuring that there is a prompt response to the disclosure and that the child is appropriately supported.
- If the Principal/other nominated staff member responsible above is unavailable, contact a Principal or Welfare Officer from another campus or Cohort Leader.

Duty of Care and Ongoing Support for Students

- Fulfilling the requirements in this procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of abuse.
- All staff have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students so it is important that staff take all reasonable steps and that they ensure that the Principal / Assistant Principal / Welfare Officer or other appropriate staff member is aware of the concerns that may be the subject of any reports, mandatory or otherwise, so that appropriate supports can be put in place for

the student affected both immediately, if required, and until any allegations or concerns are resolved.

For Staff – Mandatory Reporting

- All staff at our school should speak to a Principal or Welfare Officer if they form the **reasonable belief** that a child or young person is in need of protection as a result of physical injury, sexual abuse, emotional harm or psychological harm and the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child from that abuse.
- Ensure a mandatory report has been reported and a welfare note LEVEL 3 has been made by a Principal or Welfare Officer.
- In circumstances where a principal disagrees that a report needs to be made but the staff member has formed a 'reasonable belief' that the child is in need of protection, the staff member must still contact DHHS Child Protection to make the report.
- If you are a mandatory reporter you have an obligation to ensure that a report has been made in instances where another mandated reporter has undertaken to make the report by confirming with that staff member that the report has been made.

General Procedures

- Our school will follow the *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse* - https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf
- All staff at our school who believe that a child is in need of protection, even if it doesn't meet the threshold required for mandatory reporting, should in the first instance, speak to a Cohort Leader or Welfare Officer or should make the required reports to DHHS and/or Victoria Police as necessary.
- For all reports, our school will use the Department's reporting template for mandatory reports available at: https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/PROTECT_Schoolstemplate.pdf. This will then be put on COMPASS as a LEVEL 3 welfare note.
- At our school the Assistant Principal will be responsible for monitoring overall school compliance with this procedure.

For School Visitors, Volunteers and School Community Members

- All community members aged 18 years or over should be aware of the legal obligations – see *Failure to disclose offence* above, in this Policy.
- Any person can make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. For contact details see *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse* - https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf
- There is no requirement for community members to inform the school if they are making a disclosure to the Victoria Police. However, where a community member is concerned about the safety of a child or children at the school, and where disclosure of that concern will not compromise any potential police investigation, the community member should report this concern to the principal so that appropriate steps to support the student can be taken.



MANDATORY REPORTING

POLICY

Rationale:

- All children have a right to feel safe and to be safe. As teachers, we have a legal and moral responsibility to respond to serious incidences involving abuse and neglect of the children with whom we have contact, and to report instances that we believe involve physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect.

Aims:

- To ensure that children's rights to be safe are maintained and each child is protected against physical and sexual abuse, and neglect.

Implementation:

- All members of the Teaching Service are mandated by law to report signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, and neglect.
- New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures.
- All members of the Teaching Service are required to complete online Mandatory Reporting Training annually. Education Support staff members also have this training available and are encouraged to complete it annually.
- All concerns must be reported immediately to the Principal, or in his/her absence, the Assistant Principal / Welfare Officer.
- The Principal will keep a record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern. (Level 3 welfare note)
- The Teacher and/or the Principal Class Officer will contact the Department of Human Services by telephone as soon as possible to make an official notification on: **1800 020 202 or after school hours crisis line 131 278**
- Members of the Department of Human Services, or associated support or intervention services that visit the school following a notification, will interview staff and children only in the presence of a Principal class member or his/her nominee.
- All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
- All incidents are to be monitored, and any subsequent signs or indications of abuse are also to be reported.
- While only mandated by law to report incidents of physical and sexual abuse, and neglect; teachers are also encouraged to report incidents of emotional abuse or neglect.
- Students, who disclose to staff a desire to harm themselves or others, must be reported by staff to the Principal / Welfare Officer.

Duty of Care and Ongoing Support for Students

- Fulfilling the requirements in this procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of abuse.
- All staff have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students so it is important that staff take all reasonable steps and that they ensure that Principal / Assistant Principal / Welfare Officer or other appropriate staff members are aware of the concerns that may be the subject of any reports, mandatory or otherwise, so that appropriate supports can be put in place for the student affected both immediately, if required, and until any allegations or concerns are resolved.

Evaluation:

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

This policy was last ratified in May 2021



Warragul Regional College Child Safety Standards Risk Assessment

Rationale:

Victorian Government schools have an important responsibility for keeping children safe. They need to **Assess, identify** and **document** the school's risks in relation to child safety, and plan and document risk management strategies where necessary.

Implementation:

Warragul Regional College will adopt the following process for identifying and reducing or removing risks of child abuse;

1. Identify the school's child safety risks across the range of school environments (including excursions, camps, online) using the DET risk assessment template.
2. Identify any existing risk mitigation measures or internal controls.
3. Assess and rate the school's child safety risks given the existing controls in place, taking into account the likelihood of risk, and the likely consequence of the risk.
4. If the risk rating is more than the 'acceptable level', identify further risk management strategies through additional controls or other prevention, detection or mitigation strategies and then re-assess the risk.

The risk management process will be documented, recorded and reviewed periodically. Effective risk management strategies are dynamic and change over time as new risks arise and others may no longer be relevant.

Effective risk management strategies need to be transparent, well understood and diverse, to take account of the increased level of risk associated with the specific nature of some activities and the vulnerability of particular groups.

Resources and References:

- [A step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child FIRST](#)
- Department of Education and Training (2016) *School Policy Advisory Guide: Risk Management Policy*, and associated tools:
 - School risk register which can be edited and has automatic tools embedded is available, see: [Risk Management in Schools – Risk Register](#).
 - Subordinate risk registers for specific activities such as overseas travel/excursions or projects, see: [Risk Management in Outdoor Education – Education Outdoor tools](#).
 - Online risk management module: [Risk Management - Online Risk Module](#)
- [Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people](#)
- [Protecting Children - Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations](#) – e-learning module (log-in required)



Warragul Regional College Child Safety Standards Child Empowerment

Rationale:

Children have the right to give their views and opinions about decisions that affect them and to be listened to. Empowerment is about helping children to have their say. Children are more likely to speak up about their concerns about feeling unsafe, or make a complaint, if they feel their views are valued and welcomed.

Implementation:

Warragul Regional College will develop strategies to deliver appropriate education about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending the school;
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
- resilience; and
- child abuse awareness and prevention.

Warragul Regional College will promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children.

Warragul Regional College delivers appropriate education about **Standards of Behaviour** by

- ensuring clear expectations for appropriate and inappropriate behavior are monitored using the school's values
- having an up to date Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy
- involving students in decision making through committees, school council student curriculum team and student union.

Warragul Regional College delivers appropriate education about **Healthy and Respectful Relationships** by

- implementing a sexuality education program
- implementing a comprehensive Health and Physical Education program
- promoting mental health and wellbeing through the curriculum in CARE group
- involving students in decision making through student focus groups, student union and school council

Warragul Regional College delivers appropriate education about **Resilience** by

- promoting, modeling, teaching, acknowledging and celebrating resilience through the Be You resources and Communities that Care program.

Warragul Regional College delivers appropriate education about **Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention** by

- implementing a sexuality education program
- relevant information for parents and community published in the school newsletter
- holding parent information sessions on a needs basis when appropriate