



Child Safe Reporting Process

Canine Comprehension has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Every employee at Canine Comprehension (including staff, contractors and volunteers) has a responsibility to understand the role they have to ensure the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people that we work or have contact with.

All Canine Comprehension staff have been trained in the Protect Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools Policy to ensure that they understand:

- The reporting obligations including (refer to [Legal Responsibilities](#)):
 - Mandatory reporting
 - Failure to disclose
 - Failure to protect
- Identifying signs of child abuse
- Four critical actions for schools
- Responding to other concerns about the wellbeing of a child

Responding to a child

If a Canine Comprehension staff member becomes aware of actual or suspected child abuse (through observation, disclosure or allegation) the staff member will follow the client's specific child safe reporting process. The process will commence if there are child safety concerns including:

- Disclosure of abuse or harm
- Allegation, suspicion or observation of any abuse
- Breach of Code of Conduct
- Environmental safety issues

While following the clients process, the staff member will ensure that the following steps included as a minimum:

1. Respond:
 - ensure the child's immediate health and safety is supported by an appropriate staff member
 - ensure the alleged offender does not have access to the child
 - provide urgent medical assistance where necessary by:
 - administering first aid
 - calling 000 for an ambulance and following any instructions from emergency service officers/paramedics
 - call 000 for urgent police assistance if the person who is alleged to have engaged in the abuse poses an immediate risk to the health and safety of any person
 - you should also identify a contact person at the organisation for future liaison with police



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- take reasonable steps to preserve evidence, such as the environment, clothing, other items, and potential witnesses until the police or other relevant authorities arrive on the premises
2. Provide support to the child:
- listen to them carefully and let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred
 - reassure the child that you are taking what they are saying seriously, that it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing
 - explain to them that this information will need to be shared with others, such as their parent/carer, specific people in the organisation, Child Protection and 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
 - as appropriate, complete an incident form with or on behalf of the child or young person.
3. Report:
- Decide, in accordance with legal requirements and duty of care, whether the matter should/must be reported to the police or Child Protection and make report as soon as possible if required.
 - Report to the appropriate client contact or an alternative person if that person is involved in the incident.
 - Report the situation to Canine Comprehensions Operation Manager by phone, followed up by a completed incident report.
4. Contact parents, carers or guardians (unless they are known to be, suspected or alleged to be the perpetrator):
- Ensure that client has a process for responding to the incident that will involve contacting the child's parents, carers or guardians.
 - If there is a direct relationship with the family and it is more appropriate for Canine Comprehension to make the contact:
 - remain calm
 - be empathic to feelings
 - validate concerns
 - provide appropriate details of the incident, disclosure and/or suspicion of child abuse
 - outline the action the organisation has taken to date
 - inform them of who the incident, disclosure and/or suspicion has been reported to
 - where relevant, provide the name and contact telephone number of Child Protection and/or the investigating police officer and advise as to whether they are likely to be contacted by these authorities
 - inform them the investigation may take some time and ask what further information they would like and how staff can assist them



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- offer for the organisation to provide support to the child
 - inform them that the organisation can make referrals to support services
 - if possible, invite the parents, carers or guardians to attend a meeting where a support plan can be prepared to ensure appropriate support can be provided for their child
5. Canine Comprehension will provide the following ongoing support:
- assist the client in providing support to the child where appropriate.
 - support the client by providing records of the situation and cooperate in any investigation that may be necessary.
 - Debriefing and supporting our staff member/s who is/are involved in reporting the incident.

Responding to a client, parent, carer or guardian of a child

If a client, parent, carer or guardian has a concern about their (or any other child) while working with Canine Comprehension, they should raise this with the the Administration team in writing education@caninecomprehension.com.au.

While discussion the situation, Canine Comprehension will:

- explain that we have processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously
- ask about the safety and wellbeing of the child
- allow the client, parent, carer or guardian to talk through the incident in their own words
- advise the client, parent, carer or guardian that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details
- explain to them that you will need to follow the organisation's reporting process which includes informing the organisation's Director and where appropriate, Child Protection and/or Victoria Police
- not make promises except that you will do your best to keep the child safe
- provide them with any incident reports
- ask them what action they would like the organisation to take about the disclosure and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be
- ensure that the report is recorded accurately and stored securely
- report and provide ongoing support as per Actions Three and Five above.



Legal responsibilities

Although the Child Safe Standards focus on the obligations of organisations, adults also have several obligations to report allegations and suspicions of abuse against a child, whether or not that child is involved with their organisation.

Failure to disclose

All adults (aged 18 years or over) who hold a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 years must disclose that information to Victoria Police as soon as possible. Failing to disclose this information is a criminal offence, unless the adult who holds the belief has a reasonable excuse not to disclose the information, such as they fear for their safety or that of another person.

More information about [failure to disclose](#) is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation's website.

While the offence of failure to disclose only covers child sexual abuse, all adults should report other forms of child abuse to authorities. Failure to disclose legislation does not change mandatory reporting responsibilities.

Mandatory reporting

Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers -including early childhood teachers-, principals and police officers) must report to Child Protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse. More information about [mandatory reporting](#) is available in the department's Child Protection Manual.

Please refer to the department's website for information about [how to make a report to child protection](#).

Failure to protect

The offence of failure to protect applies where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 years under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A relevant organisation is an organisation that exercises care, supervision or authority over children, whether as its primary function or otherwise. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

Further information about [failure to protect](#) can be found on the Department of Justice and Regulation's website, and in the [Failure to protect offence factsheet](#) on the department's website.

Reportable conduct scheme

The reportable conduct scheme requires [in scope organisations](#) to report any allegations of sexual and physical abuse, sexual misconduct, significant emotional or psychological harm, or significant neglect by an employee towards a child in their care.



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In scope organisations must ensure that the [head of the organisation](#) is made aware of the allegation and that there are procedures for appropriately responding to and investigating the allegation. Notifications of reportable conduct must be made to the Commission for Children and Young People:

The reportable conduct scheme commenced on 1 July 2017 and is being implemented in three phases. Phase 1 commenced on 1 July 2017 and focused on organisations that operate schools and provide government services. Phase 2 commenced on 1 January 2018 and includes religious bodies, boarding schools, school camps and health and disability services. Phase 3 will commence on 1 January 2019 and includes kindergartens, after hour care services, children's services and certain art centres, libraries, museums, zoos, parks and gardens. Further information about the [Reportable conduct scheme](#) can be found on the department's website and the [Reportable Conduct Scheme page](#) of the Commission for Children and Young People's website.

Duty of care

On 1 July 2017, organisations that exercise care, supervision or authority over children became subject to a new statutory duty of care to take 'reasonable precautions' to prevent the abuse of children committed by individuals associated with the organisation. If a child is abused by an individual associated with the organisation, the organisation is presumed to have breached its duty unless it can prove it took 'reasonable precautions' to prevent the abuse in question.

Further information about the new [organisational duty of care](#) can be found on the Department of Justice and Regulation's website.