



CHILD SAFETY AND PROTECTION POLICY

Policy Statement

Avalon College has a zero tolerance policy for child abuse.

This Policy provides the framework for:

- the implementation of the Victorian Child Safe Standards, Ministerial Order 1359 within the College (including in the registered boarding premises of JM House and Elliott House);
- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures, consistent with the Department of Education and Training's PROTECT document, "Four Critical Actions for Centres: Responding to Incidents, Disclosure and Suspicions of Child Abuse" (PROTECT Four Critical Actions) that promote child protection, safety and wellbeing within the College;
- the creation of a positive child safe culture;
- the promotion and open discussion of child safety issues within the College; and,
- compliance with all laws, regulations, and standards relevant to child protection and child safety in Victoria.

The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) monitors and enforces compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards for all registered centres in Victoria.

Everyone working at Avalon College is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

Avalon College is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for its students and staff. The Avalon College Policy and Procedures aims to reduce the risk of abuse occurring and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken should abuse occur.

Avalon College is committed to child safety and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures.

We want our students to be happy, safe and empowered.

We support and respect all students, as well as our staff, contractors and volunteers.

We are committed to the cultural safety of children from a cultural and/or linguistically diverse background and to providing a safe environment for children with disabilities.

We have a legal and moral obligation to contact authorities when we are concerned about a child's safety.



Avalon College is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, removing and reducing these risks.

Avalon College is committed to regularly training and educating our staff, contractors and volunteers on child abuse risks.

CHILD PROTECTION & MANDATORY REPORTING POLICY & PROCEDURE

- All relevant State and Federal legislation will be complied with
- A Working With Children Check or Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) membership required for all staff, regular contract staff and non-employee campus residents
- All staff must complete Mandatory Reporting & Obligations training every 12 months
- A person with prior conviction relating to violent or sexually related offences is not to be employed
- All staff are to report abuse following the procedure dealing with abuse suspicion
- An environment where students feel able to report abuse is to be maintained
- Reasonable suspicions of abuse will be reported to the authorities and to AON Risk Services Australia Limited

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse, call 000

Avalon College promotes diversity and tolerance within our organisation and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

In particular we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse background.
- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.
- Empower students within our organisation by involving them with some decision making, especially about matters that directly affect them.
- We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

Avalon College's Child Safety and Protection Policy applies to all adults in the Avalon Community. This includes staff, volunteers, campus residents, third party contractors and external education providers as well as to parents, guardians, and visitors to the College.

This Policy applies in all physical, virtual and online College environments used by students during or outside of centre hours, including all locations provided for a student's use (for example on-site and off-site College grounds, sporting events, tours and excursions and environments provided by External Education Providers and other Contractors).

The Policy also applies to the our boarding houses and families of boarding students and operations which are both boarding premises registered with the Victorian Registrations and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).



The General Manager College's "governing authority" for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359.

The General Manager

The General Manager is responsible for:

- taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the College's Child Safe Program is implemented effectively and followed
- ensuring that a strong and sustainable child safe culture is maintained within the College, including by:
 - modelling the Child Safe Code of Conduct, and reinforcing high standards of child safe behaviours between adults and students and between students
 - facilitating the participation of students, families, Staff and other members of the College community in promoting and improving child safety and wellbeing at the College
 - promoting regular and open discussion of child safety and wellbeing issues within the College community
 - facilitating regular professional learning for Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors about child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and preventing and responding to child safety incidents and concerns
 - creating an environment where child safety incidents, concerns and complaints are readily raised with the College and where no one is discouraged from reporting child safety incidents or concerns to relevant external authorities.
 - The General Manager is the "head" of the College for the purposes of the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Staff Members

All Staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy, Child Safety Codes of Conduct and our Child Safe Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the College's Child Protection Officers.

- To meet these obligations, all Staff must:
 - participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training provided by the College



- always follow the College's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures in the Child Safe Program
- act in accordance with the Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- identify and raise child safety incidents and concerns in accordance with our Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns, and follow the College's Four Critical Actions Guides
- ensure students views are taken seriously and their voices are heard when making decisions that affect them
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students. All Staff are "centre staff" for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359.

Volunteers

A Volunteer is a someone who works without payment or financial reward for the College. Volunteers may be family members of students, or from the wider College or local community.

Volunteers are not "centre staff" for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359.

All Volunteers at the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of students in the College environment.

To meet these obligations:

- all Volunteers must comply with our Child Safe Policy and Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- Direct Contact Volunteers (and, if required by the College, other Volunteers such as Regular Volunteers who are engaged in "child-connected work") must:
 - participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training provided by the College
 - be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm
 - understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm
 - raise all child safety concerns with one of the College's Child Protection Officers.

Contractors

A Contractor is someone who is engaged by the College to perform specific tasks. Contractors are not employees of the College. However, Contractors who have direct contact with children are "centre staff" for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359.

Contractors include, for example, maintenance and building personnel, gardeners, consultants, casual teachers, tutors, sports coaches, caterers and College cleaners. It also includes any external



individuals engaged by international students whose welfare arrangements are subject to a Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare (CAAW) letter (boarding and homestay).

All Contractors engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

To meet these obligations:

- all Contractors must comply with our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety Codes of Conduct.

Direct Contact Contractors (and, if required by the College, other Contractors such as Regular Contractors who are engaged in “child-connected work”) must:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training provided by the College
- be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm
- understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm
- raise all child safety concerns with one of the College’s Child Protection Officers.

Implementation and Communication

The Avalon College Child Safety and Protection Policy is published on our College public website.

It is provided to new Staff, and to Direct Contact and Regular Volunteers, and Direct Contact and Regular Contractors at their induction or prior to them commencing their work at the College.

All Visitors to the College, including Casual Volunteers and Casual Contractors, are provided with information about the Avalon College Child Safety and Protection Policy (including in particular the Child Safe Codes of Conduct and how to report child safety incidents or concerns to the College and to relevant external authorities).

Authority

These are the Policy and Procedures of Avalon College.

Avalon College is committed to implementing the Policy and Procedures and training staff in its content and application.

Child Safety Standards of Avalon College

Avalon College supports a safe centre environment where students feel happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff.



We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.

Our organisation has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff. Our organisation is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

Our organisation is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety

1. All centre policy and procedure documents make references to child safety and zero tolerance of child abuse in the centre.
2. Roles and responsibilities for child safety issues and mandatory reporting of child abuse are clearly delineated in the procedure manuals, role descriptions and appraisal documents for all staff.
3. Management Committee, comprising General Manager, Business Manager and Director of Studies take responsibility for all child safety matters and providing information to staff and students.
4. Student Welfare Committee: General Manager, Director of Studies and Senior Boarding House Staff receive and act on all complaints and suspicions related to child safety.
5. All staff contractors and volunteers are responsible for reporting child safety issues and writing incident reports and directing them to student welfare committee.
6. All students are informed about child safety issues and reporting through regular child safety seminars run at least twice per year.
7. These standards are revised annually.

Definitions

Child – any person under 18

Abuse – can consist of one or more of but is not restricted to the following:

- Physical abuse – any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as:
- Hitting, punching, kicking (marks from belt buckles, fingers)



- Shaking
- Burning (irons, cigarettes), biting, pulling out hair
- Alcohol or other drug administration
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse

Sexual abuse – any sexual act or threat to perform such upon another person. It occurs when a person uses their power and authority to take advantage of another’s trust to involve them in sexual activity. It does not necessarily involve genital contact but is any act which erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear consensual but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential.

Emotional abuse – The chronic attitude or behavior of one person which is directed at another person or the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a child’s development, self-esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviors may include devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or chronic and extreme domestic violence in the child’s presence.

Centre – Avalon College, located at 480 Avalon Road, Lara, 3212

Staff – all persons employed by Abion Pty Ltd ATF Abion Trust and Abion (Aust) Pty Ltd ATF Abion (Aust) Trust, Avalon College Pty Ltd, Avalon Boarding Pty Ltd, all trading as Avalon College. Regular contractors – cleaning staff, catering staff.

Obligations

Legal – Avalon College is subject to Federal and State legislation and principles established through common law.

Ethical – Some actions may not be regarded as abuse but are unacceptable behaviour for staff members. These include:

- Inappropriate conversation of a sexual nature
- Coarse language, especially of a sexual nature
- Suggestive gestures or remarks
- Jokes of a sexual nature
- Inappropriate touching
- Inappropriate literature
- Recording or filming without prior consent
- Acts of violence committed in the course of an activity

Management – of Avalon College has the ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and is responsible for making sure that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place.



Management is responsible for:

- Investigating reports of child abuse
- Ensuring that all staff, volunteers, and contractors are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures and code of conduct.
- Making sure that all staff, volunteers and contractors at Avalon College are aware of their obligations to report any suspected abuse of a child in accordance of these policies and procedures.
- Providing support for all staff, volunteers and contractors in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

A safe environment

When transporting children, the staff member must take the student directly to and from arranged venues and will not spontaneously detour or make additional arrangements.

Students should expect privacy during undressing, dressing or changing clothes.

Avalon College has the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be on its premises to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.

Risk Management

Avalon College has child safety as part of its overall risk management approach and uses this to inform our policy, procedures and activity planning in addition to general occupational health and safety risks.

All staff are required to undertake annual *Mandatory Reporting & Obligations* via the Victorian Department of Education and Training.

Breach of our Child Safety and Protection Policy

Avalon College enforces this Child Safety and Protection Policy and our Child Safe Codes of Conduct. In the event of any non-compliance, we will instigate a review that may result in a range of measures including (depending on the severity of the breach):

- remedial education
- counselling
- increased supervision
- the restriction of duties
- suspension
- in the case of serious breaches, termination of employment, contract or engagement.

Reporting Procedures

What to do in a case of suspected child abuse:

1. Child reports suspicions to staff
2. Staff member reassures the child and explains that it must be reported to the General Manager, Business Manager or Director of Studies. Staff member writes down the details in an incident report and reports immediately.
3. Report to Police (usually by a member of the welfare committee, but if urgent and offsite by staff on the scene).
4. Police will advise next steps and conduct investigation if necessary.
5. Staff members who believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection are able to report their concerns to the **Child Protection Crisis Line - Phone 13 12 78** – 24 hours, 7 days or the **DHS Child First Office – (03) 5226 4540**.

If there are reasonable grounds to suspect a child has been or is suffering abuse, the police and insurers will be contacted immediately – POLICE 000

AON Risk Management (QBE insurance/Zurich Insurance agent) 08 8301 1111 or 1800 806 493

Reasonable grounds can be assumed when:

**A student discloses that he or she has been abused and/or
Someone close to the student discloses on behalf of the student**

The police will also be notified if a child discloses an incident of abuse that has occurred somewhere other than at Avalon College.

If a disclosure of abuse is made the person who receives the disclosure will maintain appropriate care, including:

- Treating the allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim.
- Not pushing the student to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempting to investigate the allegation



- Assuring the student that they are understood: that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has happened is not their fault and that they are correct in disclosing the incident
- Report the abuse to the police and insurer
- Not making contact with the alleged perpetrator
- Retain clothing worn by the student and hand to police
- Maintain confidentiality

All disclosures by a student, reports of suspected abuse and details of the investigation to be documented promptly and the documents held in the Incident File and Student File.

Legal Obligations in Victoria

Working With Children Check/VIT membership

The Working With Children Check (WWCC) creates a mandatory minimum checking standard. The WWCC helps to keep children safe by preventing those who pose a risk to the safety of children from working with them in either paid or volunteer work. WWCC provides information regarding a person's criminal history for serious sexual, violence or drug offences and findings from professional disciplinary bodies.

All employees and volunteers who work in child related work must apply for a WWCC or have membership to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT). The work most commonly involves regular, direct contact with a child where that contact is not directly supervised. Guardians when a non-direct relative must also have a WWCC and provide evidence before Avalon College will approve the guardianship. Non-employee campus residents must also hold a valid WWCC.

Direct contact is defined as any contact with a child that involves any of the following:

- Physical contact
- Talking face to face
- Physically being within eyeshot

Direct supervision must:

- Be undertaken by a person who supervises child-related work
- Be immediate and personal

The WWCC is valid for five years and is transferrable between different employers or volunteer organisations (except if moving from a volunteer to an employee position).

Mandatory Reporting

The following people are legally required to report reasonable suspicions of abuse:

- Doctors
- Nurses
- Teachers
- Police
- Centre Principals
- All adults and employees with a reasonable belief that sexual abuse has occurred

Reports should be made to:

The General Manager/Business Manager/Director of Studies of Avalon College

Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection Division - 1800 075 599

Child First – 13 12 78 and/or Commission for Children and Young People – 1300 782 978

6. Policy Review

The Policy and Procedures will be reviewed annually by the Business Manager and Management.

Reviewed May 2024



FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

As a school staff member, you play a **critical role** in protecting children in your care.

- You **must** act, by following the Four Critical Actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief* that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
- You **must** act if you form a suspicion/ reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).
- It is strongly recommended that you use the **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template** to keep clear and comprehensive notes, even if you make a decision not to report.

* A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to **Action 2**.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you **must** ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid
- calling **000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance** to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES / REFERRING TO SERVICES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

Q: Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?

WITHIN THE SCHOOL

VICTORIA POLICE
You **must** report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor, volunteer or visitor to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **Internally** to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Employee Conduct Branch
- DET Incident Support and Operations Centre.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or school chairperson
- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

All allegations of 'reportable conduct' **must** be reported as soon as possible to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- Employee Conduct Branch

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- Diocesan education office

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION
You **must** report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:

- in need of protection from child abuse
- at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

VICTORIA POLICE
You **must also** report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **Internally** to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- DET Incident Support and Operations Centre.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or chairperson.

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your principal **must** consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- not to contact** the parents/carer (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parent/carer to be contacted)
- to contact** the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion)
- how to communicate** with all relevant parties with consideration for their safety.

4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your school **must** provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a **Student Support Plan** in consultation with wellbeing professionals. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements. Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals and support.

You **must** follow the **Four Critical Actions** every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

OTHER CONCERNS

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold **significant concerns** for their wellbeing you **must** still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from:

- Child FIRST/The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support)
- DHHS Child Protection
- Victoria Police.

CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION AREA

North Division **1300 664 977**
South Division **1300 655 795**
East Division **1300 360 391**
West Division (Rural) **1800 075 599**
West Division (Metro) **1300 664 977**

AFTER HOURS
After hours, weekends, public holidays **13 1278**.

CHILD FIRST
<https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/referral-and-support-teams>

ORANGE DOOR
<https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/the-orange-door.html>

VICTORIA POLICE
000 or your local police station

DET INCIDENT SUPPORT AND OPERATIONS CENTRE
1800 126 126

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT UNIT
1800 126 126

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH
(03) 9637 2595

DIOCESAN OFFICE
Melbourne **(03) 9267 0228**
Ballarat **(03) 5337 7135**
Sale **(03) 5622 6600**
Sandhurst **(03) 5443 2377**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA
(03) 9825 7200

THE LOOKOUT
The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence: <http://www.lookout.org.au>.

Family violence victims/survivors can be referred to **1800 Respect** for counselling, information and a referral service: **1800 737 732**.

