



Document Number	POL-OPR-018
Issue Status	V2
Date of Issue	June 2025
Document Name	Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse Policy
Document Site	SharePoint

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

All Autism Abilities staff play a **critical role** in protecting children & young people from abuse.

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

- 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).
- You must use the Incident Report in accordance with our Incident Management Policy, 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.*

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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 an Autism Abilities contact person for future liaison with Police.
- Notify their Manager, the Child Safety Officer &/or the CEO as soon as possible.

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



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REPORTING: INCIDENT/NEAR MISS & AUTHORITIES

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. **Complete an Incident Report form and send it to Autism Abilities. Call 0481 112 928 to notify the report has been sent and confirm it has been received.** Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

The CEO and Child Safety Officer will report all incidents, suspicions, and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible to the relevant authorities as listed below.

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

WITHIN AUTISM ABILITIES

VICTORIA POLICE

You **must** report all instances of suspected child abuse involving an Autism Abilities member of staff, contractor, volunteer or visitor to Victoria Police.

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

All allegations of **Reportable Conduct*** **must** be reported as soon as possible to
CCYP:
1300 782 978

**Victoria's Reportable Conduct Scheme requires organisations involving children to notify the CCYP of alleged abuse by workers and volunteers.*

WITHIN FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

DFFH CHILD PROTECTION

You **must** report to DFFH 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.

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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)
- DFFH Child Protection
- Victoria Police

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CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your Manager, the Child Safety Officer or the CEO must ensure parents and carers are notified unless advised otherwise by DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police, or there are other safety and wellbeing concerns in relation to informing parents/carers. We may be advised:

- **Not to contact** the parents/carers (eg in circumstances where the parents/carers 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

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PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Autism Abilities has a responsibility to continue to deliver supports for children impacted by abuse. Strategies may include direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals and support.



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Important Contacts

DFFH 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 12 78

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 the local police station

RESPECT

1800 Respect for family violence counselling, information and referrals **1800 737 732**

SAFE AND EQUAL

Peak body for Victoria's specialist family violence services supporting victim survivors.

<https://safeandequal.org.au/>