

CHILD ABUSE – FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS

Responding to allegations of child abuse:

Critical Information

- As a school staff member, you must act as soon as you witness an incident or form a reasonable belief that a child has been, 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 should make sufficient enquiries to form a reasonable belief and to determine a child's immediate needs. However, once a reasonable belief has been formed, it is not your role to investigate . This is the role of DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police
- Child abuse includes any instance of physical or sexual abuse (including grooming), emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and family violence involving a child.
- If you hold significant concerns for a child's wellbeing, which do not appear to be a result of child abuse you must still act. See: Responding to other concerns about the wellbeing of a child

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Action One: RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY- Ensuring Immediate Safety

Critical Information:

If a child has just been abused, or is at immediate risk of harm you must take reasonable steps to protect them. These include:

- separating the alleged victim and others involved, ensuring both parties are supervised by a school staff member
- arranging and providing urgent medical assistance where necessary by:
administering first aid assistance
- calling 000 for an ambulance and following any instructions from emergency service officers/paramedics.
- Calling 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 school for future liaison with police)

Take reasonable steps to preserve the environment, the clothing, other items, and potential witnesses until the police or other relevant authorities arrive on the premises.

PRESERVING EVIDENCE:

Where an incident of suspected child abuse occurs at the school, you may need to take action to preserve any items that may amount to evidence of the abuse. Consider all of the following:

Environment:

Do not clean up the area and preserve the sites where the alleged incidents occurred. Cordon off the relevant area/room/building and take reasonable steps to ensure that no one enters these areas.

Clothing

If sexual abuse/physical abuse is suspected you may also need to ensure that the person who has allegedly committed the abuse and the child who has allegedly been abused remain in their clothing and, if this is not possible, ensure that the clothes are not washed, are handled as little as possible, and stored in a sealable bag

Other Physical Items

If there are any other items that may amount to evidence (e.g. weapons, bedding, condoms), **try and ensure that these things remain untouched.**

Potential Witnesses

Reasonable precautions must be taken to **prevent discussion of the incident between those involved in the alleged incident** (including any other children who may have witnessed the incident). If the incident involves:

- Two or more students, a staff member should be allocated to remain with each student involved in separate rooms
- A staff member, they should be asked to remain with a member of the school's leadership team and be instructed not to discuss the incident with any staff/student/s carers/family members.

Action Two: REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

Critical Information:

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 child sexual abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

COMPLETE the form: DHHS CHILD PROTECTION/POLICE/CHILD FIRST REPORT CS2

If the source of suspected abuse comes from **within the school** (this includes any forms of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor or volunteer) you **must**:

- **Contact Victoria Police (via your local police station) – this is important**
(they may refer you to local Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team)

ALSO report internally to:

- School Principal and/or Leadership Team/ (all instances)
- Government Schools: Employee Conduct Branch and Security Services Unit

If the source of suspected abuse comes from **within the family** or **community** you **must**:

Report to **DHHS Child Protection** if a child is considered to be:

- In need of protection due to 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.

ALSO report suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to **Victoria Police**

ALSO report internally to:

- School Principal and/or leadership team (all instances)
- Government Schools: DET Security Services Unit on (03) 9637 2934

The DET Regional Office and the DET Critical Incident and Advisory Unit (Student Incident and Recovery Unit) must be called if you are reporting about suspected sexual abuse including grooming or another criminal offence.

You should consider reporting to Child FIRST if you have other reasonable concerns for the wellbeing of a child, such as concerns due to conflict within a family, parenting difficulties, isolation of a family or a lack of apparent support

Action Two: Additional Information

Following any incident, suspicion or disclosure of child abuse you must make a report as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

In all instances when making a report about child abuse you must also report internally to:

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL and/ or LEADERSHIP TEAM – highlighting:

- The details of the suspected child abuse or risk of abuse including the name of those involved
- Any immediate actions taken to protect the safety of the child
- Your report or intention to report to DHHS Child Protection, Victoria Police and/or Child FIRST
- possible steps that can be taken to contact parents (if appropriate) and support the student

ALSO

- **Government Schools:** DET Security Services Unit on (03) 9637 2934

**Please note that reporting internally does not mean that mandatory reporting obligations have been met. The staff member who has formed a reasonable belief regarding child abuse or neglect must also report to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police if the child is in immediate risk of harm.*

Reporting if the incident, suspicion or disclosure relates to an international student:

If the incident, suspicion or disclosure relates to an **international student** you will most likely be required to make an additional report:

- **Government schools** must **also** contact International Education Division on (03) 9637 2990

How should you proceed if the Principal/leadership team advise you not to make a report?

In some circumstances the Principal and/or leadership team may advise you not to proceed with reporting suspected abuse. Regardless of this advice, if you hold a reasonable belief that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused you **must** still make a report to DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police. This report may be critical in protecting a child from abuse.

In complying with the four critical actions:

- School staff must NOT be prohibited or discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school.
- School staff must NOT state or imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the police or other authorities of the allegation.
- School staff must not be required to make a judgement about the truth of the allegation of child abuse
- School Staff cannot be prohibited from making records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse
- If school staff fail to report they may not discharge their duty of care and in some circumstances this can result in criminal charges.

If you decide not to report, this decision should be documented within the **form CS/2 (see page 3)**

Action Two: Additional Information

Making Additional Reports

Reporting further reasonable grounds for belief

You must make a new report in any circumstance where you become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief. Every report is critical to protecting a child by building evidence and enabling authorities to gain a clearer understanding of the risks.

This means that you must make a report to protect a child even if:

- DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police were previously involved or are already involved with the child and/or their family
- Staff are aware that another party, such as a family member, has already raised concerns with the relevant authorities.

What if another person has already made a report?

Once you form a reasonable belief that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused, your obligation to report is separate from the obligations or actions of other people.

In addition, it is important to consider that other people may not have access to the specific detail you have. The information you provide through your report may assist the relevant authority to take further action to protect the child.

However, there may be times when two or more school staff members, for example a teacher and a Principal, have formed a belief about the same child on the same occasion and based on the same information. In this situation it is sufficient that only one of the staff members make a report. The other is obliged to ensure that the report has been made and that all the grounds for their own belief were included in the report made by the other person.

In instances where two staff members form different views about whether or not to make a report, if one staff member continues to hold a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection, then they are legally obliged to make a report.

What if you don't think the child is at risk of abuse but you still hold concerns about a student's wellbeing?

If you believe that a child is not subject to child abuse, but you still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing, you may still need to contact DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police and/or make a referral to Child FIRST.

For further advice, see: Responding to other concerns about the wellbeing of a child

Action Three: CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Critical Information:

In many cases where it is suspected that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused, it is extremely important that parents/carers are notified as soon as practicable.

- However before contacting parents, **Principals must seek advice** from DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police (depending on who the report was made to).
- This is critical to ensure the safety of the child as well as to avoid any compromise to the investigations being conducted by the relevant authorities or agencies.
- Where advised to be appropriate, schools should make sensitive and professional contact with parents as soon as possible on the day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion.

In many cases where it is suspected that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused, it is extremely important that parents/carers are notified as soon as practicable. This enables parents/carers to take steps to:

- Prevent or limit their child's exposure to further abuse.
- Ensure that their child receives the support that they require.

However there are some circumstances where contacting parents may place a child at greater risk.

This is why before contacting parent/carer, your Principal (or delegate) must contact **Victoria Police** or **DHHS Child Protection** (depending on who the report has been made to). They will advise your Principal (or delegate) about whether it is appropriate to contact parents/carers at this stage.

Your Principal (or delegate) will be **advised not to contact** the parents in circumstances where:

- The parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse
- A disclosure to the parent/carer may subject the child to further abuse
- The child is a mature minor (assessed to be sufficiently mature and intelligent to make such decisions on his or her own behalf) and have requested that their parent/carer not be notified (in these circumstances ideally the child will nominate another responsible adult who can be contacted)
- The notification is likely to adversely affect the investigation of the incident by the relevant authorities.

Where advised to be appropriate, schools should make sensitive and professional contact with parents as soon as possible on the day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion.

For advice and support on contacting parents:

Government schools can contact Student Incident and Recovery Unit on (03) 9637 2934

Action Three: Contacting Parents/Carers – cont.

Where advised to be appropriate the Principal and/or reporting staff member (ideally together) should inform the parents/carers of the child impacted by the suspected child abuse. During this conversation it is important to:

- 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 school staff have taken to date
- Inform them of who the incident, disclosure and/or suspicion has been reported to
- Provide the name and contact phone number of DHHS Child Protection and/or the police officer who is investigating
- Provide information on whether they are likely to be contacted by DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police (if known)
- Inform them that the investigation may take some time and ask what further information they would like and how school staff can assist them.
- Assure them that school wellbeing staff can provide support to the child. Victorian Government school staff can make referrals to Student Support Services or other wellbeing staff based at the school
- Invite the parents/carers to attend a Student Support Group meeting where a Student Support Plan can be prepared to ensure that appropriate support can be provided for their child

For more information on what information can be shared, see: Privacy and information sharing

For information on sharing information about an incident to the school community, see: Information sharing with school staff

Action four: PROVIDING ON-GOING SUPPORT

Critical Information:

In addition to reporting suspected abuse, as a school staff member you have a

- **critical role in supporting students impacted by abuse and have a Duty of Care to ensure that the students feels safe and supported at school.**

Support can include direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals and community services and should involve the development of a Student Support Plan

- Principals are responsible for ensuring students are supported during interviews at school conducted by Victoria Police or DHHS Child Protection and you may be required to respond to subpoenas to attend court.
- Support must be provided to any impacted staff members

Experiences of child abuse can cause trauma and significantly impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children. In addition to reporting and referral into relevant authorities, as a school staff member you play a central role in addressing this trauma and have a **Duty of Care** to ensure that the students feels safe and supported at school.

This section outlines actions that schools must take, where deemed appropriate, to support students who are impacted by child abuse, including:

- Working Together and Planning Support
- Engaging Allied Health and Wellbeing Supports
- Referring to Non-School Based Supports
- Providing Developmentally and Culturally Appropriate Support
- Providing Support for Impacted School Staff Members
- Supporting Students in Interviews Conducted at School
- Responding to Subpoenas or Court Attendance
- Responding to Complaints or Concerns.

In the context of student-to-student offending, school staff have a **Duty of Care** to support all students who are impacted by the abuse – this will include the students who were subjected to the abuse, the students who perpetrated the abuse, and any students who witnessed or were otherwise impacted by the abuse.

Working Together and Planning Support

Providing holistic support to address the trauma and wellbeing issues associated with child abuse is best achieved through careful planning and working in partnership with wellbeing professionals, parents/carers and educators.

If a student is impacted by suspected abuse, and it is deemed appropriate, school staff must:

- Establish regular communication between staff and the child's parent/ guardian/carer (if this is appropriate) to discuss a child's progress wellbeing and the effectiveness of planned strategies
- Convene a **Student Support Group** to plan on-going monitoring, support, and follow-up of the child's health and wellbeing (Student Support Groups usually comprise school wellbeing staff, teachers, allied health professionals and where appropriate the student and/or their parent/carer)
- 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 professional with expertise in addressing child abuse and trauma).

Engaging Allied Health and Wellbeing Professionals

Where appropriate school staff should engage allied health and wellbeing supports and services to meet the wellbeing needs of the child impacted by abuse, including:

- Student Support Services (government schools only)
- Wellbeing staff members
- Allied health and wellbeing professionals engaged by the student and families.

Allied health and wellbeing professionals can provide:

- Intensive support to children and their families
- Critical input into Student Support Plans
- Advice to school staff members on how to appropriately support the student.

Government schools can contact their Regional Office and also refer to the Continuum of Supports for a description of the range of school based support services that may be locally available.

All schools can contact their local government for advice on available local services.

School staff can also refer to the wide range of non-school based support services, which specialise in providing tailored support and advice for children impacted by abuse. For example the **Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASA)** provide expert support for victims of sexual assault and **HeadSpace** can provide tailored support for children whose mental health is impacted by exposure to abuse

For details on where to go for further support, see: Counselling/Support Organisations

Whilst a child's background should not impact on a decision to report suspected abuse, school staff need to be sensitive to a child's individual circumstances when providing support and working with families impacted by abuse.

It is a requirement under the Child Safety Standards that school governing authorities must "take account of the diversity of all children", including (but not limited to) the needs of:

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

When supporting a child with a disability who has been impacted by child abuse it is critical to consider the child's:

- Chronological age, developmental age and their cognitive functioning in order to tailor developmentally appropriate support strategies
- Vulnerability to on-going abuse (children with disabilities disproportionately fall prey to child abuse, in particular child sexual abuse) when considering the need to make a further report and/or implement risk mitigation strategies.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN

When supporting an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child who has been impacted by child abuse it is essential that school staff provide culturally appropriate support.

- Principals from **Government schools must** notify their Regional Office to ensure that the Koorie Engagement Support Officer can arrange appropriate support for the child and/or advise on culturally appropriate support strategies.

CHILDREN FROM CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE (CALD) BACKGROUNDS:

When supporting a child from CALD backgrounds who has been impacted by child abuse it is essential that schools provide culturally appropriate support. However this should not detract from ensuring the child's safety and wellbeing.

Where possible schools should work with relevant cultural support services (ensuring that the confidentiality of the student and family is maintained) and engage an interpreter when communicating with the student's family if needed.

STUDENTS WITH REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS:

When working with children from refugee backgrounds who have been impacted by child abuse it is important to recognise that they (and their families) may also be experiencing trauma, dislocation and loss. This trauma may significantly affect family wellbeing and parenting capacity and whilst these issues also require sensitive consideration, they should not detract from ensuring the child's safety and wellbeing (or impact on decisions to report suspected abuse).

School staff should consider contacting services that specialise in providing support to refugees (ensuring that the confidentiality of the child and their family is maintained).

Schools should also **engage an interpreter** when communicating with the student's family if needed.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS:

Principals must ensure appropriate measures are taken for the welfare of international students. This may require additional support given that the child's family may not be present to provide support within the home environment.

For details on who must be contacted in the event that an international student is involved in suspected abuse, see: Reporting if the incident, suspicion or disclosure relates to an international student

PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR OTHER IMPACTED CHILDREN :

It can be stressful for other children involved in any incidents, disclosures or suspicions of child abuse. Principals must ensure that other impacted children are offered and provided appropriate support.

PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR IMPACTED STAFF MEMBERS:

Providing Support for Impacted School Staff Members

It can also be stressful for staff involved in any incidents, disclosures or suspicions of child abuse. Principals must support impacted staff members to access necessary support.

School staff requiring wellbeing support can contact:

Government Schools: - DET Employee Assistance Program (EAP) on 1300 361 008

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO ARE INTERVIEWED AT SCHOOL:

Supporting Children who are interviewed at School

All children (including children who are alleged to have perpetrated abuse) must be independently supported in any interviews conducted by Victoria Police or DHHS Child Protection at school.

Where possible and appropriate the child's parent/carer should be present for these interviews. However if this is not appropriate or practicable the Principal (or delegate) may be identified as the independent person or support person for the child for the purpose of the interview.

POLICE INTERVIEWS:

In the event that Victoria Police schedule an interview with a child at the school, the Principal (or delegate) must advise the child's parent/carer (**where advised to be appropriate**) as well as:

Government schools:

- Student Incident and Recovery unit on (03) 9637 2934
- Koorie Engagement Support Officer if the child is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- International Division if the child is an international student on (03) 9637 3990.

POLICE INTERVIEWS AT SCHOOL WHERE THE CHILD IS THE ALLEGED VICTIM OR WITNESS:

The information below includes critical detail on when and how police interviews are conducted at school and what role the Principal (or delegate) should play if they are nominated as the support person.

- Police should only interview children at school as a matter of urgency or necessity.
- A request must be made to the Principal (or delegate) who must be advised of the reason for the interview.
- The child's parent/carer should be present where it is practical and appropriate to make these arrangements. If the parent/carer is not able to be present, an independent person must be present during the interview (the role of the independent person is to ensure the child understands what is happening and to provide support).
- Principals (or delegate) may if necessary, act as an independent person where the child is a victim, unless they believe it will place them in a conflict of interest to do so.
- As an independent person, school staff must refrain from providing their opinions or accounts for events during interviews.

POLICE INTERVIEWS AT SCHOOL WHERE A STUDENT HAS ALLEGEDLY ABUSED ANOTHER CHILD:

If the police need to speak with a student who has allegedly abused another child this should preferably be done in the presence of the parent/carer, or another independent person that is not a school staff member.

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION INTERVIEWS AT SCHOOL:

DHHS Child Protection may conduct interviews of children at Victorian schools without parental knowledge or consent of the parent/carer (although this will only occur in exceptional circumstances and if it is in the child's best interests to proceed in this manner).

The information below includes critical detail on when and how DHHS Child Protection interviews are conducted at school and what role the Principal (or delegate) should play if they are nominated as the support person.

- DHHS Child Protection will notify the school staff of any intention to interview a child at the school. This may occur regardless of whether the school staff member is the source of the report to DHHS Child Protection.
- When DHHS Child Protection practitioners arrive at the school, the school Principal (or delegate) should ask to see their identification before allowing DHHS Child Protection to have access to the child. See Visitors in School Policy.
- Children should be advised of their right to have a supportive adult present during interviews. If the child is too young to understand the significance, a supportive adult should be provided even though they may not have consented or requested this to occur.
- A staff member may be identified as a support person for the child during the interview. Prior to the commencement of the interview, the DHHS Child Protection practitioner should always authorise the staff member of the school to receive information regarding DHHS Child Protection's investigation. This could be conducted verbally or in writing using the relevant DHHS Child Protection proforma.
- As an independent person, school staff must refrain from providing their opinions or accounts for events during interviews.

COMPLYING WITH SUBPOENAS OR COURT ATTENDANCE

- A subpoena / witness summons is a Court Order that compels you to produce documents, or attend Court and give evidence, or to do both of these things.
- You are usually issued with a subpoena / witness summons because one of the parties to the legal proceedings believes that you may have information / documentation that is relevant to the legal proceeding.
- If a **government school** staff member receives a subpoena / witness summons in the context of their employment with the DET, they should contact the Legal Division on (03) 9637 3146 for advice and assistance in meeting their legal obligations.

RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS OR CONCERNS:

There may be concerns or complaints about the school staff's management of an incident, in particular by parents/carers. This is a very stressful time for parents/carers, and concerns that they do not believe have been dealt with fairly may quickly escalate.

As a first step school staff must consider whether the complaint raises any concerns about unreported abuse and/or risk of abuse. **You must follow the Four Critical Actions: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse** if **any** new information comes to light which leads you to believe that a child may be subject to, or at risk of any unreported abuse.

GOVERNMENT SCHOOL COMPLAINT PROCESS:

Principals or delegates of government schools should follow the Department's standard parent complaints process, including:

- Meeting the complainants to clarify their concerns (a face-to-face meeting with the Principal will often resolve the matter)
- Documenting the concerns, clarify the issues, explain and gain agreement to further action
- Linking the complainants to the responsible Regional Office (e.g. the Regional Director) if the issues are not quickly resolved,
- Advising complainants of internal and external supports including the role of parent groups to provide independent advice and support
- Advising complainants of their rights to:
 - escalate their complaint, in writing, to: Deputy Secretary Regional Services Group
 - Write to the Victorian government Ombudsman if they have exhausted the internal procedures and remain dissatisfied.

If the complaint is related to sexual abuse, government school Principals (or delegates) should seek advice from the Student Incident and Recovery Unit on (03) 9637 2934 and the Legal Division on (03) 9637 3146.

For additional information on managing parent complaints, see: School Policy & Advisory Guide: Parent Complaints.

Responding to other concerns about the wellbeing of a child:

Critical Information

Regardless of the suspected cause, all concerns about the wellbeing of a child (or their unborn child) should be taken seriously and acted upon. This includes concerns about the wellbeing of a child, which do not appear to be the result of abuse.

In addition to reporting and referring wellbeing concerns to relevant authorities, you also have a **Duty of Care** to ensure that students feel safe and supported at school.

You should make a referral to Child FIRST if:

- You have a significant concern for a child's wellbeing
- Your concerns have a low-to-moderate impact on the child
- The child's immediate safety is not compromised
- You/your school has discussed the referral with the family and they are supportive of it.

You must contact Victoria Police if:

- There is any concern for a child's immediate safety and/or
- A child is partaking in any risk taking activity that is illegal and extreme in nature or poses a high risk to the child

You should contact DHHS Child Protection if:

- After consideration of all of available information you form a view that the child is in need of protection
- You believe that the child's parent/carers will not be open to support from family services to address their child's wellbeing.

If you are unsure whether to take action, or what action to take, you should discuss this with your leadership team and make contact with authorities for further advice.

When to Report Wellbeing Concerns to Child FIRST

Child FIRST (Family Information, Referral and Support Team) is a community-based referral point into Family Services.

Examples of concerns that school staff should reported to Child FIRST include instances when a child's care or development is significantly impacted on by:

- Parenting problems
- Family conflict or family breakdown
- Pressure due to a family member's physical/mental illness, substance abuse, or disability
- Vulnerability due to youth, isolation or lack of support
- Significant social or economic disadvantage

When to Report Wellbeing Concerns to Victoria Police:

In addition to reporting suspected abuse to appropriate authorities, you **must** contact **Victoria Police on 000** if the:

- Child's immediate safety is compromised
- Child is partaking in any risk taking activity that is illegal and extreme in nature or poses a high risk to the child.

When to Report Wellbeing Concerns to DHHS Child Protection:

In addition to reporting suspected abuse to appropriate authorities, you should contact **DHHS Child Protection** if you believe a child is in need of protection.

This includes all concerns that:

- Have a serious impact on a child's safety, stability or development, including abandonment, death or incapacity, extreme risk-taking behaviour, or harm to an unborn child.
- Are persistent and entrenched and likely to have a serious impact on a child's safety, stability or development and
- Relate to a parent/s who cannot or will not protect the child from significant harm
- Include a belief that the family is likely to be uncooperative in seeking assistance.

Common grounds for protection include:

- **Abandonment**

The child's parents have abandoned the child and after reasonable inquiries, the parents cannot be found, and no other suitable person can be found who is willing and able to care for the child.

- **Death or incapacity of parent/carer**

The child's parents are dead or incapacitated and there is no other suitable person willing and able to care for the child.

- **Extreme risk-taking behaviour**

The child is displaying extreme risk taking behaviour, which has potentially severe or life threatening consequences. Examples include severe alcohol or drug use, unsafe sexual activity including prostitution, solvent abuse and chroming, and violent or dangerous peer group activity.

In addition to contacting DHHS Child Protection it may also be necessary to contact Victoria Police where the risk taking activity is illegal and extreme in nature or poses a high risk to the child.

- **Harm to an unborn child**

There is a threat of harm to an unborn child, including circumstances where a parent has previously demonstrated an inability to safely parent.

The *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* allows DHHS Child Protection to receive and respond to reports about an unborn child.