

FIVE CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR CHURCH PERSONNEL

Responding to current abuse (incidents, disclosures, allegations, suspicions and concerns)

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION:

The safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk, is a collective responsibility of all who are part of the Catholic Diocese of Sale.

There are Five Critical Actions to be followed as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or an allegation or have a concern.

You must act if you form a suspicion or have a reasonable belief*, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed abuse.

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



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

If the person is at immediate risk of harm, you **must** ensure their safety:

- separate alleged victims and others involved
- administer first aid
- call 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- contact Diocesan Professional Standards Officer.

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

You should:

- **not make promises to the child or adult at risk**, such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe
- explain to them that the information that they have told you will be shared confidentially with the relevant authorities
- listen to them carefully and let them use their own words to explain what has occurred
- reassure them that what they are saying is taken seriously, that it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.

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

Contact the Diocesan Professional Standards Officer for support.

↪ Different pathways, dependent on whether you are a mandatory reporter ↩

REPORT TO VICTORIA POLICE

VICTORIA POLICE
If you are **not** a 'Mandatory Reporter', you must report to Victoria Police by attending a police station or reporting over the phone.
You must also report internally to the DIOCESAN PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OFFICER

MANDATORY REPORTERS

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.

If unsure if a child's circumstances meet the threshold for child protection intervention, then consider making a referral to Child FIRST / Orange Door.

DHHS will notify Victoria Police about the report.

You must also report internally to the DIOCESAN PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OFFICER

OTHER CONCERNS

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

If personnel find inappropriate material online of a child, this can be reported to the eSafety Commissioner – Cyber report team and also reported to Victoria Police.

You must also report internally to the DIOCESAN PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OFFICER

Where it is suspected that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused, a parent, carer or guardian of the child must be notified as soon as practicable.

Similarly, if it is suspected that the adult at risk has been abused, the respective guardian, power of attorney or family member must be notified.

If the child or adult at risk has disclosed allegations of abuse perpetrated by their parent, carer, guardian or family member, the Head of Entity via the Diocesan Professional Standards Officer will make contact with the appropriate authority such as Child Protection and/or Victoria Police.

Experiences of abuse can cause trauma and significantly impact the mental health and wellbeing of victims. In liaison with the Diocesan Professional Standards Officer, support will be arranged.

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

CONTACT

DIOCESAN PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OFFICE
Tel: (03) 5622 6600 or
Mobile: 0409 691 139

DIOCESE OF SALE SAFEGUARDING
<https://www.cdsale.org.au/safeguarding>

MANDATORY REPORTING FACTSHEET
For people in religious ministry
<https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mandatory-reporting-child-protection-victoria-people-religious-ministry-factsheet>

ESAFETY COMMISSIONER – CYBER REPORT TEAM
<https://www.esafety.gov.au/report>

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION Area
South Division **1300 655 795**
AFTER HOURS
After hours, weekends, public holidays **13 12 78**

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

VICTORIA POLICE
000 or your local police station
<https://www.police.vic.gov.au>



Catholic Diocese of Sale