

ACS Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure

Policy number	ACS 01	Version	2a
Drafted by	Michelle Sheehan	Approved by board on	19 February 2018
Responsible person	Michelle Sheehan	Scheduled review date	19 February 2019

1. CHILD SAFETY POLICY

1.1. Introduction

The Association of Coeducational Schools (ACS) holds the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our school sporting association. The ACS is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children and young people.

We have a zero tolerance for child abuse.

The ACS is committed to ensuring that children and young people who participate in its activities have a safe and happy experience. The ACS supports and respects children, young people, staff and participants.

Everyone working with the ACS is responsible for the care and protection of children and young people within our care and reporting information about child abuse.

The ACS will work in close partnership with its member schools, State Sporting Associations, contractors, external venue operators and other providers to ensure the policies, procedures and strategies of this Policy are clearly communicated and adhered to.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

1.2. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- a) prevent child abuse occurring within all the ACS Environments;
- b) work towards an organisational culture of child safety;
- c) ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs;
- d) provide guidance on action that should be taken where a person suspects any child abuse within all the ACS Environments; and
- e) provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

For the purposes of this Policy, "ACS Environment" means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the ACS' governing authority for use by a child, including:

- a) online ACS Environments (including email, portals and intranet systems); and
- c) other locations provided by ACS for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for sports competitions).

1.3. Scope

This Policy applies to all employees and volunteers of the ACS which includes contractors, officials, volunteers, coaches, umpires and referees, Board/Committee members; collectively referred to as “**staff**” throughout this policy.

1.4. Guiding principles

This Policy is based on the following principles:

- a) the ACS has a zero tolerance for child abuse;
- b) the best interests of the child are paramount;
- c) child protection is a shared responsibility;
- d) all children have a right to feel safe and be safe, and have equal rights to protection from abuse;
- e) the ACS will consider the opinions of children and use their opinions to develop child safety policies and procedures;
- f) the ACS will take into account the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable, and make reasonable efforts to accommodate these matters; and
- g) the ACS is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

1.5. Responsibilities

All **staff** must:

- a) familiarise themselves with the relevant laws in relation to child safety and this Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure, and comply with all requirements;
- b) report any reasonable belief that a child’s safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (in accordance with the Child Safety Procedure);
- c) provide a safe environment for all children.

Notwithstanding the above, **the ACS Committee of Principals** has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place. The Committee of Principals is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Child Protection Code of Conduct are in place

The **Executive Officer of the ACS** is responsible for:

- a) dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse in conjunction with the Committee;
- b) ensuring that all staff are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation’s Code of Conduct;
- c) ensuring that all adults within the ACS Environment are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures;

- d) ensuring that all staff are aware of their obligation to observe the Child Safety Code of Conduct; and
- e) providing support to staff in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

All **Directors/Heads of Sport** must ensure that they:

- a) promote child safety at all times;
- b) assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and eradicate / minimise any risk to the extent possible;
- c) educate staff about the prevention and detection of child abuse; and
- d) facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

Directors/Heads of Sport should be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within their area of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

All **staff** share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- a) familiarise themselves with the relevant laws and this Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure and comply with all requirements;
- b) report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the CSO and / or relevant authorities (such as the police and / or the state-based child protection service); and
- c) provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

1.6. Child Safety Officers

A nominated Child Safety Officer (**CSOs**) is available to listen, discuss and clarify issues confronting staff in relation to child abuse. The CSO will make reports on behalf of the ACS and ensure that adequate records are maintained. Please note that individuals may still have reporting obligations, as set out below.

The Executive Officer of the ACS is the CSO.

Should the ACS Executive Officer not be available, then the current ACS President is the next point of contact.

1.7. Recognising child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- a) any act committed against a child involving
 - a. a sexual offence; or
 - b. grooming; and
- b) the infliction, on a child, of-
 - a. physical violence; or
 - b. serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- c) serious neglect of a child.

“**Child**” means a person under the age of 18 years unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child. Collective term for “child” is “children”.

1.8. Reporting obligations

Some staff engaged by the ACS are subject to mandatory reporting laws.

Mandatory reporting is a term used to describe the legislative requirement imposed on selected classes of people to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to government authorities and/or the police.

In Victoria, mandatory reporters include teachers registered to teach or who have permission to teach pursuant to the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic), principals of government and non-government schools, and registered medical practitioners, nurses and all members of the police force.

Notwithstanding the above, if any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

Encouraged to report

The ACS supports and encourages staff to make a report to the Police and/or the relevant government agency if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection, or they are concerned about the safety, health or wellbeing of a child.

As set out in the Child Safety Procedure, if a person would like internal guidance or support with addressing their concerns, they are encouraged to speak with the CSO.

Ultimately, it is a personal decision of the staff member whether they choose to make a report to an external authority or not.

Protection of reporters

Any staff member that makes a report in good faith in accordance with the Child Safety Procedure will be supported by the ACS, and will not be penalised by the ACS for making the report.

1.9. Prevention

Recruitment

The ACS will apply a thorough screening and recruitment process which aims to:

- a) promote and protect the safety of all children within all ACS Environments;
- b) identify and recruit the safest and most suitable candidates who share the ACS’s values and commitment to protect children; and
- c) prevent a person from working at the ACS if they pose an unacceptable risk to children.

When recruiting and selecting staff involved in child-connected work, the ACS will make all reasonable efforts to confirm the applicant’s Working With Children Check (**WWCC**) and National Police Check status (where required) and/or professional registration; such as with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (**VIT**). The Executive Officer of ACS records all WWCCs and other checks on a spreadsheet that is checked annually to see who requires a renewal.

Any costs associated with gaining a valid WWCC will be the responsibility of the individual.

ACS will conduct thorough reference checks to ensure the suitability of all candidates prior to their engagement. This will include the ACS making reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child-connected work:

- a) WWCC status, or similar check;
- b) proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
- c) the person's history of work involving children; and
- d) references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.

The type of evidence that an applicant is required to provide to the ACS will vary depending on the type of position that they are applying for. However, the ACS will not offer any applicant a position at the ACS until they provide the required evidence.

All successful applicants engaged at ACS will be assessed on an ongoing basis:

- a) during any scheduled performance review; and
- b) after any concern is raised regarding their conduct with children,

to ensure that they remain suitable for child-connected work.

Once engaged, the ACS will provide staff with access to this policy and staff must review and acknowledge their understanding of this policy.

The ACS requires that member schools ensure all staff and volunteers (including coaches and any officials) likely to have contact with students have a current WWCC, which needs to be signed off annually as part of the membership process.

Risk Management

The ACS will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management strategy approach.

Executive Officer will be responsible for identifying and managing child safety risks within all ACS Environments. Executive Officer will receive regular training in relation to child safety.

Executive Officer will be open to receiving feedback from all members of the community on how to improve its risk management approach and better protect the safety of children. Feedback should be directed to the Executive Officer in writing.

If the Executive Officer identifies risks of child abuse occurring in one or more of the ACS Environments the particular the Executive Officer will make a record of those risks and specify the action(s) the ACS will take to reduce or remove the risks (i.e. risk controls).

As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the Executive Officer will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.

The Executive Officer will report any risks to child safety to the ACS Committee of Principals.

The ACS will ensure that there are appropriate human resources policies to assess staff in relation to compliance with their child safe obligations and continued suitability for child-connected work.

The ACS will ensure that appropriate training at least annually is conducted for staff.

Communication

The ACS is pro-active in the area of prevention and will communicate this policy to all staff of the ACS via the ACS's website www.acssport.org.au and email upon appointment.

This policy will be communicated to all staff and Committee members via; internal memo, email, meetings and the ACS Handbook.

References to this policy will be included in documentation provided to all officials that represent the ACS.

The ACS will ensure that the ACS's child safety practices and its child safety code of conduct are communicated in an accessible manner for:

- a) younger children, by discussing the documents in-person (and/or any other method deemed appropriate and effective for the particular age of the child); and
- b) children living with a disability, by discussing the documents in-person (and/or any other method deemed appropriate and effective for the particular type of disability that the child is living with).

1.11 Responding & Reporting

In the case of an allegation being made against a staff member of the ACS, the Executive Officer of the ACS (or a delegate of the Committee of Principals if the allegations involve the Executive Officer) will follow the ACS's Child Safety Procedure. The ACS will take all steps to ensure that the safety of the child is paramount.

The first step is to withdraw the accused person from active duty, which could entail standing down (with pay, where applicable), re-assignment to other duties that do not have direct contact with children, or to work under increased supervision while the matter is being investigated.

Investigations

The ACS will appropriately investigate all allegations relating to an incident of abuse in accordance with its obligations and to the extent reasonably practicable. In some circumstances, it may be necessary for the ACS to conduct an investigation in addition to any investigation conducted by authorities (e.g. the police).

The Executive Officer of the ACS (or a delegate of the Committee of Principals if the allegations involve the Executive Officer) will conduct an independent investigation into the allegation to the extent that it will not interfere with investigations by a Government Department or the police, and will co-operate with the authorities as required.

All people covered by the Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure must co-operate fully with any investigation by a Government Department, the police or the ACS.

The Executive Officer of the ACS (or a delegate of the Committee of Principals if the allegations involve the Executive Officer) will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other employees, directors, volunteers and contractors may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation (e.g. to provide witness statements).

An investigation conducted by the ACS will be conducted in accordance with procedural fairness to protect the integrity of the investigation and the interests of all the participants involved in the investigation. The ACS will also handle the allegations in a confidential manner to the greatest extent possible.

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for the ACS to engage a person (or persons) from outside the ACS to conduct an independent investigation in relation to allegations.

The outcome will depend on the findings of the investigation, but may include withdrawal from active duty, re-assignment to duties with no contact with children, increased supervision, disciplinary action, dismissal or criminal prosecutions.

If a person is uncertain as to whether they should make a report to an external authority in relation to the safety of a child, they may speak to the Child Safety Officer (the ACS Executive Officer) for guidance and information. If in doubt, ask for assistance.

All reports of alleged abuse or harm, or risk thereof, must be recorded in the form of an Incident Report. Places, times, dates, names of people, observable behaviours or evidence of harm are what is recordable. Reports must be securely stored by the Executive Officer of the ACS.

All reports of alleged abuse or harm, or risk thereof, received by ACS will be passed on to the Principal of the relevant School where considered appropriate.

1.12. Privacy and confidentiality

The ACS will collect, use, disclose and hold personal information in accordance with the applicable privacy laws.

Principles

There are two guiding principles in respect to a child's privacy.

- a) First, the ACS will operate on "the best interests" principle. All staff members will do what they believe to be in the best interest of the child. This principle supersedes all others.
- b) Second, the ACS will respect a child's confidentiality except in situations where it conflicts with the best interests principle.

As much as is reasonably possible, an individual's confidentiality is to be protected. Both those who are making reports and those about whom accusations are being made are entitled to confidentiality. Where there is suspected abuse or misconduct, staff must not disclose or make use of the information in a manner that breaches confidentiality, other than to report and act consistent with the Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure, and relevant statutory requirements.

1.13. Monitoring and review

In accordance with the ACS's document management framework a review of this Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure shall be conducted every two years, and following every child safety incident.

The Executive Officer will be responsible for ensuring that this Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure is reviewed and updated.

2. CODE OF CONDUCT

2.1. Introduction

This Code of Conduct has a specific focus on safeguarding children and young people at all ACS events against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect. It aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, ACS Member School policies, procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to ACS staff.

The principle responsibility of ACS staff is to conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner. ACS staff must ensure that the workplace is safe and free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and violence.

This Code of Conduct applies to all ACS employees, coaches, umpires, officials, volunteers, contractors, parents and board members (collectively referred to as **staff** throughout this code of conduct).

The following list of behaviours includes examples of what is acceptable and not acceptable behaviour.

2.2. Acceptable behaviours

ACS staff are expected to actively contribute to a school sporting association culture that respects the dignity of its members. They are required to act lawfully at all times and to undertake their duties in a professional, responsible and ethical manner that could reasonably be expected of persons who hold similar positions.

All people involved in the care of children on behalf of, or in connection with, the ACS must:

- a) contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse (telephone '000');
- b) adhere to the Child Safety Policy and Procedure and uphold the ACS's statement of commitment to child safety at all times;
- c) take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse;
- d) conduct themselves in a manner consistent with their position as a staff member of the ACS and as a positive role model to children;
- e) work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of the organisation;
- f) be responsible for relevant administration of programs and activities in their area;
- g) maintain a duty of care towards others involved in these programs and activities;
- h) establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work;
- i) be fair, considerate and honest with others;
- j) treat children with respect and value their ideas, opinions and backgrounds;
- k) promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island child's self-identification);

- l) promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination);
- m) promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability;
- n) listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they are or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child;
- o) ensure (as far as practicable) that adults are not alone with a child;
- p) comply with all applicable reporting obligations (as set out in the Child Safety Procedure);
- q) raise concerns about suspected abuse with the Executive Officer as soon as possible;
- r) record and act upon all allegations or suspicions of abuse, discrimination or harassment;
- s) if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe;
- t) be professional in their actions;
- u) maintain strict impartiality;
- v) respect confidentiality when sharing information about children in accordance with the Child Safety Policy and Procedure and your reporting obligations;
- w) operate within the policies and guidelines of the ACS.

2.3. Unacceptable behaviour

All people involved in the care of children on behalf of the ACS must not:

- a) ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse;
- b) put a child at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors for an improper reason);
- c) speak to a child in a way that is or could be construed by any observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Some examples are:
 - i. swearing or using inappropriate language in the presence of a child;
 - ii. yelling at a child, except in an emergency situation where the a child's safety may be in danger;
 - iii. dealing with a child while the adult is angry with the child; and
 - iv. using hurtful sarcasm.
- d) express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of a child;
- e) discuss sexual activities with a child;
- f) have contact with a child or their family outside of the ACS's activities without the knowledge and/or consent of the School Principal or CSO. Accidental/incidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate.

- g) have any online contact with a child (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc.) or their family (unless necessary for the purposes of the child's involvement with the ACS e.g. by providing e-newsletters));
- h) use any personal communication channels/devices such as a personal email account to communicate with a child without the written consent of their child and his/her parents;
- i) exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses with a child without the written consent of their child and his/her parents;
- j) use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol while in the presence of or while supervising a child;
- k) use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs while in the presence of or while supervising a child;
- l) provide or allow a child to consume alcohol;
- m) provide or allow a child to consume illegal drugs;
- n) initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves;
- o) engage in rough physical games, hold, massage, kiss, cuddle or touch a child in an inappropriate and or/culturally insensitive way;
- p) engage in any sexual contact with a child;
- q) take a child to their home or encourage meetings outside program activities;
- r) other than in an emergency or other abnormal situation where no other option could be reasonably foreseen, it is not acceptable to transport a child;
- s) be naked in the presence of a child;
- t) possess sexually explicit printed materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) in the presence of children;
- u) sleep in the same bed, sleeping bag or room with a child;
- v) discriminate against any child, including because of age, gender identity, sex, race, culture, sexuality, or disability;
- w) engage in any activity with a child that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them;
- x) be alone with a child unnecessarily and for more than a very short time;
- y) develop a 'special' relationship with a specific child for their own needs;
- z) show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention;
- aa) photograph or video a child without the written consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians;
- bb) do anything in contravention of the ACS's policies, procedures or this Code of Conduct.

2.4. Confidentiality

Disclosing information to employees, directors, volunteers and contractors

When children are having a written or verbal interaction with staff of the ACS, that interaction is confidential to the organisation. Where possible the privacy of the child should be respected at all times. When considering breaching their privacy who and how many people are told should be based on what is believed to be in the best interests of the child.

Disclosing information to people external to the organisation

Staff should not discuss confidential matters about children with people outside the organisation in a way that identifies that child except when they have the express permission of the child or it complies with this Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure. In circumstances where staff believe that there is not enough knowledge within the organisation to provide the best possible assistance to a child, they are able to seek expertise external to the ACS. When communicating with people outside the ACS the child's identity should be protected.

2.5. Breaches of this Code

If you breach this Code of Conduct you will face disciplinary action, including and up to the termination of employment or cessation of engagement with the Association.

This Code of Conduct will be reviewed annually by the ACS as part of its Child Safety Policy review.

Please list any ACS Event where you will have interactions with students from the ACS's 7 member colleges:

I, _____, confirm I have been provided with a copy of the above ACS Code of Conduct and have listed any known interactions I will have with students from its member schools. I will update this list when/if necessary.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Role: _____

3. CHILD SAFETY PROCEDURE

Introduction

All teachers, staff, coaches, umpires, referees, officials, volunteers and contractors (collectively referred to as **staff** in this document) working with the ACS must understand and abide by the professional, moral and legal obligations to implement child protection and child safety policies, protocols and procedures and is a shared responsibility.

This Child Safety Procedure ensures that the ACS responds appropriately to and reports allegations of suspected child abuse. It ensures all ACS staff working at ACS events understand their obligations and how to make a report in the event of suspected child abuse.

Reasonable grounds

When staff are concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a 'reasonable belief'.

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

- a child states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused
- a child or young person exhibits sexually-abusive or age-inappropriate behaviours
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused
- signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

Procedure

Step 1:

Any person that believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse should telephone 000.

Any person (aged 18 or over) that forms a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child (under the age of 16 years) by another person (aged 18 or older), **must** make a report to the police as soon as practicable.

A **mandatory reporter** under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic) who, in the course of practising his or her profession or carrying out the duties of his or her office, position or employment, forms the belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection **must** report to Department of Health and Human Services (**DHHS**) that belief and the reasonable grounds for it as soon as practicable.

Mandatory reporters in Victoria are teachers registered to teach or who have permission to teach pursuant to the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic), principals of government and non-

government schools, and registered medical practitioners, nurses and all members of the police force.

Any person that forms a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or neglect), **may** disclose that information to the police or the DHHS. The ACS encourages all persons with concerns to raise this directly with the Executive Officer.

Any person may disclose a reportable allegation to the Commission for Children and Young People (**Commission**).

The staff member of the ACS, should discuss these observations and concerns with the Executive Officer, who can assist the person to make the report to DHHS, the police and/or the Commission as required. However the individual is not required to consult with the ACS, or gain the support of the ACS, prior to making a report.

The Executive Officer should be notified of any reportable allegation against a staff member as soon as practicable.



Step 2:

It may be that, following the previous step, a person decides to make a report to DHHS, the police and/or the Commission with the support of the Executive Officer.

Making a report:

Ring DHHS, Child Protection - <https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts> .

Ring the police on 000.

Information for making a report:

- name, age and address of the child;
- the reason for suspecting that the behaviour or injury is a result of abuse;
- an assessment of the immediate danger to the child;
- a description of the injury or behaviour observed;
- the current whereabouts of the child;
- any other information about the family; and
- any specific cultural details, e.g. English speaking, disability, etc.

Ask that the ACS be informed of each step of the procedure.

Where an allegation has been made, the ACS will make, secure, and retain records of the allegation of child abuse and the ACS's response to it.

Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in this Procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.



Step 3:

If the child is agreeable to be interviewed by DHHS, the Commission and/or the police, a member of the ACS (e.g. the Executive Officer) should offer to be present at the interview to give support to the child.



Step 4:

Following a report, DHHS, the police and/or the Commission may need to contact the Executive Officer (or alternative nominated person) about the notification. It would be a matter of courtesy to inform the Executive Officer (or alternative nominated person) that a report has been made, or is about to be made.



Step 5:

Following a report, it is important to protect confidentiality and the interests of the child and family at all times.

Special comments:

- DHHS will only interview the child if he/she is agreeable;
- the family will not be contacted until it is believed there is a case and the child is at risk;
- if the incident which caused the report to be made has occurred in the past - the child may be seen to be no longer at risk and no further action may be taken;
- the identity of the person making a notification will be kept confidential (except when that information is required in a court case) unless that person gives permission for the information to be divulged;
- throughout the entire process of observation, discussion and reporting, the interests of the child and their family should be protected from unnecessary disclosure of information concerning abuse; and
- following the making of a report, any investigation that takes place by that external authority (i.e. DHHS, the police or the Commission) is the responsibility of that authority.

What to do when a child discloses or alleges an incident of child abuse

The following procedure is to be followed by any person to whom a child discloses or alleges an incident of child abuse:

1. Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully. Stay calm.
2. Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred and to continue at their own pace.
3. Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
4. Explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, or the police.
5. 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 and you have an obligation to report what has occurred.
6. Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
7. Provide them with the ACS Child Safety incident report form to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this.
8. As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to the Child Safety Officer, the police or child protection. Ensure that you use dates and times of incident(s).
9. Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and provided to the Child Safety Officer to be stored securely.

What to do when a parent/carer alleges or discloses that their child has been abused in ACS's environment

The following procedure is to be followed by any person to whom a parent/carer discloses or alleges an incident of child abuse:

1. Explain that the ACS has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.

2. Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
3. Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
4. Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
5. Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the organisation's Child Safety Officer, the police or child protection.
6. Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
7. Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together.
8. Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
9. Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.
10. As soon as possible after the disclosure, report the disclosure to the Child Safety Officer.

Protecting a child connected to alleged abuse

Where an allegation of suspected child abuse is made all reasonable and appropriate action will be taken to protect any child connected to the alleged child abuse until the allegation is resolved.

The individual circumstances of each case will determine the appropriate course of action but in all cases will seek to prevent as reasonably practicable, any contact between the child connected to the alleged abuse and the alleged offender by;

- Moving the alleged offender to a non-child related position
- Supervising the alleged offender
- Removing or suspending the alleged offender from their duties until the matter has been investigated.