



EAST PRESTON ISLAMIC COLLEGE

M A N D A T O R Y

R E P O R T I N G

P O L I C Y

RATIONALE

Every adult who reasonably believes that a child has been abused, whether in their organisation or not, has an obligation to report that belief to authorities.

All mandatory reporters, who believe on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse must report their concerns to the **Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Protection**.

Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

AIM

The aim of this policy is to:

- Define the roles and responsibilities of East Preston Islamic College staff in protecting the safety and wellbeing of our students.
- Enable all East Preston Islamic College staff to identify students who may be in need of protection.
- Enable all East Preston Islamic College staff to make a report of a student who may in need of protection.

TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE OR INDICATORS OF HARM

Child abuse can have a significant effect on a child's physical and emotional wellbeing. The types of child abuse may include:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Medical neglect
- Family violence

There are many different indicators of child abuse. The presence of a single indicator, or several indicators alone does not prove that abuse or neglect has occurred. However a repeated occurrence of an indicator, or the occurrence of several indicators together, should alert teachers to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.

IMPLEMENTATION

MANDATORY REPORTING

Mandatory reporters must make a report as soon as practicable if in the course of practising their profession or carrying out their duties, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a student is in need of protection, as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse. Mandatory reporters should report to the Department of Human Services. Any person may make a report if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection for any of the following reasons:

FORMING A BELIEF ON REASONABLE GROUNDS

A person may form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection after becoming aware that a child or young person's health, safety or wellbeing is at risk and the child's parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child.

THERE MAY BE REASONABLE GROUNDS FOR FORMING SUCH A BELIEF IF:

- a child or young person states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- a child or young person states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (in some instances, the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows the child or young person states that the child or young person has been physically or sexually abused
- a child shows signs of being physically or sexually abused
- the staff member is aware of persistent family violence or parental substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability that is impacting on the child or young person's safety, stability or development
- the staff member observes signs or indicators of abuse, including non-accidental or unexplained injury, persistent neglect, poor care or lack of appropriate supervision
- a child's actions or behaviour may place them at risk of significant harm and the child's parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child.

WHO IS MANDATED?

Mandatory reporters: doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

The **failure to disclose criminal offence** requires all adults (aged 18 and over) who hold a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 to disclose that information to police (unless they have a reasonable excuse not to, for example because they fear for their safety or the safety of another).

While failure to disclose only covers child sexual abuse, all adults should report other forms of child abuse to authorities. Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting responsibilities.

The **failure to protect criminal offence** (commenced on 1 July 2015) applies where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that

organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

NON-MANDATED STAFF MEMBERS

The children, youth and families act 2005 states that any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection may report their concerns to Child Protection. This means that any person, including non-mandated licensed children's services or school staff, is able to make a report to Child Protection when they believe that a child or young person is at risk of harm and in need of protection, and the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

REPORTING A BELIEF TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (DHS)

(REFER TO PROCEDURE SET OUT IN EPIC WELFARE AND DISCIPLINE POLICY)

All staff members of East Preston Islamic College, whether or not mandated, need to report their belief when the belief is formed in the course of undertaking their professional duties. A report must be made as soon as practicable after forming the belief and on each occasion on which they become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief. If one staff member has a different view from another staff member about making a report and the staff member continues to hold the belief that a child is in need of protection, that person is obliged to make a report to Child Protection.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All staff must respect confidentiality when dealing with a case of suspected child abuse and neglect, and may discuss case details and the identity of the child or the young person and their family only with those involved in managing the situation.

PROFESSIONAL PROTECTION OF REPORTERS

Teachers and principals making mandatory reports:

- are protected against legal, professional and civil actions by the CYFA (Children, Youth and Families act 2005) as long as they are acting: in good faith.
- for the best interests of the child cannot be held to have acted unprofessionally.

INFORMATION SHARING

Teachers and principals making reports or providing information to Child Protection, Child FIRST and Victoria Police are specifically protected against legal, professional and civil actions by the provided they are "acting in good faith" in the interests of the child.

School staff are allowed to share information with Child Protection that may help them to make and initial assessment about a child. Any information that is relevant to the protection or development of a child when Child Protection is investigating a report, or during subsequent child protection intervention is allowed to be shared.

IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS EAST PRESTON ISLAMIC COLLEGE WILL DO THE FOLLOWING:

- All teaching staff who are registered as a teacher under the Education and Training Reform Act (2006), or any person who has been granted to teach under the Act, including principals, is mandated to make a report of signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, and neglect to the Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Protection.
- Any new staff employed by East Preston Islamic College, will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.
- All staff of East Preston Islamic College will be reminded of mandatory responsibilities annually.
- All Casual Relief Staff, will have access to a copy of the School's Mandatory Reporting Policy via the school website and CRT folder.
- All staff at East Preston Islamic College, including members of the governing body will complete the DEECD online Mandatory Reporting training module.
- All staff of East Preston Islamic College are encouraged, to discuss any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of students with the school principal or member of the school wellbeing team, especially if they have a suspicion of possible abuse but have not formed a belief at that time.
- If a principal or member of the school leadership team does not believe that a mandatory report is warranted, this does not discharge the teacher of their obligation to do so if they have formed a reasonable belief that abuse may have occurred. If the teacher's concerns continue, even after consultation with the principal, that teacher is still legally obliged to make a mandatory report of their concerns.
- Non-mandated staff members who believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection are encouraged to speak to the principal, VP or the wellbeing team.
- Any member of staff who have concerns about a child or young person because they have been made aware of possible harm via their involvement in the community external to their professional role may make a (protective) report to (DHS) Child Protection.
- East Preston Islamic College governing body, will annually monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of all child safety strategies and policies.

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed by the EPIC governing body as part of our 3 year cycle.

NEXT REVIEW

Next review date is 30th June 2020.