

Preschool Field Officer Service

# **CHILD PROTECTION**

**You should contact Child Protection if you have reasonable grounds for believing a child has suffered, or is suffering, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect and that their parent has not protected or is unlikely to protect the child from harm of that type. A reasonable belief does not require proof.**

**All Early Childhood Educators are MANDATED to report to Child Protection. This means Educators are legally obliged to report suspected child abuse.**

* To report concerns that are life threatening, ring Victoria Police: **000**
* To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child after hours, call the **After-Hours Child Protection Emergency Service: 13 12 78. (5pm-9am – Mon-Fri, and 24 hours on weekends and public holidays)**
* Child Protection Intake: **1300 664 977 (Western Division Intake)**

**WHAT IS CHILD PROTECTION?**

Child Protection provides child-centered, family-focused services to protect children and young people from significant harm caused by abuse or neglect within the family. The family does not need to be notified or to give their consent to be referred to Child Protection.

“To make a report to child protection a person needs to have formed a reasonable belief that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect, and that their parent has not protected or is unlikely to protect the child from harm of that type”.

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| **Criteria for Child Protection Reports:** |
| * Serious physical abuse of or non-accidental or unexplained injury to a child.
* Sexual abuse.
* Serious emotional abuse or ill treatment of a child affecting their healthy development.
* Persistent neglect, poor care or lack of appropriate supervision.
* Serious or persistent family violence, or substance use, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability – where there is a likelihood of significant harm to the child or their development.
* A child’s actions or behaviour places them at risk of significant harm and the parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child.
* A child appears to have been abandoned, or the child’s parents are dead or incapacitated and no one is caring properly for the child.

If any of the above criteria are selected, proceed with a Child Protection Report |

**WHO PROVIDES CHILD PROTECTION?**

The Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) provides this service. Child Protection provides child-centred, family-focused services to protect children and young people from significant harm caused by abuse or neglect within the family. It also aims to make sure that children and young people receive services to deal with the effect of abuse and neglect on their wellbeing and development.

**HOW TO MAKE A REFERRAL TO CHILD PROTECTION**

Phone Child Protection Intake 1300 664 977 and discuss your concerns with the duty officer. The duty officer will guide you regarding the referral process.

**WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I MAKE A REFERRAL TO CHILD PROTECTION?**

The role of the Child Protection Service is to:

* investigate matters where it is alleged that a child is at risk of harm
* refer children and families to services that assist in providing the ongoing safety and wellbeing of children
* take matters before the Children's Court if the child's safety cannot be ensured within the family
* supervise children on legal orders granted by the Children's Court
* provide and fund accommodation services, specialist support services, and adoption and permanent care to children and adolescents in need

**MORE INFORMATION:**

**<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/making-report-child-protection>**

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