



WAVERLEY COLLEGE

## Child Protection - Abuse, Grooming & Neglect Identification & Initial Notification

### Child Abuse (Maltreatment)

All children have the right to be protected from abuse, maltreatment and harm.

Child abuse or maltreatment occurs when a child (a person under the age of 16), or a young person (aged 16-17 years) has been subjected to:

- physical abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- serious emotional or psychological harm;
- ill-treatment;
- exposure to domestic or family violence; or
- neglect;

which has resulted or is likely to result in harm to the child's wellbeing. Child abuse may involve ongoing, repeated or persistent abuse, or it may arise from a single incident. It is possible for a child to be maltreated by a parent or carer, another adult person or another child who may or may not be older.

### Grooming

Grooming is the means by which a person creates or exploits opportunities to safely engage in sexual contact with a particular child or children.

Grooming behaviour typically involves a graduation from attention giving and non-sexual touching to increasingly more intimate and intrusive behaviour.

Grooming is not defined as a form of abuse in NSW but grooming behaviour is a criminal offence and is identified as a form of sexual misconduct that is subject to reportable conduct and mandatory reporting obligations.

Waverley College treats the commission of grooming behaviours on its premises, online, using college equipment or during its extra-curricular activities as conduct which threatens the safety of students and action must be taken as part of our child protection program.

See our [Detecting, Reporting and Addressing Grooming Behaviours Policy](#) and [Reportable Conduct of Staff, Volunteers and Others](#).

### Waverley College's Policy

Waverley College is committed to providing a safe environment for all our students.

It is our policy that:

- all staff\* are trained with respect to identification of child abuse, grooming and relevant procedures;
- all suspected cases of child abuse are reported to the Department of Family and Community Services and the Police, where the suspected case involves and allegation of a criminal offence.
- we maintain up-to-date procedures to assist staff in identifying and reporting child abuse;



- we work collaboratively with relevant external agencies that may be involved in child protection;
- we act immediately to ensure the safety of abused students; and
- we provide ongoing support and assistance to students who have been abused.

*\* - In these child protection policies, "staff" refers to all personnel (including employees, casual staff, student teachers, volunteers, religious, clergy and regular contractors)*

### **Indicators of Child Abuse (Maltreatment)**

Children in need of care and protection may show indicators of harm and maltreatment in their school environment. The following indicators may assist staff who are concerned about children in their care:

#### ***Physical Abuse***

Physical abuse is a non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child caused by a parent, caregiver or any other person.

It includes, but is not limited to, injuries which are caused by:

- excessive discipline;
- severe beatings or shakings;
- cigarette burns;
- attempted strangulation; and
- female genital mutilation.

Injuries include bruising, lacerations or welts, burns, fractures or dislocation of joints.

Hitting a child around the head or neck and/or using a stick, belt or other object to discipline or punish a child (in a non-trivial way) is a crime.

Indicators of physical abuse include:

- bruising to the face, head or neck, other bruising and marks which may show the shape of the object that caused it e.g. belt buckle, hand print;
- lacerations and welts;
- drowsiness, vomiting, fits or pooling of blood in the eyes, which may suggest head injury;
- adult bite marks and scratches;
- fractures of bones, especially in children under three years old;
- dislocations, sprains, twisting;
- burns and scalds (including cigarette burns);
- multiple injuries or bruises;
- explanation of injury offered by the child is not consistent with the injury;
- abdominal pain caused by ruptured internal organs, without a history of major trauma;
- swallowing of poisonous substances, alcohol or other harmful drugs; and/or
- general indicators of female genital mutilation e.g. having a 'special operation'.

#### ***Sexual Abuse***

Sexual abuse is when someone involves a child or young person in a sexual activity by using their power over them or taking advantage of their trust. Often children are bribed or threatened physically and psychologically to make them participate in the activity.



Child sexual abuse is a crime.

Indicators of sexual abuse include:

- bruising or bleeding in the genital area;
- sexually transmitted diseases;
- bruising to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs;
- child or child's friend telling you about it, directly or indirectly;
- describing sexual acts;
- sexual knowledge or behaviour inappropriate for the child's age;
- going to bed fully clothed;
- regressive behaviour e.g. sudden return to bed-wetting or soiling;
- self-destructive behaviour e.g. drug dependency, suicide attempts, self-mutilation;
- child being in contact with a known or suspected paedophile;
- anorexia or over-eating;
- adolescent pregnancy;
- unexplained accumulation of money and gifts;
- persistent running away from home; and/or
- risk taking behaviours including self harm, suicide attempts.

### ***Serious Emotional or Psychological Harm***

Serious psychological harm can occur where the behaviour of their parent or caregiver damages the confidence and self esteem of the child or young person, resulting in serious emotional deprivation or trauma.

Although it is possible for 'one-off' incidents to cause serious harm, in general it is the frequency, persistence and duration of the parental or carer behaviour that is instrumental in defining the consequences for the child.

This can include a range of behaviours such as excessive criticism, withholding affection, exposure to domestic violence, intimidation or threatening behaviour.

Indicators of psychological abuse or harm include:

- constant feelings of worthlessness about life and themselves;
- unable to value others;
- lack of trust in people;
- lack of people skills necessary for daily functioning;
- extreme attention-seeking behaviour;
- obsessively eager to please or obey adults;
- takes extreme risks, is markedly disruptive, bullying or aggressive;
- highly self critical, depressed or anxious;
- suicide threats or attempts; and/or
- persistent running away from home.

### ***Neglect***

Child neglect is the continued failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child with the basic things needed for his or her proper growth and development, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care and adequate supervision.



Key indicators of neglect are:

- low weight for age and/or failure to thrive and develop;
- untreated physical problems e.g. sores, serious nappy rash and urine scalds, significant dental decay;
- poor standards of hygiene i.e. child consistently unwashed;
- poor complexion and hair texture;
- child not adequately supervised for their age;
- scavenging or stealing food with a focus on basic survival;
- extended stays at college, public places, other homes;
- longs for or indiscriminately seeks adult affection;
- rocking, sucking, head-banging; and/or
- poor school attendance.

### ***Domestic or Family Violence***

Domestic or family violence is behaviour towards a family member that may include:

- physical violence or threats of violence;
- verbal abuse, including threats;
- emotional or psychological abuse;
- sexual abuse; or
- financial and social abuse.

As family violence can result in one or more forms of child abuse (being neglect, physical or sexual abuse or emotional or psychological harm) physical and behavioural indicators of these types of abuse may also be indicative of a family violence situation. A child's exposure to family violence also constitutes child abuse under the Family Law Act 1975 (Cth).

### **Managing a Student's Disclosure of Abuse**

A student may disclose information about abuse or neglect privately to a staff member. Alternatively a child may make a public disclosure such as making a disclosure in class or to a group of other students, or in some other way.

Where a student makes a disclosure, it is important that the staff member understands that they should not:

- investigate the matter;
- ask questions that would mean the child or young person is required to retell their story to various staff members within the school.

### **Private Disclosure**

If a student discloses a situation of abuse directly to a staff member their role is to reassure the student and support the student in their decision to disclose. The teacher must assure students that they have the right to feel safe and must listen actively to what the student is saying.

Disclosure of abuse can cause strong feelings in the person to whom the disclosure is being made. It is important for the staff member to be aware of, and control, their feelings.

Sometimes students may try and elicit a promise that a staff member not tell anyone about the disclosure. Do not make this promise.



The teacher is responsible for reporting the matter (refer to our [Child Protection – Mandatory Reporting of Abuse & Neglect](#)) and is not responsible for investigating the matter.

### **Public Disclosure**

It is possible that a student may start to disclose in class or with a group of other students. In this circumstance, a teacher should use a strategy of 'protective interrupting' and:

- acknowledge that you have heard the student and stop further disclosure whilst maintaining support and encouraging the student to discuss the matter in a more private situation;
- quietly arrange to see the student as soon as possible away from other students; and
- do not allow other students to ask questions and discourage them from making judgements.

### **Initial Reporting of Abuse**

The identification of child abuse can be difficult especially where it is based upon the observation of multiple risk indicators that may often occur over a period of time.

Where a staff member forms a belief on reasonable grounds that neglect or abuse may be occurring they must raise the matter with the Principal or Deputy Principal – Student & Staff Wellbeing.

If the matter involves the Principal or Deputy Principal – Student & Staff Wellbeing, the report must be made to the EREA Regional Director via the EREA National Office at (03) 9426 3200.

### **Initial Action Following Disclosure**

Safety of students is paramount. Once disclosure has been made the Principal, Deputy Principal – Student & Staff Wellbeing or appropriate person \*may consult with other college staff including the School Counsellor, as the particular circumstances demand\*, and will determine a strategy to ensure the student's immediate safety. This process must be documented (refer to the 'Records' section below).

### **Mandatory Reporting of Abuse & Neglect**

In NSW it is a requirement of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW) that the reporting of abuse (including physical, sexual or psychological/emotional abuse and/or neglect/ill-treatment/exposure to family violence) of a child is mandatory. It is not mandatory to report the abuse of a young person, however it is the College's policy to report concerns about the safety and wellbeing of all of its students, including young persons.

Abuse and neglect must be reported where a teacher forms a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child is at risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect.

To make a report call the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111 or 1800 212 936 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

For details of the process of mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect refer to our [Child Protection – Mandatory Reporting of Abuse & Neglect Policy](#).

### **Voluntary Reporting**

Any person who believes, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is in need of protection may voluntarily report to the Department of Family and Community Services. Services. You do not have to prove that abuse has taken place.



If you need to report an offence that requires immediate Police attention, call the Police on 000.

If you suspect on reasonable grounds that a child is suffering abuse or neglect or you wish to discuss your concerns about a child or young person, call the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111 or the Office of the Children's Guardian on 1800 212 936 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

### **Allegations against a Staff Member / Volunteer/ Others**

Where a matter that is subject to mandatory reporting also involves an allegation against a staff member or any person engaged by the college to provide services to children, including volunteers, it must also be reported to the NSW Ombudsman.

Allegations against a staff member or volunteer that are not subject to Mandatory Reporting because the child is not at 'significant risk of harm' but still involves sexual misconduct (including child pornography) or 'behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child' must also be reported to the NSW Ombudsman.

For details refer to our [Child Protection – Reportable Conduct of Staff, Volunteers & Others Policy](#).

### **Ongoing Management Plan**

Together with the Department of Family and Community Services and/or the Police the college shall develop and implement a management plan designed to provide ongoing support to the student who has been the subject of abuse or neglect.

In addition to implementing a management plan the college may also undertake one or more risk assessments in respect of the victim and the college including staff & students.

### **Record Keeping**

Where a staff member suspects child abuse but does not have enough information, written and dated records of their observations and concerns should be kept until reasonable belief is formed. The staff must also inform the Principal / Deputy Principal - Student & Staff Wellbeing of their concerns as soon as possible.

All verbal and written communications regarding child protection matters (including notes of observations, meetings and telephone calls) must be properly documented. The documented records should include dates and times and enough detail to record key conversations, especially those relating to the student's disclosure.

The records of child protection matters must be stored securely.

### **Confidentiality**

Staff who have access to information regarding suspected or disclosed child abuse must keep such information confidential and secure and must not disclose this information unless required to do so as part of the ongoing investigation or by law.

Staff must not provide undertakings that are inconsistent with their reporting obligations under this policy. In particular, staff must not promise a student that they will not tell anyone about the student's disclosure.

Students and any other parties who become involved in the investigation (this may include other



students) should be informed of the reporting process and be requested to maintain confidentiality.

Inappropriate disclosure will be subject to disciplinary action.

### **Workers' Responsibility**

All workers are responsible to ensure:

- reports of child abuse are made as soon as practicable to Principal or Deputy Principal – Student & Staff Wellbeing;
- they comply with their obligation for mandatory reporting of abuse or neglect;
- confidentiality is maintained throughout the process;
- immediate support is given to students making disclosures;
- records of all verbal and written communication are maintained and stored securely;
- no attempts to investigate the incident are made; and
- participation in training.

### **Implementation**

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- development of risk identification and reporting procedures;
- the provision of counselling services;
- staff training;
- signage;
- effective communication and incident notification procedures;
- effective record keeping procedures; and
- initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

### **Discipline for Breach of Policy**

Where a staff member breaches this policy Waverley College will take disciplinary action, including in the case of serious breaches, summary dismissal.



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