



Moerlina School

MOERLINA SCHOOL
POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Child Safety & Wellbeing

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1. Policy Statement

All children have a right to feel safe at school and in the wider community and to be protected from harm. Moerlina School has a special responsibility to protect children when they are on school premises and to intervene when a belief is formed that the welfare of a child is at risk, either within or outside of the school.

Moerlina School is committed to providing a child-safe environment which safeguards all students, and to promoting practices which provide for the safety, wellbeing and welfare of our children. Through clearly articulated policies and practices that meet all legislative requirements, the school will balance a safety focus with positive interactions and environments that contribute to the healthy development of our children.

Moerlina staff are vigilant in their care of all students. Policies, procedures and organisational structures are thorough and understood by staff through a process of training and ongoing review. These practices reflect the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and are guided by the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations WA: Guidelines, 2019*.

As a child safe and friendly organisation, Moerlina School will deliberately and systematically:

- *Create an environment where children's safety and wellbeing are at the centre of thoughts, values and actions;*
- *Place emphasis on genuine engagement with, and valuing of children;*
- *Create conditions that reduce likelihood of harm occurring;*
- *Create conditions that increase the likelihood of any harm being discovered; and*
- *Respond appropriately to any disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm.*

The school community are kept informed of policies, programs and practices related to child safety and wellbeing, and relevant policies are made available to the wider community on the School's website. The School Code of Conduct is based on common sense and positive practice, and clearly outlines the duty of care students, staff, parents, volunteers and visitors have for all children at Moerlina, and their own rights and responsibilities within our organisation.

Through an annual, whole of school curriculum plan and shared expectations and practices, Moerlina staff are responsible for assisting children to develop protective behaviours so that they have the knowledge and skills to manage their own safety.

Staff are aware of their responsibility to report suspected incidents of abuse or neglect, or disclosures of abuse or neglect, to the principal or through Mandatory Reporting process. All reports of any form of abuse will be taken seriously. Clear guidelines for the response and management of incidents have been established to ensure staff, students and parents are supported at such a critical time.

Creating and maintaining a safe and friendly organisation is a dynamic and ongoing process of learning, monitoring and reviewing. Regular review processes, including completion of the National Principles Self-Assessment Tool, have been built into school planning at both governance and management levels in recognition of child safety as a priority at Moerlina School.

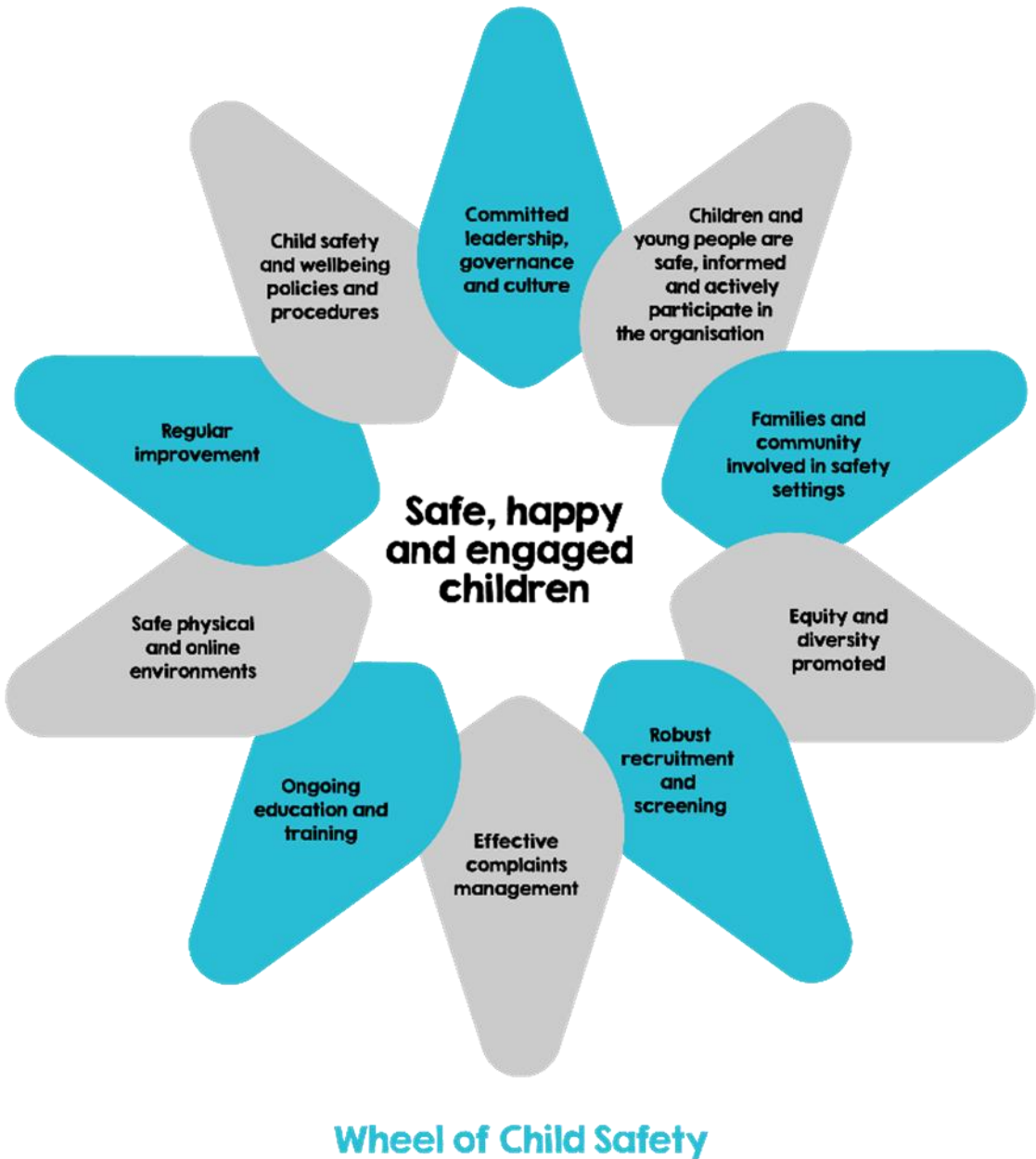
2. A Culture of Safety, Collaboration and Connectedness

Central to the success of a community school are positive relationships between all stakeholders. At the heart of our small community school, where parents enter into a partnership in their children's learning and development in a nurturing, child-focused educational setting, are shared values which give voice to all members of the school community in providing for the welfare and wellbeing of our children.

Moerlina School has a long-established culture of care for children's safety and wellbeing. Through the collaborative approach of our community school, parents are regularly invited to engage in planning, reflection and review processes with various stakeholder groups – the governing body, the principal, staff

and the children. Parents, children and staff were represented in the development of the Rights and Responsibilities that form part of the Code of Conduct. All groups were represented in the development of the School's Strategic Plan. Strong communication channels keep them informed of policies and practices and provide opportunity to raise questions or make suggestions for consideration and response.

The National Principles are considered in addressing the many aspects of the school culture and practices that go to developing a safe, supportive and protective learning community. The diagram below assists in communicating the considered approaches the school undertakes in managing the care of our students to families.



The 10 elements of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations that assist in school planning.

This policy and procedures are implemented in conjunction with associated policies and practices that aim to provide for the safety, wellbeing and engagement of our children, and to support appropriate response to situations if required.

Related documents include, but are not limited to:

- Moerlina Strategic Plan

- Respectful Relationships and Positive Behaviours Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Communications Policy
- Social Media and Privacy Policy
- Protective Behaviours Curriculum

3. Recruitment and Selection of Staff and Volunteers

Moerlina School has clear, effective human resource practices in place for the selection of staff and to ensure all new employees, volunteers and contractors are adequately screened and supervised.

Screening requirements for adults working in either a remunerated position or in a voluntary capacity at the School are aligned to State guidelines.

A Working With Children (WWC) card is held on file for all staff, including non-teaching staff, and volunteers.

Teachers are required, through the Teachers Registration Board (TRB), to have a police clearance. The Working with Children legislation requires them to have a WWC check.

Volunteers who are not parents who have contact with children are required to have a WWC check.

Volunteers who are parents are exempt from getting a WWC Check, unless on an overnight camp. Similarly, parent volunteers who undertake a professional role (either paid or unpaid) at the school are also to be in possession of a current WWC card.

Members of the governing body - the School Council, are required to have a Federal Police Clearance.

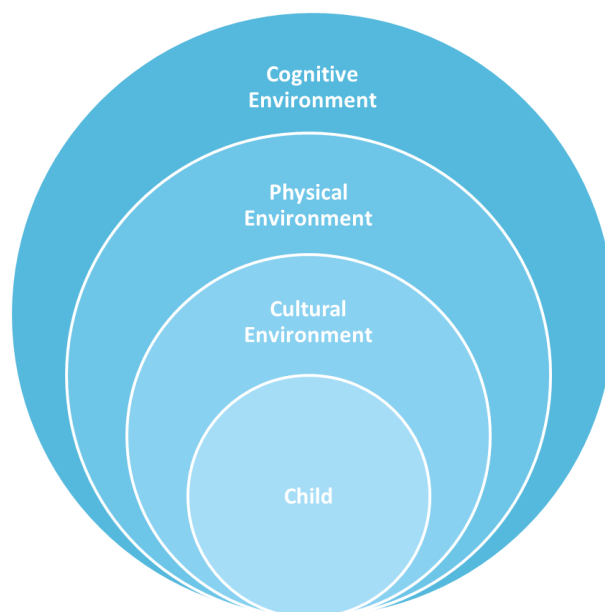
New employees participate in an induction process to familiarise them with relevant policies and procedures, orientation, supervision by a mentor, training and performance management and development.

All staff are required to sign the school's Staff Code of Conduct in acknowledgement of their commitment to adhere to the Code on commencement and then annually.

Clear guidelines are adhered to in the establishment of parameters for volunteers working with children in the school. Volunteers who work with children do so under the direction of a teacher or the principal, and in open, visible spaces within the school.

4. Empowering Children to Participate

In articulating the Moerlina school educational environment in a wholistic context, staff created a model based on the work of Yong Zhao, *World Class Learners: Educating Creative and Entrepreneurial Students* (2012). Zhao states that, 'to meet the needs of educating the whole child, a sound educational environment should have at least 3 interconnected elements: a safe, healthy, aesthetically-pleasing and inviting physical environment; an engaging, friendly and supportive social-emotional environment; and a rich, stimulating and diverse cognitive environment'.



The model illustrates the commitment of the school community to putting children at the centre of all decision-making processes.

Further to this, three areas were identified as being key to the difference in approach in the Moerlina School context, compared to more traditional mainstream schools: diversity, structures and organisation, and agency. The school's focus on the rights of the child embodies *practices focused on empowerment and participation of children and organisational structures and systems that provide age-appropriate platforms to seek children's views and encourage participation in meaningful decision making.*

At all levels, staff seek to: share information that impacts children in an age-appropriate manner; provide opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills to respond to matters of importance; and, provide authentic opportunities to engage them in decision making processes.

5. Child Protection Curriculum

At Moerlina the Protective Behaviours Curriculum has been developed to cover a comprehensive, realistic and age-appropriate personal safety component enabling students to recognise and report abuse, understand power in relationships, and develop protective strategies, including seeking help, to avoid abuse.

Moerlina staff are responsible for assisting children to develop protective behaviours so that they have the knowledge and skills to manage their own safety. This is done by:

- establishing a school culture that values the rights of every person to feel safe and secure;
- establishing a school culture that expects every person to be responsible for recognising and respecting the rights of others;
- implementing a whole school approach to the teaching of social and emotional health programs to provide children with the knowledge and skills they need to care for their own wellbeing;
- implementing a whole school protective behaviours program, Pre-Kindy to Year 6, to teach children the knowledge and skills to care for themselves in both physical and online environments.

The Protective Behaviours programs are delivered to all students, Pre-Kindy to Year 6, across the same term. Parents are provided information about the whole of school program prior to commencement and are kept informed of the weekly focus of the protective behaviours program to support them in continuing a shared dialogue at home.

6. Child Abuse

Child abuse refers to any non-accidental behaviour by adults or children that is outside the norms of expected conduct and entails a substantial risk of harm to a child or young person. The behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and are generally categorised as abuse or neglect.

Abuse of children is normally described in five categories. Each category of maltreatment is described by a range of indicators listed in Appendix 1:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional, including psychological
- Neglect
- Family and domestic violence

Moerlina School explicitly forbids the use of any form of child abuse, corporal punishment or other degrading punishment without exception.

All reasonable steps are put into place, through organisational structure, policy and practice to avoid opportunity for child maltreatment on the school premises or during offsite activities. Reflection and review processes following reports of incidents in other settings strengthens the supports that are in place to maintain a safe environment.

All staff are aware of their responsibility to report suspected incidents of abuse or neglect, or disclosures of abuse or neglect, to the principal or through the Mandatory Reporting process. All reports of any form of abuse will be taken seriously. It should be noted that staff cannot agree to a student's requests for confidentiality or requests that parents, police or other agencies not be informed when the welfare or safety of the student or other students may be threatened.

Clear guidelines for the response and management of incidents have been established to ensure staff, students and parents are supported at such a critical time.

Where the incident is between children at the school, but is not sexual abuse, Behaviour Management procedures will be followed.

Where the incident involves an adult/s, but is not sexual abuse, the Non-Mandatory Report Notification Procedure at Appendix 2 will be followed.

For any incident involving sexual abuse the Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse notification processes at Appendix 3 will be followed.

All strong concerns for the welfare of children believed maltreated by parents/caregivers will be discussed with the Department for Child Protection and Family Support or the Police Child Abuse Squad before contacting parents/caregivers. These agencies will then decide on the provision of advice to parents/caregivers and any further action. The Department for Child Protection and Family Services (DCPFS) is the government department with the statutory authority to investigate concerns in Western Australia. It is not the school's role to investigate child maltreatment issues, including concerns of sexual abuse. That is the DCPFS's responsibility. All disclosures or strong concerns of abuse or neglect will be reported to DCPFS by the Principal or teacher. DCPFS will then decide on how to proceed.

Details on where to find further information for DCPFS are located at Appendix 4.

Any breach of the School's Code of Conduct will be dealt with in accordance with the 'Reporting a Breach of the Code of Conduct Flow Chart' at Appendix 5.

Any critical incident will be reported to the Department of Education and TRBWA according to policy procedures.

AISWA will be contacted following other relevant authorities (in the case of sexual abuse), to access support for staff where it is required, and to provide guidance and support for the School Council and the Principal in managing the situation.

7. Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse

Procedures for the reporting of child sexual abuse differ from the reporting of other forms of abuse and are a legal requirement of teachers in Western Australia (Appendix 3). In WA, the legislation covering mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse is the Children and Community Services Act 2004.

In WA, the mandatory reporters of child sexual abuse are the following professions in both the government and non-government sectors: doctors; nurses; midwives; **teachers**; and police officers.

In the independent school sector, teachers are required to make the report, not the school principal. If the teacher concerned wishes, they may include the Principal and other relevant staff in discussions in relation to a specific child prior to the teacher forming a belief based on reasonable grounds. If either of those parties are mandated reporters and then personally form a belief, they are then legally obliged to complete and submit the report to the Mandatory Reporting Service.

Procedural guidelines for reporting of abuse form part of this Policy (Appendix 3).

Annual training of all staff and governing body members in understanding the requirements of Mandatory Reporting of Sexual Abuse is undertaken in recognition of our commitment to the safety and wellbeing of all children, and in meeting legislative requirements for schools. Online training and certification is through https://moodle.communities.wa.gov.au/file.php/1/PublicCourses/Mandatory_Reporter_Training/story.html Training is also provided for staff to understand and be alert for grooming behaviours with an expectation to raise concerns around unprofessional behaviour.

Grooming in a child protection context refers to deliberate actions undertaken to engage in sexual activity with a child. It differs from sexual abuse in that it is primarily a preparatory activity occurring before abuse occurs but is continued during and after the abuse to ensure the safety of the groomer. A description of grooming behaviours can be found at Appendix 6.

Strong concerns of grooming behaviours will be reported according to the Non-Mandatory Reporting procedures.

Within the school context, all staff members will be held accountable to the School Code of Conduct, which clearly articulates the expectations around interactions with students for all adults.

8. Online Safety

Increasingly the internet is becoming more available to primary aged students as one of their main sources of communication. Although this is most likely to occur outside of Moerlina, it is still a potential issue for the school.

Computer use is carefully considered and monitored at Moerlina, with clear guidelines around student access, e-safety protocols, programs and internet usage and response to inappropriate use or unexpected responses. Staff members responsible for IT in each classroom belong to the IT Team, meeting regularly to manage all aspects of IT programs, including cyber safety.

The Children's e-safety Commissioner Educate program and resources are used to promote safety awareness in class, and information is made available to support parents in understanding the best ways to prevent online issues from arising at home to ensure their children have positive and safe online experiences. Access to external workshops and seminars is offered to parents as they become available through agencies such as the e-safety office and AISWA.

Should an online incident occur at the school, or support be sought by families to respond to an incident at home, the Children's e-safety Commissioner Respond resources would be accessed to effectively assess and respond to the online incident at <https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/toolkit-schools/respond>. They offer guidance for understanding reporting requirements, preserving digital evidence, minimising further harm and supporting wellbeing. Further support in responding would be sought from AISWA.

Evidence of cyber predator behaviours will be reported to the Office of the Children's e-safety Commissioner at <https://www.esafety.gov.au>.

9. Response to Disclosure of Abuse or Neglect

There may be times when a student makes a disclosure of abuse or neglect. Staff will be made aware of the immediate needs of these students and what to do in these circumstances through annual training.

Staff at Moerlina will to the best of their ability adhere to the guidelines provided at Appendix 7 in the case of a disclosure of abuse or neglect.

Staff will understand they cannot agree to a student's demands for confidentiality or requests that parents, police or other agencies not be informed when the welfare or safety of the student or other students may be threatened.

Staff will be aware that a disclosure can arouse in them strong feelings of shock, anger and helplessness and it is important to control these feelings; they can be worked through after the disclosure.

Where the Principal is made aware of a disclosure of abuse or neglect by a child at the school, the disclosure will be reported according to the Non-mandatory reporting guidelines.

Any critical incident will be reported to the Department of Education and TRBWA.

10. Relevant Legislation and Authority

The following Acts can be viewed at www.slp.wa.gov.au:

- Children and Community Services Act 2004
- Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008
- Criminal Code Act (1913)
- Criminal Code Amendment (Cyber Predators) Act 2006 (changes to s204B of The Criminal Code)
- Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004.

The *Criminal Code Amendment (Cyber Predators) Act 2006* is the legislation in Western Australia that protects children under the age of 16, or that the offender believes is under the age of 16, from an adult who uses electronic communications with the intent to procure the child to engage in sexual activity; or to expose the child to any indecent matter.

APPENDIX 1: CHILD MALTREATMENT

Child maltreatment refers to any non-accidental behaviour by adults or children that is outside the norms of conduct and entails a substantial risk of harm to a child or young person. The behaviours may be intentional or unintentional.

It may be the result of action or inaction on the part of a person who has responsibility to care for a child resulting in harm or injury to the child. The harm may include delayed physical and/or intellectual development. The maltreatment experienced is normally described in five categories. Each category of maltreatment is described by a range of indicators:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional including psychological
- Neglect
- Family and domestic violence.

Descriptions of these indicators have been taken from the Department for Child Protection document *"Identifying and responding to child abuse and neglect – A Guide for Professionals"*.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse occurs when a child has experienced severe and/or persistent ill-treatment. It can include, but is not limited to injuries such as cuts, bruises, burns and fractures caused by a range of acts including beating, shaking, illicit administration of alcohol and other drugs, attempted suffocation, excessive discipline, physical punishment or other forms.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse covers a wide range of behaviour or activities that expose or subject a child to sexual activity that is exploitative and/or inappropriate to his/her age and developmental level. These behaviours include observation or involvement with inappropriate fondling of a child's body, making a child touch an adult's genitalia, showing pornographic material or sexual acts to a child, and sexual penetration of the child. Harm from sexual abuse may include significant emotional trauma, physical injury, infections and impaired emotional and psychological development.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is a sustained, repetitive, inappropriate, ill treatment of a child or young person through behaviours including threatening, belittling, teasing, humiliating, bullying, confusing, ignoring and inappropriate encouragement. Children who have been emotionally abused are likely to have a reduced capacity to experience a range of emotions, to express emotion appropriately and to modulate their emotional experience. Children who have been emotionally abused are likely to be fearful, withdrawn and/or resentful, distressed and despairing.

Included under emotional abuse is psychological abuse. This abuse damages a child's intellectual faculties and processes, including intelligence, memory, recognition, perception, attention, imagination and moral development. Children are likely to feel worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered or only of value in meeting another's needs.

Neglect

Neglect is the failure of a parent/caregiver to provide a child with the basic necessities of life. These include adequate supervision, adequate food or shelter, suitable clothing, effective medical, therapeutic or remedial care and emotional security. Neglect can be acute, chronic or episodic, and can result in detrimental effects on the child or young person's social psychological, educational or physical development and/or physical injury. Neglect should be considered in the context of physical, emotional or psychological abuse.

APPENDIX 2: NON-MANDATORY REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE – physical, emotional, psychological or neglect

Observations or a child’s disclosure should be discussed, in the first instance, with the Principal, or the School Chair, if it is not appropriate to discuss it with the Principal.

It is not the role of the teacher to investigate child abuse or neglect matters. They must report concerns to the Principal.

The teacher and Principal may wish to consult with the AISWA school psychologist.

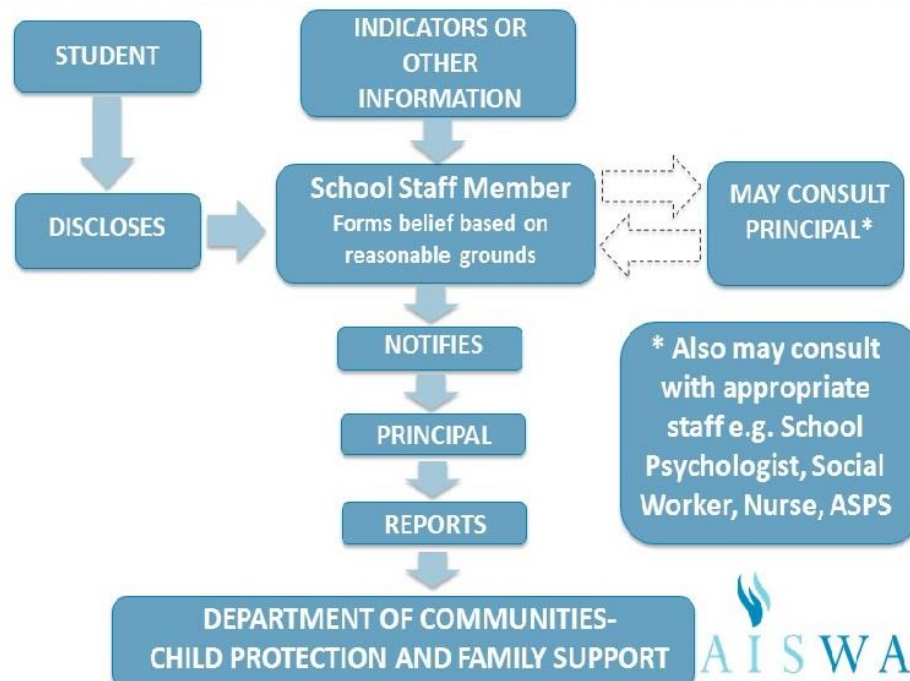
For forms of abuse other than sexual abuse, including grooming of children, the Principal will report all disclosures or strong concerns to the Department of Child Protection and Family Services (DCPFS) or the Police Child Abuse Squad and maintain a written record of this communication and subsequent actions. The DCPFS will then decide how to proceed, including notification to parents/caregivers. The decision to progress the matter further is the responsibility of the DCPFS.

The principal will at all times keep the Chair informed of procedures and recommendations for action.

It is vital to remember that confidentiality is paramount and that disclosure of this information should only be discussed with those in the school who are required to know.

If, following a report, a family approaches the school to receive support for their child, it is recommended that any interview be conducted with a minimum of 2 school members present (eg. The Principal and one other) to provide support. It is important to remember that the focus of the meeting should be the welfare of the child. The Principal will arrange ongoing support for the teacher, the student and anyone else affected. The need for ongoing support is often necessary as the teacher will continue in their role with the student and the CPFS’s role may continue for an extended period of time.

NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE – CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT (NON-MANDATORY REPORT)



APPENDIX 3: MANDATORY REPORTING STAFF INFORMATION SHEET

General Information

What is a mandatory reporter?

A mandatory reporter is someone who is required by law to make a report to the Department for Child Protection and Family Services (DCPFS) if they form a belief, based on reasonable grounds, in the course of their work that a child sexual abuse has occurred or is occurring.

In WA the legislation covering mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse applies to Teachers, Police Officers, Doctors, Nurses and Midwives.

This legislation focuses on child sexual abuse. Other forms of abuse should continue to be reported.

What is the legislative definition of a child?

A child is a person who is under 18 years of age. In the absence of positive evidence as to age, a child is a person who is apparently under 18 years of age.

What is the legislative definition of child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse includes sexual behaviour in circumstances where the child:

- Is the subject of bribery, coercion, a threat, exploitation or violence; or
- Has less power than another person involved in the behaviour; or
- There is a significant disparity in the development function or maturity of the child and another person involved in the behaviour.

What is the DCPFS definition of child sexual abuse (from the field worker guidelines)?

The DCP takes the position that sexual abuse involves the exposure of children and young people to inappropriate sexual activity by either forcing them to be involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex); or witnessing the sexual activity of others, either by reading or viewing pornographic material or through direct observation.

What happens if a mandatory reporter doesn't make a report?

Failure to make a report can result in a fine of up to \$6000.

Failure to make a written report after a verbal report can result in a fine of up to \$3000.

If I make a report, do I have any legal protection?

Mandatory reporters, non-mandatory reporters and others who provide relevant information are protected from liability, if the information is provided in good faith.

The penalty for disclosing a reporter's identity is up to 2 years imprisonment and a fine of up to \$24,000.

There may be cases where the court can give permission for identifying information to be revealed.

[Source: Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse: Core Training Workshop, Department for Child Protection and Family Services]

A **belief, based on reasonable grounds**, that child sexual abuse is occurring, is all that is necessary for mandatory reporters to be required to make a report to the DCPFS.

It is **NOT** necessary to prove that child sexual abuse is occurring before making a report.

A mandatory reporter can form the necessary belief, based on reasonable ground, by noting the presence of indicators, disclosures, injuries, signs, symptoms and behaviours that heighten concerns about child sexual abuse.

To help you decide if you have a belief based on reasonable grounds consider the following questions:

- Can you describe the reasons why you believe the child has been, or is being sexually abused?
- What has the child said or done to suggest that they are being sexually abused?
- Have you observed, or been told about, the presence of any of the 'possible indicators' of sexual abuse?
- Did the child disclose sexual abuse? What did they say happened? Who did they disclose to and when?
- What other behaviours have you observed and/interactions with the child are of concern to you? What is the frequency and severity of the behaviour? How long has it been occurring?

[Source: Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse: Core Training Workshop, Department for Child Protection and Family Services]

Possible behavioural signs and indicators of sexual abuse:

- Sexualized behaviours inappropriate to their age (including sexually touching other children and themselves)
- Evidence of sexual knowledge beyond the norms for their age
- Disclosure of abuse either directly or indirectly through drawings, play or writing that describes abuse
- Pain or bleeding in the anal or genital area with redness or swelling
- Fear of being alone with a particular person
- Child or young person implies that he/she is required to keep secrets
- Presence of sexually transmitted disease
- Sudden unexplained fears
- Frequent sleep disturbances, nightmare, enuresis and/or encopresis (bedwetting or bedsoiling), soiling, night fears and refusal to get undressed
- Attempts to avoid contact with the alleged offender
- Unexplained sadness, crankiness or irritability
- Re-enactment of what abuser did, using dolls or other children
- An obsession with 'rude' matters in play, conversation and artwork
- Frequent masturbation
- Onset of anxiety symptoms such as thumb sucking, twitching and psychosomatic illness which doctors fail to diagnose
- Social withdrawal and self imposed isolation
- Poor concentration and regression in school work

[Source: Freda Briggs, (1993). Why my child? Allen and Unwin and DCP Indicators of Child Sexual Abuse]

How to make a report

The legislation requires that the mandatory reporter make the report. The definition of a teacher relating to independent schools under the mandatory reporting legislation is:

'A person who, under the Western Australian College of Teaching Act 2004, is registered, provisionally registered or has a limited authority to teach'.

If the teacher concerned wishes, they may include the Principal and other relevant staff in discussions in relation to a specific child prior to the teacher forming a belief based on reasonable grounds. If either of

those parties are mandated reporters and then personally form a belief, they are then legally obliged to make a report to the MRS.

Once a mandatory reporter forms a belief that child sexual abuse is occurring, they must make a report to the Department for Child Protection Mandatory Reporting Service on **1800 708 704** or lodge a written mandatory report using the [Department's secure Mandatory Reporting Web System \(MRWeb\)](#).

A verbal report can be made, but this must be followed up by a written report as soon as is practicable, preferably within 24 hours.

The school must not inform parents until they have sought advice from CPFS or WA Police, so as not to hinder / impede a possible investigation.

What information should I provide?

There are three tiers of information to be provided:

- Information that must be provided under the legislation
- Information that must be provided if known
- The Mandatory Reporting Service officer may ask mandatory reporters further questions about the child and their circumstances.

Tier 1 – Essential information

- Your name and address
- The child's name or, if you cannot determine this after making reasonable enquiries, a description of the child
- Why you believe the child has been, or is the subject of sexual abuse

Tier 2 – Information that must be provided if known

- Child's date of birth
- Where the child lives
- Names of the child's parents or other responsible persons

Tier 3 – Useful information

- Does the child have a disability or a special need?
- Is the child from a culturally or linguistically diverse background?
- Is the child Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?
- Information about the child's current whereabouts.

You may not know all of the information you are asked to provide. **IT IS IMPORTANT NOT TO INTERVIEW THE CHILD TO OBTAIN INFORMATION.** Just provide the information you have.

What happens once I make a report?

- The Mandatory Reporting Service (MRS) will issue you with an acknowledgement receipt number. You must keep this; it is your proof that you made a report.
- The MRS must provide the Police with a copy of every written report.
- The MRS will make enquiries and an assessment, then take the necessary action.
- The Police may undertake a separate investigation.
- The MRS will issue a feedback letter which will indicate to the reporter:
 - That a copy of the report has been forwarded to the Child Protection Squad; and

- Which DCP District Office the report has been referred to; or
- Whether no further action was recommended by the Mandatory Reporting Service.

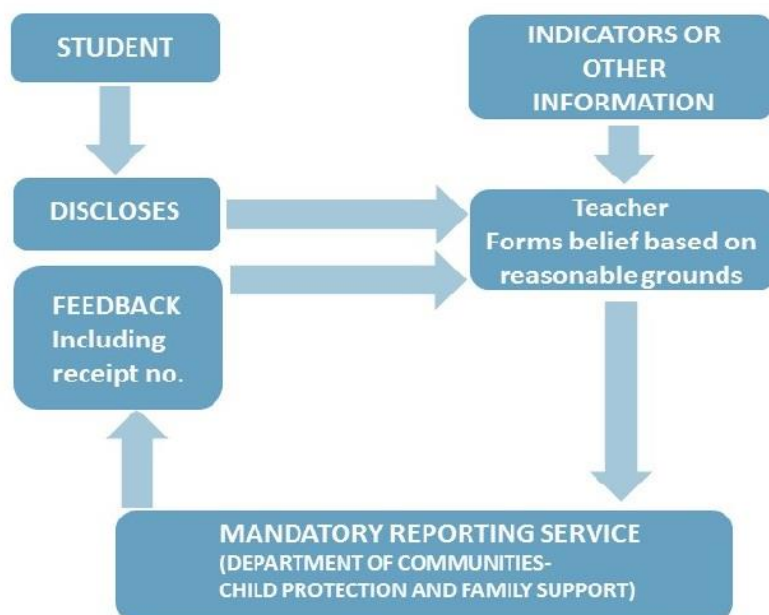
[Source: Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse: Core Training Workshop, Department for Child Protection and Family Services]

If, following a report, a family approaches the school to receive support for their child, it is recommended that any interview be conducted with a minimum of 2 school members present (eg. The Principal and one other) to provide support. It is important to remember that the focus of the meeting should be the welfare of the child.

In cases of child sexual abuse, the legislation provides protection for the person reporting. Disclosure of the reporter’s identity or identifying information to parents or any other party can incur a fine of \$24,000 and two years’ imprisonment.

The Principal will arrange ongoing support for the teacher, the student and anyone else affected.

MANDATORY REPORTING PROCEDURE



APPENDIX 4: WHERE TO GO FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

The Department for Child Protection is the state government department responsible for issues specifically related to the protection of children, including the handling of abuse and neglect cases. This website contains some excellent material for professionals, and parents and friends. Of particular interest is the information on 'Identifying and responding to child abuse and neglect – a guide for professionals'.

<https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/>

For sexual abuse reports, the Mandatory Reporting Service must be contacted through one of the following means:

Telephone: 1800 708 704

Email: mrs@dcp.wa.gov.au

Fax: 1800 610 614

Post: PO Box 8146

Perth BC WA 6849

This unit is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for make a report or to raise concerns.

Details regarding mandatory reporting can be obtained through

<https://mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au/Pages/Home.aspx>

To contact DCPFS for assistance with a specific case that does not involve sexual abuse, the school will need to speak to the Duty Officer at the local office, available during office hours. All offices are listed in the White Pages or on the website.

After hours

Child Abuse Services WA

9223 1111/1800 199 008

Crisis Care

9223 1111/1800 199 008 (a 24 hour telephone service for people in crisis and needing urgent help)

WA Police Service Child Abuse Investigation Unit

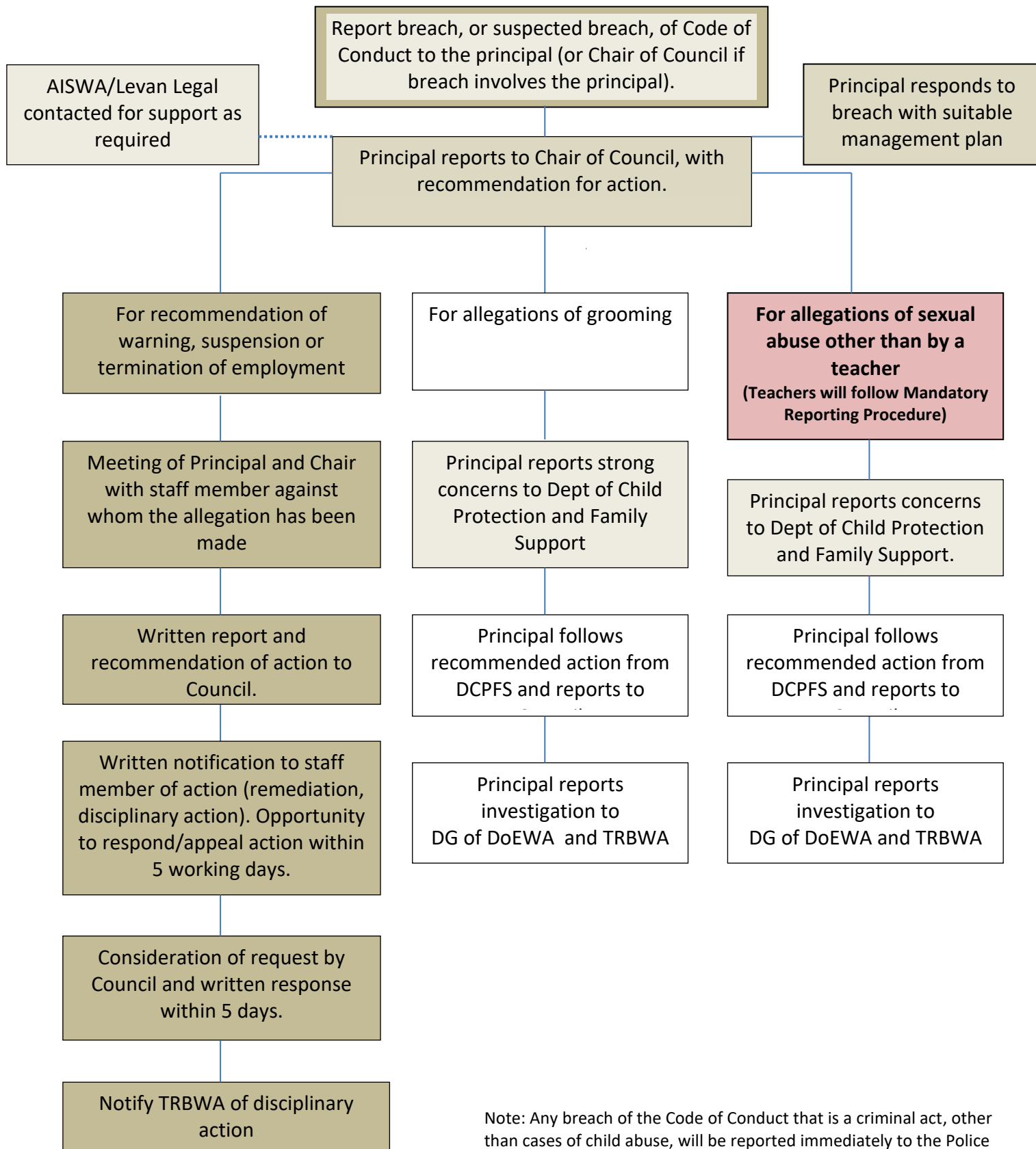
If the matter is urgent and the safety of a child is at risk, call 000. If you are a victim of child abuse or paedophilia, or if you have information about someone else being abused, you should contact police on **131 444**. You can also report child abuse to the Child Protection Squad on **9492 5444** or email them on Child.Abuse.Investigation@police.wa.gov.au, or ring Crime Stoppers on **1800 333 000** or go to your local police station.

WA Police Cyber Predator Team can be contacted on 9492 5444 or complaints can be lodged on the WA Police Website www.police.wa.gov.au

The WA government site below provides information on online safety for parents, teachers and students to use.

<https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-communities/online-safety>

APPENDIX 5: REPORTING A BREACH OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FLOW CHART



Note: Any breach of the Code of Conduct that is a criminal act, other than cases of child abuse, will be reported immediately to the Police

APPENDIX 6: GROOMING BEHAVIOURS

Grooming in a child protection context refers to deliberate actions undertaken to engage in sexual activity with a child. It differs from sexual abuse in that it is primarily a preparatory activity occurring before abuse occurs, but is continued during and after the abuse to ensure the safety of the groomer.

Grooming is a subtle, gradual, and escalating process of building trust with a child and those around the child, both children and adults, with the express purpose of the sexual gratification of the perpetrator and generally involves engaging in sexual activity with the child. It is deliberate and purposeful and occurs both before and after the abuse. Abusers may groom children and supporting adults for weeks, months, or even years before any sexual abuse actually takes place. The grooming may occur in person or via cyber media.

In the early stage, a committed offender will employ grooming behaviour and because it is so subtle and gradual the child may not be aware of the actual abuse when it occurs and that it is wrong or harmful. The grooming occurs not only with the child but also with those supporting networks around the child which might act as a deterrent or protective element. The perpetrator will invest significant energy and patience to minimise the risk of detection and exposure.

The groomer will employ manipulation, guilt, shame, bribery, coercion or exploit low self-esteem to psychologically manipulate the child and as a result the child becomes increasingly dependent on the groomer and increasingly alienated from protective elements including possible sources to disclose to. Plausible deniability is part of the strategy that the groomer employs to ensure that staff don't take seriously the possible disclosures of a child. This is a deliberate strategy employed to maintain the secrecy of the abuse, so that the abuse is concealed and to ensure the silence of the child.

The groomer will exploit vulnerabilities of the protective elements around the child, including parents and family circumstances, organizational and systemic weaknesses. Groomers are very adept at identifying anomalies, boundary ambiguities, and the lack of systemic awareness; at deflecting attention from their own actions and intentions.

While distinguishing between appropriate intent and inappropriate intent is very difficult, particularly for a child, it is essential that schools have very clear expectations and boundaries around behaviours so that there can be rigorous accountability when dealing with children.

Organisations must invest in increasing understanding around providing a safe environment for children and adults to challenge existing practice, to be able to raise concerns around unprofessional behaviour and to have a shared understanding of what a safe school is.

Grooming behaviour with children may include, but is not limited to:

- selecting, befriending a child and gaining his or her trust, exploiting the child's vulnerabilities;
- testing a child's boundaries through telling inappropriate jokes, roughhousing, backrubs, tickling, or sexual games;
- moving from non-sexual touching to "accidental" sexual touching. This typically happens during play so the child may not even identify it as purposeful, inappropriate touching. It is often done slowly so the child is gradually desensitized to the touch;
- manipulating the child to not tell anyone about what is happening. The abuser may use a child's fear, embarrassment, or guilt about what has happened. Sometimes, the abuser uses bribery, threats, or coercion;
- causing the child to feel responsible for the abuse. Children may not notice or may become confused as the contact becomes increasingly intimate and sexual.

Grooming behaviour with adolescents may include additional strategies, such as:

- identifying with the adolescent. The abuser may appear to be the only one who understands him/her;
- displaying common interests in sports, music, movies, video games, television shows, etc;
- recognizing and filling the adolescent's need for affection and attention;
- giving gifts or special privileges to the adolescent;
- allowing or encouraging the adolescent to break rules (e.g., smoking, drinking, using drugs, viewing pornography);
- communicating with the adolescent outside of the person's role (e.g., teacher, or coach). This could include, for example, texting or emailing the teen without the parents' knowledge.

In addition to grooming the child, the groomer will use deflection strategies to remain unchallenged. Some of these strategies may include where the perpetrator:

- promotes self and creates a reputation as caring, child-loving, competent, available, trustworthy, truthful;
- raises doubts about the motives, mental health, reliability of the child or anyone else who might approach support services with allegations;
- fosters dependency as someone the family can rely on; and
- positively represents child to others so as to be perceived as someone who would never harm the child.

Preventing or interrupting the Grooming process

Organisations unfortunately provide a vast array of opportunities for groomers to enact the grooming process. Some abusers have a particular preference for children within particular age bands and some studies have shown that groomers will take child focussed employment primarily to get access to a particular cohort of children.

Within an organisational context, holding all staff members accountable to the school code of conduct and challenging boundary crossings and violations is one of the most accessible strategies to combat grooming behaviour.

Employees, other professionals and volunteers, and others, must have very clear understandings of the expectations around interactions with students and processes for reporting concerning behaviours. Where an employee is investigated for behaviours considered to be grooming, school authorities are obligated to report this to both the Director General of DoE WA and the TRBWA.(Standard 9).

APPENDIX 7: RESPONSE TO DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT

If a student makes a disclosure of abuse or neglect, staff should be aware of the immediate needs of the student and know what to do in these circumstances. Children will rarely use adult language or specific terms when disclosing abuse, the language used will be at the developmental level of the child, so staff may not initially pick up the nuances of the disclosure.

Most disclosures are accidental, that is the child did not intend to disclose, and it is likely that the disclosure will only be partial. Staff should not attempt to elicit a full disclosure or ask direct questions. The child should be encouraged to speak freely (ie a free narrative), but staff should not try to direct the child down a particular path of thought.

The following are suggested elements that form part of the school policy and are discussed at staff training:

- Use 'protective interrupting' if students begin to disclose in class or in a public area to protect them from sharing the information with too many other people
- Acknowledge that you have heard them and stop them from disclosing any further
- Be supportive and gently indicate that they might tell you about it in a more private situation
- Quietly arrange to see them as soon as possible, in a situation away from other students
- Establish clear limits on confidentiality by telling the child that a report will be made to a person who will be able to provide help and protection and that you will help them throughout the process
- Put your own feelings aside and listen as if the information is not sensational
- Provide reassurance that the student is believed, that they were right to tell and it was not their fault
- remain as objective as possible as a staff member and do not make judgements about what has happened
- Listen to students in an appropriate private location within the school, that is a place where the interactions can be observed but not heard by others
- Be supportive and understanding
- Be empathetic to student feelings; the student may be confused because of the relationship with the abuser; eg: loving parents shouldn't do abusive things
- Acknowledge that it is difficult to talk about such things
- Try to identify students' immediate fears
- Let students tell the event in their own words; when reporting, do not paraphrase but try to be as accurate as possible
- If you are unable to answer all the questions of the child, it is OK to let them know
- Once you have established that they have been harmed or are at risk of being harmed, do not pursue the conversation any further. This is important to ensure that questions cannot be raised later about possible manipulation of the disclosure
- Allow students the option of support during any agency interview and reassure them of the availability of continuing support
- Document the conversation that you have had remembering as accurately as you can, the words and phrases used by the child to describe what has happened to them
- Document the disclosure and subsequent discussion and actions
- Explain what will happen next
- Try and stay with the student after the disclosure to provide a sense of security until necessary steps have been taken to ensure the safety and support.

Staff must be careful that they:

- don't push for details or conduct an investigation. Other agencies have this responsibility;
- don't express judgement of the student, perpetrator or family;
- don't get angry, upset or show shock;

- don't ask questions that may make the child feel guilty or inadequate;
- don't ask leading questions, for instance 'Did Daddy hit you?';
- don't put words in students' mouths or interrogate as this could jeopardise the interviewing process of CPFS and Police;
- don't promise not to tell when there are clear limits on confidentiality;
- never make false promises;
- don't give a lecture about right and wrong;
- don't say 'forget it', 'you'll get over it' or other such minimalising statements;
- don't give excessive pity;
- respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and do not share the information with anyone other than the Principal and either the Department for Child Protection or the Police. This includes not engaging in general staffroom discussion about the disclosure.

Staff must be aware that a disclosure can arouse within themselves strong feelings of shock, anger and helplessness. It is important to try and control these feelings and work through them after the disclosure. Even a hint of disbelief could cause a child to stop disclosing.

	Date	Changes	By Whom	Reviewed by Council
Published	February 2021	Aligned to current Standards for Non-government Schools	Perette Minciullo	March 2021
Reviewed	January 2023	Change of language from Child Maltreatment to Child abuse, in line with Standards	Perette Minciullo	

