

WATTLE GLEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

FAMILY VIOLENCE SUPPORT POLICY

POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to outline the range of supports available to students, families and staff affected by family violence and to explain school reporting requirements in relation to family violence.

SUMMARY

- Schools are well placed to identify family violence risk, respond to disclosures, and support affected students and families.
- Mandatory reporting requirements, duty of care and the Child Safe Standards should be followed as outlined on the PROTECT website.
- There are a range of supports available to students, families and school staff affected by family violence. These supports are outlined below and are also provided in the Resources tab.
- Sharing and requesting information relating to family violence, where lawful and appropriate, is an important element of the school's duty of care and support for students.

DETAILS

Identifying family violence

The Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic) defines family violence as behaviour towards a family member where the behaviour:

- is physically or sexually abusive
- is emotionally or psychologically abusive
- is economically abusive
- is threatening or coercive or
- in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person.

A child can be the victim to any of these behaviours.

Family violence includes any behaviour by a family member that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of family violence, including violence between adults and/or adolescents in the home. Coercive and controlling behaviours are common across all experiences of victim-survivors. These behaviours add up to a pattern of abuse and violence which build and maintain fear of escalation to physical and sexual violence.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR IN STUDENTS

Awareness of family violence and child safety risk indicators form part of your professional judgement and inform your decision about what action to take. While most of the risk indicators listed below do not necessarily mean that family violence or abuse is present, it is important to recognise they may indicate that family violence is occurring, or other child wellbeing issues are present.

Family violence risk indicators include:

- becoming fearful when other students cry or shout
- being too friendly to strangers
- rebelliousness and defiance
- tantrums and irritability
- violence and aggression
- extremely demanding, attention-seeking behaviour

- limited tolerance and poor impulse control
- avoidance of conflict
- depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts
- overly compliant, shy, withdrawn, passive and uncommunicative
- separation anxiety
- poor school performance
- school refusal
- poor coping skills
- few or no friends
- frequent illness
- embarrassment about family
- taking on a caretaker role prematurely
- demonstrated fear of parent(s)/carer(s) and of going home.

Further information about the identification of family violence, including a more extensive list of physical and behavioural indicators, can be found in Child Protection and Child Safe Standards (PROTECT), under Identify child abuse.

Known risk factors relating to severe risk of family violence for families are:

- physical harm or threatened to harm a member of household, including pets
- recent separation of parents, including separation under the same roof
- harm of, or threat to harm a child
- mother/carer/partner (e.g. for adolescent) is pregnant
- child under one years of age in the household
- isolation
- financial difficulties
- Child Protection previous or current involvement
- behaviour indicating non-return of child
- threat of suicide or previous attempts
- unemployment of person perpetrating family violence
- alcohol or drug misuse of person perpetrating family violence.

REPORTING FAMILY VIOLENCE AND MANDATORY REPORTING

Schools are well placed to identify family violence risk, respond to disclosures, and support affected students and families.

Mandatory reporting requirements, duty of care and the Child Safe Standards must be followed as outlined on the PROTECT website. Refer to the Four Critical Actions for Schools as a quick-reference guide for schools on how to report and respond to disclosures, suspicions or allegations of child abuse including family violence.

For more detailed information and guidance on responding to child abuse and family violence under PROTECT, refer to: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools

SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND FAMILIES EXPERIENCING FAMILY VIOLENCE

It is important to be aware that family violence is likely to be an issue in your community and to address — not excuse — the violence and affirm the right of those affected to live free from violence. If you notice signs or indicators of family violence, or a student, parent or carer discloses family violence, accept this and provide appropriate information and support.

Guidance and support is available from the Respectful Relationships workforce or regional Health and Wellbeing teams. Please refer to the Contacts section below and Resources tab for further information on how the Respectful Relationships workforce is able to assist you.

Information for parents about family violence, including family violence supports, can be found on the Family violence page.

A range of generic supports for parents, carers and families including family intervention services can be found at Services for parents and carers.

Schools can also seek expert advice, or provide information and referral to the specialist family violence service in your area on the Orange Door website, or through these 24 hour state-wide and national services: safe steps on 1800 015 188 or 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732. More information is available in Resources.

FAMILY VIOLENCE DURING EMERGENCY AND TRAUMATIC SITUATIONS

Family violence incidents and risk can increase during emergency and traumatic situations and in the aftermath of these situations.

During these times family violence and other wellbeing and safety issues for students and their families can be impacted by

- isolation from support networks
- inability to seek and access support services
- difficulty telling someone what is happening at home (disclosing)
- family violence or abuse for the first time
- increased unemployment, financial and housing insecurity
- limited ability for community members, peers or services to monitor known issues.

Mandatory reporting requirements, duty of care and the Child Safe Standards continue to apply during or following emergency or traumatic situations and should be followed as outlined on the PROTECT website.

Family violence frontline services, including crisis accommodation, police and courts operate to support women, students and their families. Further information, support and referral information for people experiencing family violence can be found at: The Orange Door

INFORMATION SHARING AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Sharing information appropriately and lawfully for the purpose of supporting a student's safety and wellbeing, and to reduce risk, is an important element of a school's duty of care. Under the Schools' Privacy Policy, schools may share information for a number of purposes including:

- to support students' social and emotional wellbeing, and health
- when necessary to lessen or prevent a serious threat to a person's life, health, safety or welfare
- with parent, carer or mature minor student consent
- when required or authorised by law.

For policy and guidance on sharing information refer to: Privacy and Information Sharing.

Schools are prescribed Information Sharing Entities under the Child Information Sharing Scheme and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme. The schemes complement and expand upon other information sharing laws, child wellbeing and safety laws, and family violence protection laws. The schemes enable schools and other prescribed Information Sharing Entities to access and share relevant information with each other to promote the wellbeing and safety of children and to assess or manage family violence risk.

For policy and guidance on requesting and sharing information under the schemes, refer to Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes.

FAMILY VIOLENCE MULTI-AGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK (MARAM)

Schools are also prescribed under the Victorian Government's Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM).

MARAM aims to build a shared understanding of and consistent response to family violence across Victoria's service system, which includes schools.

The Department is in the process of finalising how MARAM is implemented in schools and will update relevant Department policies and guidance to align with the MARAM when this process is complete.

For further information on MARAM visit: Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework or contact the Whole of Victorian Government Information Sharing and MARAM Enquiry Line on 1800 549 646.

SUPPORTING STAFF AFFECTED BY FAMILY VIOLENCE

Support is available to all DET staff members. For further information, refer to Family Violence — Information for Employees.

Our EAP service has specialist family violence counsellors and can be accessed confidentially by staff and any of their family members over 18 years old. If you are concerned about a staff member using family violence, please contact People Services for further information and advice.

Leaders and senior staff also have access to the EAP, Manager Assist and the Principal class Early Intervention Program. Phone: 1800 338 663 or Email: prinsupport@injurynet.com.au

DET EMPLOYEE USING FAMILY VIOLENCE

If school staff are provided with information that leads them to form a reasonable belief that any of the following behaviours have been engaged in by a DET or Victorian Government School Council employee or volunteer:

- a sexual offence (even prior to criminal proceedings commencing), sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm
- significant neglect of a child, or
- misconduct involving any of the above.

They must follow the reporting requirements set out in the Department's policy Reportable Conduct.

RELATED POLICIES

- Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes
- Child Safe Standards
- Family Violence — Information for Employees
- OHS Management System (OHSMS) Overview — Employee Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Privacy and Information Sharing
- Protecting Children — Reporting and Other Legal Obligations
- Reportable Conduct

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety (Information Sharing) Regulations 2018 (Vic)
- Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)
- Family Violence Protection (Information Sharing and Risk Management) Regulations 2018 (Vic)

CONTACT

For further advice and support in relation to:

- supporting students who may be experiencing family violence
- educating students and other members of the school community about family violence.

Schools may contact their regional Respectful Relationships Liaison Officer. For contact details, refer to: Respectful Relationships Liaison Officers (login required)

For policy and contact details in relation to concerns that a DET or school council employee or volunteer is using family violence, refer to: Reportable Conduct

For information and advice on supporting school staff members affected by family violence, refer to Family Violence — Information for Employees

REVIEW PERIOD

- This policy was last updated in July 2021 and is scheduled for review on JULY 2022.