

Procedure for reporting disclosures of sexual abuse from children under 16 years of age.



Our overarching aim is the care and protection of each child who comes into our church community and our legal obligation under Victorian Law to report any disclosures of a sexual nature to Police. It is important to remember that a child's age and the information disclosed will relate to the process undertaken in reporting disclosures to Police. Each case will be approached sensitively and according to the information disclosed in each case.

When a disclosure by a minor has been made the following procedures must be followed:

- The Children and Youth Pastor and the safe Church Person must be notified of the disclosure and oversee the completion of the risk of significant harm form. These will be filed in a locked filing cabinet.
- The Senior Pastor, Church council chairman and Administrator will be notified that a disclosure has occurred.
- Church council will be notified at the next council meeting.
- The Safe Churches Concern Person will talk to the leader to whom the disclosure was made and confirm what was disclosed, putting it in writing and having the leader sign it.
- The Safe Church Person will be responsible for ensuring that the report is made by whoever is deemed appropriate for each individual case.
- **The Professional Standards from the BUV will be contacted to discuss the most appropriate procedure in relation to reporting the incident to Police (e.g. how to proceed if the perpetrator is unknown, when and if parents are to be involved).**

Depending on the age of the child and the nature of the disclosure (e.g. was it a once off, is it ongoing and is the child at risk of more abuse) the following considerations will be included in the reporting process.

If a perpetrator is NOT an immediate family member

If appropriate:

- Contact will be made with the minor involved at the earliest opportunity, to ascertain whether parents are aware of the abuse and that they need to be informed. (The preference is for parents to be a part of the process unless they are the alleged offender). If the child is not willing to tell their parents the Senior Staff Member will suggest to the parents that they speak to the child about some issues that have arisen.
- Explanation that we are required by law to report the disclosure to the Police. Inquire as to whether they wish to be involved in that. Reassurance that this is in no way the minor's fault nor do they need to be worried about this. This means that the Police will investigate.
- Pastoral staff to follow up with parents in regards to the report if minor wishes this.
- Appointment made at Police station to report the disclosure – minor and parents would be invited to be a part of this process if they wish.
- The leader shall be referred to a pastoral carer.