



SECTION 4: RESPONDING AND REPORTING ABUSE

Definition

Mandatory Reporting: The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. Mandated persons include teachers, nurses, police, psychologists, psychiatrists and medical practitioners.

Reasonable Belief: When an adult is concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or vulnerable adult, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a 'reasonable belief'. A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

INTRODUCTION

38. All adults in the Parish, including staff, clergy, volunteers, parishioners, contractors, have a responsibility to care for children and vulnerable adults and to positively promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse. The application of this principle expects that all parishioners would uphold a strong sense of moral obligation to report any inappropriate or criminal activity to the designated authority

RESPONDING: "SEE ME, HEAR ME"

39. Seen and Heard. Parishes in which children and vulnerable adults are seen and heard, where their participation is valued and where their families can get the support they need are stronger communities which contribute to overall parish safety.
40. Listening. Conversation begins with a listening heart. Listening reveals our desire to learn and to grow through understanding the wisdom others offer especially the vulnerable, it involves the suspension of our viewpoint to attempt to truly hear and understand another. Listening is a complex process, and we need to develop our listening skills to be able to sort through all we might hear to get to the essential truth of a situation. The presence or absence of listening, especially to the young and to those who are vulnerable, acts as the barometer of our health and vitality as a Church.
41. Responding. The change for the greater protection of our most vulnerable will occur only as we respect them, ask what they are going through, watch what others are doing regarding them, listen to what they are trying to tell us, do what we are supposed to do for them, inform them



about danger, and stand up and speak out for them. In so doing, we maintain our most treasured within the nurturing bonds of community.

REPORTING: WHAT TO REPORT

42. You may form a reasonable belief that a child or vulnerable adult in our parish environment is in need of protection, or a criminal offence has been committed. You should always report circumstances that cause you concern. These circumstances may include:
- a) Any breach of the St Patrick's Code of Conduct;
 - b) A disclosure made to you by a child or vulnerable adult.
 - c) Observing events that cause you to form an objectively reasonable belief that a child or vulnerable adult is being harmed or abused, or is at risk of being harmed or abused.
 - d) Any incident in which a child is seriously harmed or goes missing;
 - e) Any emergency situation including a medical emergency;
 - f) Any hazard or risk of harm to a child that is not being adequately addressed;

REPORTING: TO WHOM TO MAKE A REPORT

43. Criminal Offence. If a criminal offence may have been committed, report the allegations to police. For example, the following circumstances could indicate that a criminal offence has been committed:
- a) Any allegation of sexual misconduct.
 - b) Any disclosure by a child, or an objectively reasonable belief you have formed, that a child is being abused or is at risk of abuse of any kind.
 - c) Any allegation of violence inflicted by an adult upon a child.
 - d) Any incident in which a child has been seriously harmed or injured (either physically or psychologically) or is at risk of harm or injury.
44. Victoria Police will explain the options that are available to victims and what each pathway may involve. Contact with Victoria Police can be made to the SANO Taskforce of (03) 9247 6666 or, if urgent, by dialling 000. SANO investigators are trained experts in sexual assault matters who will maintain the confidentiality of anyone who makes a complaint or wishes to provide information regarding child sexual abuse.
45. Parish Matters. If you have a reasonable belief that a report should be made on any breach of St Patrick's Code of Conduct and wish to pursue your complaint through the Church, you should contact the Parish Priest or Parish Safety Officer. If the complaint relates to the Parish Priest or Safety Officer, contact the Diocesan Safety Officer at the Diocesan Office Sale. Victims can always contact the Melbourne Response on (03) 9225 6422 or Towards Healing on 1800 816 030.
46. Unsatisfied. If you consider that the parish response you have received is not satisfactory you may refer your report to the Diocesan Safety Officer at the Diocesan Office Sale.