



ST THOMAS MORE PARISH

OUR CHILD PROTECTION REPORTING POLICY

DEALING WITH BREACHES AND MATTERS OF CONCERN

The Parish of St. Thomas aims to deal with all reports under this Code of Conduct fairly and appropriately, and to act on the following principles:

- Promoting a positive experience of the Church and creating a strong community of faith;
- Preventing misconduct where this is possible;
- Ensuring fair process for persons against whom allegations are made; and
- Dealing effectively with any allegations which are substantiated, including responding compassionately to anyone who has been affected.

A **flow chart** setting out how and to whom to make reports is attached to this document.

What should you report?

You may come across possible breaches of this Code of Conduct, or matters that cause you concern, in any number of ways. These might include:

1. A disclosure made to you by a child;
2. b. Observing events that cause you to form an objectively reasonable belief that a child is being harmed or abused, or is at risk of being harmed or abused (whether by a family member or by another person); or
3. Being present and witnessing an event or incident.
4. Alternatively, an incident may occur during an activity you are responsible for, such as:
 - ✓ A child being lost;
 - ✓ A child being injured; or
 - ✓ A medical emergency.
5. Regardless of the way in which an issue arises, you should always report circumstances that cause you concern and you should certainly always report:
 - ✓ Any material breach of this Code of Conduct;
 - ✓ Any incident in which a child is harmed or goes missing;
 - ✓ Any emergency situation including a medical emergency;
 - ✓ Any hazard or risk of harm to a child that is not being adequately addressed;
 - ✓ Any allegation of sexual misconduct;
 - ✓ 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;
 - ✓ Any allegation of violence inflicted by an adult upon a child;
 - ✓ Any allegation in which an adult has been under the influence of drugs or alcohol while responsible for children;
 - ✓ Any incident in which a child has been harmed or injured (either physically or psychologically) or is at risk of harm or injury;
 - ✓ Any allegation of conduct which is or might be unlawful

Who may make a report?

6. Any person may make a report. If an allegation involves sexual or other abuse of a child you should not investigate the matter yourself, or raise it with parents/guardians or the alleged abuser directly. You should report the matter using the procedures set out in the flow chart.

What happens when a report is made?

7.
 - i. Listen carefully to the report and ensure it is fully understood and document everything using the CAM Confidential Incident Reporting Form (Appendix IIa)
 - ii. Consider whether it is appropriate or necessary to advise others within St. Thomas More Hadfield or to inform relevant authorities;
 - iii. Determine what action will be taken (if any); document all action taken; and
 - iv. Maintain the confidentiality of all parties (including the person making the report, and any person to whom the report relates) at all times to the extent this is possible. In some cases, it may be necessary to inform relevant authorities or others within the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne or the person to whom the report relates. Depending on the nature of the allegation it may be necessary to:
 - ✓ Inform the police, if the behaviour is or might be criminal and/or the Vicar-General.

Dealing with disclosures by children or a reasonable belief that abuse is or may be occurring:

A child makes a disclosure to you that sexual, physical or psychological abuse is occurring, or you form an objectively reasonable belief that a child is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed:

- ✓ You should immediately report the matter to the responsible officers in St. Thomas More Hadfield as outlined in the attached flow chart. They will discuss your concerns and advise you on the next steps to take.
- ✓ Be aware that the child may be feeling ashamed, guilty and scared, and may be worried about the consequences of telling someone about the abuse.
- ✓ Stay calm and listen carefully to the child. Tell them you believe them and that they did the right thing by telling you.
- ✓ Do not make promises you cannot keep such as promising that you will not tell anyone else.

Date of next major review: June 2018