

<b>Title</b>	Mandatory and Voluntary Reporting Policy ACT
<b>Description of policy</b>	This policy sets out the obligations and procedures for Catholic Education Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn (CECG) workers to report abuse and injury of children and young people under ACT laws. It applies to all CECG workers, in all CECG workplaces in the ACT.
<b>Required because</b>	Teachers, clergy members and other CECG workers are legally required to report abuse and neglect of children and young people. Other workers may voluntarily report abuse and injury of children and young people. Laws in ACT and NSW differ slightly so CECG maintains separate policies for each jurisdiction.
<b>Description of changes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlighted that staff must not notify a student's family or other school community members that they have made a report without first discussing it with the CECG Child Protection Team.</li> <li>Added additional detail on processes for Child Protection and Youth Services to follow up reports in some cases. These are managed by the Child Protection Team in the Catholic Education Office.</li> </ul>
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## 1. Summary

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- 1.1 This policy sets out the obligations and procedures for Catholic Education Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn (CECG) workers to report abuse and injury of children and young people under ACT laws. It applies to all CECG workers, in all CECG workplaces in the ACT.
- 1.2 Failure to comply with mandatory reporting obligations is an offence for certain workers (see below) and may result in legal action against CECG and the person who did not report. In the interest of protecting children, CECG requires voluntary reporting of abuse and injury to children in line with the procedures below, even where a person may not be a mandated reporter.

## 2. Mandatory and Voluntary Reporting Policy ACT

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If any CECG worker has reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation, telephone Police or Emergency Services on '000' immediately.

- 2.1 Child protection and safety is the paramount concern of CECG and our workers. All CECG workers in the ACT must report abuse and neglect (which may include a physical injury caused by physical abuse or supervision neglect) of children and young people in line with this policy.
- 2.2 In some instances there are legal consequences for failure to report and there could be disciplinary consequences for not reporting.

## 3. Key Messages

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- 3.1 Many CECG workers must make a report if they believe a child is at risk including:
  - Principals, teachers, classroom support assistants and other school-based staff
  - Workers in early learning centres
  - Workers in the Catholic Education Office, and
  - Ministers of religion and members of the clergy
- 3.2 All other CECG workers should make a voluntary report if they discover information that a child is at risk of reportable harm.
- 3.3 The worker who suspects abuse or neglect must make the report directly – not their manager.
- 3.4 The worker who suspects abuse or neglect should make the report first and then inform their manager or supervisor.
  - Do not disclose the fact you have made a mandatory or voluntary report to anyone else without approval from CECG's Child Protection Team or School and Family Services Leader.
- 3.5 Reports are made to [Child and Youth Protection Services](#).

## 4. Who is a Mandated Reporter

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- 4.1 Mandated Reporters in the ACT includes all CECG:

- Workers who deliver education or children’s services, including Principals, teachers, classroom support assistants and workers in early learning centres.
  - Workers in the Catholic Education Office, and Ministers of religion, religious leaders and members of the clergy or religious denominations.
- 4.2 They must report any relevant information they discover in the course of their work (see What Must Be Reported below).
- 4.3 Mandated Reporters are not required to investigate. They are required to collect relevant information in a factual and objective way and to report it in line with the reporting procedure below. Any existing relationship of a mandated reporter with a child or young person at risk should not adversely influence the reporter determining to not make a report.

## 5. Voluntary reporting

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- 5.1 CECG expects all other workers (including volunteers) who are not Mandated Reporters to make a Voluntary Report if they have reason to believe children are suffering abuse or neglect.

## 6. What Must Be reported?

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- 6.1 CECG workers must report to Child and Youth Protection Services any information of abuse, neglect or harm to children and young people that is discovered in the course of their work.
- 6.2 In the ACT, Mandated Reporters must report to Child and Youth Protection Services if they believe a child or young person under the age of 18 years is suffering:
- Sexual Abuse.
  - Physical Abuse
  - Emotional abuse (including family violence)
  - Neglect (including educational neglect)
  - Non accidental Injury.

## 7. Reporting sexual offences against children in the ACT

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- 7.1 In the ACT it is a legal requirement for all adults to report to police if they have reason to believe a sexual offence has been committed against a child.
- 7.2 To avoid confusion and duplication, CECG policy is that workers should report sexual offences against children to Child and Youth Protection Services.

## 8. What does not need to be reported?

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- 8.1 Not all distressing or disruptive incidents qualify for mandatory reporting. Examples of what need not be reported includes:
- Normal sexualised child play.
  - Children fighting in playgrounds.
  - Children upset after break up with girlfriend boyfriend – or verbal fight with friend or parent.
  - Children upset because parents separating or getting divorce.

- Children who exhibit occasional risk taking attitude.
- Disruption in classroom.
- Type of food provided in school lunch by parents.

## 9. Self-harm

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- 9.1 Self-harm is a complex matter. It happens when a child deliberately hurts their body and is often done in secret as their way of coping with difficult emotions or stressful events. Types of self-harm include cutting, burning or punching the body, or picking skin or sores.
- 9.2 Self-harm by itself does not qualify for mandatory reporting but can be voluntarily reported in certain circumstances. Workers who think a child is self-harming should discuss it with their school Principal, ELC Director, school-aged care director or Service Area Leader. Care should be taken before escalating the actions of vulnerable children to an official voluntary or mandatory reporting process.
- 9.3 Mandatory Reporting might be required where self-harm is combined with a parent refusing to provide or allow access to mental health care that a child or young person requires. This could be a form of reportable neglect. Again, care should be taken and sufficient information obtained before escalating to an official voluntary or mandatory reporting process.
- 9.4 The ACT Child and Youth Protection Services provides a Guideline to assist schools and ELCS<sup>1</sup>. It states:

Self-harm is a complex matter. It happens when a child deliberately hurts their body and is often done in secret as their way of coping with difficult emotions or stressful events. Types of self-harm include cutting, burning or punching the body, or picking skin or sores.

Self-harm should be reported to Child and Youth Protection Services if the child is a danger to themselves or others and there is no parent willing and able to protect the child from harm. In these situations, Child and Youth Protection Services may respond by working with community partners to provide a support service to the child and family, rather than conduct an appraisal.

- 9.5 The aim is to uncover why the child is self-harming and to help them change their behaviour.

## 10. Reporting Process

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- 10.1 The main stages of the reporting process are outlined below and the two-page [Mandatory and Voluntary Reporting Process ACT](#) (for ease of printing or distribution).

Do not 'investigate' the matter. Workers must report information they receive or witness and reasonable supporting information like photographs or school records. They are not required to investigate the circumstances.

If authorities ask workers for additional information as part of their investigation, refer them to the CECG School and Family Services Team.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocys/keeping-children-and-young-people-safe>

**Mandatory and Voluntary Reporting Process ACT**

Step	Stage of Process	Actor and Action
One	Incident	A CECG worker sees something or receives information that makes them believe or suspect a child has suffered a non- accidental injury, is abused, or at risk. The worker should make notes of what was said and seen as soon as possible after any necessary immediate action (see <a href="#">Preliminary Assessment Checklist</a> below for support).
Two	Immediate Action	<b>The worker must call 000 if it involves an emergency or life-threatening</b> situation and should ensure the child is safe, if possible. Request an Ambulance for serious injuries and fire brigade if there is an ongoing risk such as chemical spills or fire. Request police if the incident involves a criminal offence or crowd control. If police assistance is needed but it is not an emergency, call 131444
Three	Report to authorities – by phone or online	<b>The worker who first saw or received information about the incident must report</b> the information through the <a href="#">ACT Mandatory Reporting Portal</a> <sup>2</sup> . They should follow any instructions when completing the report, or any instructions from the authorities.  It does not matter if someone else tells the Mandated Reporter not to report – if a Mandated Reporter believes a child has suffered a non-accidental injury, is abused, or at risk, they must report it. The legal obligation cannot be avoided unless the Mandated Reporter knows someone else has already submitted a report about the same incident.  <b>Complete the report as soon as practicable</b> , do not delay in the hope for more information. Report what is available at the time.
Four	Consult and Risk Management	The worker should notify their school Principal, ELC Director, school-aged care director or Service Area Leader of the report they have made to Child Protection and Youth Services.  Workers can call the CECG Child Protection team with any questions or concerns they may have.  The worker <b>must not</b> disclose to the child, their parents or carers or community members that they have made a mandatory or voluntary report without first seeking approval from a member of CE’s Child Protection Team or the School & Family Services Leader.
Five	Forward report to CECG	The person who made the report must forward a copy of the report submission confirmation to <a href="mailto:mandatory.reporting@cg.catholic.edu.au">mandatory.reporting@cg.catholic.edu.au</a> .  The Child Protection team will review the report and contact the Principal of the school to ask if the school requires any assistance. If no response is received from the Principal within two working days, the Child Protection Team will conclude the school is managing the matter and it will be closed.

<sup>2</sup> <https://forms.act.gov.au/smartforms/servlet/SmartForm.html?formCode=1136>

Six	CYPS Follow-up	CYPS may contact schools to request further information. Any requests <b>must be referred</b> to the Child Protection Manager, who will manage them the under the processes for CYPS information gathering
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10.2 If the incident involves a CECG worker, it also may be [Reportable Conduct](#). This is a separate process for reporting workplace misconduct to the ACT Ombudsman. Full details can be found in the [Reportable Conduct Policy \(ACT\)](#).

10.3 If a worker thinks an incident may require both Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct procedures, they should advise the School and Family Services Team and forward the report to [mandatory.reporting@cg.catholic.edu.au](mailto:mandatory.reporting@cg.catholic.edu.au) (step 5 in the reporting process).

## 11. Processes for CYPS information gathering

11.1 In some circumstances CYPS will request workers who have made reports to provide further information, or visit schools to interview children.

11.2 All information requests from CYPS must go through the CE Child Protection team before being completed by a worker. If any worker is contacted by CYPS directly via any means, they must refer CYPS back to the CE Child Protection team.

Information sharing with CYPS	<p>The following process applies when CYPS make requests for information from CECG workers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) CYPS should write to the CE Child Protection team with an information request that contains:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The name and date of birth of the child or children they seek information about</li> <li>b. Specific questions they wish workers to provide information about</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) The CE Child Protection team will send the request to the Principal and Assistant Principal of the school the worker is at</li> <li>3) The Principal and/or Assistant Principal will consult with the worker who has the information CYPS require, compile the responses, and send them back to the CE Child Protection team</li> <li>4) The CE Child Protection team will reply to CYPS with the responses provided by the school.</li> </ol>
Visits from CYPS to CE Schools	<p>The following process applies when CYPS make requests to visit a CECG school:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) CYPS should write to the CE Child Protection team with a request to visit a CECG school that contains:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The name and date of birth of the child or children they seek to interview</li> <li>b. The date and times they wish to visit</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) The CE Child Protection team will send the request to the Principal and Assistant Principal of the school CYPS are requesting to visit</li> <li>3) The Principal and/or Assistant Principal will advise of availability</li> </ol>

	<p>4) The CE Child Protection team will reply to CYPS with the agreed upon date and time for the interview.</p> <p>It is CECG's preference that when CYPS interview a child at a school, an appropriate member of school staff is present during the interview. If CYPS insist that a member of staff is <b>not present</b> during the interview, workers <u>must</u> ask CYPS why, and make a record of the reasons provided.</p> <p>Following any interview with a child from CYPS the worker present <u>must</u> make a record of the interview with all relevant information and record it on Compass or equivalent school record management system. All records of CYPS interviews <u>must</u> be saved with restricted viewing capabilities in whatever system they are kept.</p>
Declared Care Teams	<p>Sometimes following an Appraisal, CYPS will open a Declared Care Team of individuals who play different roles in the child's life. CYPS may request the child's teacher be a member of the Declared Care team because of the knowledge and understanding they have of the child and their circumstances.</p> <p>Declared Care teams are defined in the legislation and often involve serious child protection matters. If CYPS request any worker to be a member of a Declared Care team the worker must inform their Principal and Assistant Principal.</p> <p>If a Principal and/or Assistant Principal receive notification of a request to join a Declared Care team from a worker they must inform the Child Protection Manager in writing and include the details of the child, the worker and the CYPS contact.</p> <p>If the Child Protection Manager receives notification of a request to join a Declared Care team from a Principal they must add the details to the CECG register of Declared Care teams.</p>

## 12. Contact details for reporting to authorities

12.1 Reports can be made to Child Protection and Youth Services by telephone, email or online portals:

- Telephone 1300 556 728
- Email [childprotection@act.gov.au](mailto:childprotection@act.gov.au)
- Online <https://form.act.gov.au/smartforms/landing.htm?formCode=1136>

12.2 The relevant authorities can advise you if parents should be notified or not. Frequently parents and guardians will not be notified of the report.

## 13. Welfare considerations

13.1 Where a child or young person discloses abuse or where a worker is involved in the process of reporting this can create, trigger or heighten emotional responses.

13.2 The child or young person should be offered support that is reasonably within the schools power to give, until welfare authorities or law enforcement undertake their investigations. This may include checking in with the child or young person during the school day, and assessing risks to the child and how they are managed.

13.3 Support for workers is also available through the CECG Flourish, People Wellbeing Program (Converge or CatholicCare) or by contacting CECG People and Culture Team.

## 14. Frequently asked questions

**Q. What if I report an incident and it is found to be unfounded by the child welfare agency?**

A. Any report made in good faith is protected against disciplinary and legal action. Laws require that you act honestly when making a report and that you are not being reckless. Knowingly making a false report an offence in the ACT. This is why consultation with your Principal or ELC/SAC Director is important.

**Q. Do I tell the parents what has happened?**

A. If providing a report allow the authorities receiving the report to contact the parents of the child or young person. If unsure contact School and Family Services for advice. If the parent/carer asks you whether you made a report advise that as a CECG worker you have a legal obligation relating to child protection matters and are unable to discuss whether a report has or has not been made.

**Q. Is my identity disclosed?**

A. Your identity is protected under law from disclosure to another person except in exceptional circumstances. If you have concerns speak with the CECG School and Family Services team.

**Q. How much information do I obtain?**

A. It is important to collect sufficient information to make a report. Use open questions designed to let people tell the story, instead of leading questions that assume the answer – especially with children and young people. Record the information they give as soon as possible. Remember to:

- Listen carefully.
- Control your own emotions especially verbal and facial expressions.
- Let them know you believe them.
- Reassure them they are doing the right thing in telling you.
- Acknowledge that this is a difficult thing to talk about.
- Reassure them they are not to blame.
- Let them know what you are doing next – that it will be reported – but they will receive help.
- If you can't answer a question tell them you will find the right person to answer their question.
- Let them know you are there for them and they can trust you.
- Make written notes about what was said. Ensure the notes are as close to the words used by the child/young person as possible.

**Q. How do I talk with the child or young person?**

A. Remain calm and let the child talk about what happened. A good question to use when a person stops talking is 'What happened next'. At the beginning you may ask, 'is there anything bothering you' or simply, 'how are you going'. Do not question the content of what is told to you, this is the role of child protection officers or the police.

**Q. Are there things I shouldn't do?**

A. While it may be difficult, you must not:

- Express anger about the alleged abuser.
- Allow any personal views or experience impact on how you respond to any disclosure and subsequent actions.
- Confront the alleged abuser.
- Make promises you cannot keep – such as promising you will not tell anyone.
- Pressure the child for more information or quiz them for further details.
- Request the child to undertake certain actions to obtain further evidence.

**Q. Where do I find more information about what to report?**

A. ACT authorities provide fact sheets outlining the types of injury that should be reported and advice to Mandatory Reporters in general. Visit [Access Canberra](#) for further information.

**Q. What should I do if a disclosure triggers my emotions about my own or others life experiences?**

A. You should consider contacting the [CECG Employee Assistance Providers](#) for support. If you think such emotions may affect how you perform your role with the child or young person you should discuss this with your manager or contact People & Culture for support.

## 15. Definitions

15.1 **Child:** a person up to the age of 16 years.

15.2 **Young person:** a person who has attained the age of 16 years but is under 18 years of age.

15.3 **Mandatory / Voluntary report/reporter:** refers to the two types of incidents which are reported. CECG workers are required to report incidents which fall into both categories. Mandatory and Voluntary reports/reporters have been referred to as ‘reports/reporters’ in this policy.

## 16. Related Documents and Legislation

16.1 Related CECG Documents:

- [Mandatory and Voluntary Reporting Process ACT](#)
- [Child Safety Policy](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)

16.2 Related legislation or Standards

- [Children and Young People Act 2008 \(ACT\)](#)
- [Crimes Act 1900 \(ACT\)](#)

16.3 Online Resources:

- [Access Canberra](#)

## 17. Contact

17.1 For support or further questions relating to this policy, contact the CECG Family Service Team.



## Appendix 1 – Preliminary Assessment Checklist

Preliminary Assessment Checklist	
Do I have reason to believe or suspect a child is being, or has been, or is at significant risk of being abused or neglected?	Y / N
On what basis have I formed this belief or suspicion?	
Is my definition of abuse or neglect consistent with the definition provided in this guide?	Y / N
Am I reacting to a behaviour (for example sexualised behaviour) which may have many causes, or a pattern of behaviours which point to abuse or neglect?	Y / N
Is the abuse or neglect occurring within the family?	Y / N
Has this particular abuse or neglect already been reported to CYPS by someone else?	Y / N
What is known about the child's behaviour inside and outside of their home?	
What is known about the child's siblings?	
What is known about the child's parents or carers?	