

MMuDS Child Safe Reporting Procedure

In all instances where child abuse or related misconduct is alleged or suspected it is imperative that the person receiving the information or suspecting conduct notifies a MMuDS Child Safe Officer or appropriate external authority as soon as possible.

- 1) **If member or volunteer suspects or receives allegations of child abuse or related misconduct involving a breach or potential breach of child safe standards, policy or legislation:**
 - a) **they must make contact with a MMuDS Child Safe Officer or:**
 - b) **The member or volunteer reports the matter to emergency/crisis service; Police/DHHS.**
 - c) **All matters should be considered urgent and reported to a Child Safe Officer as soon as possible.**

A MMuDS Child Safe Officer is the first point of call upon becoming suspicious or aware of conduct that may breach child safe standards or legislation. Incidents should not be disclosed to or discussed with other members or volunteers without first consulting a MMuDS Child Safe Officer.

- 2) **Under no circumstances, is any matter brought to the attention of any personnel, to be discussed within production teams or directly with Committee Members. This rule applies even after an issue has been reported to a Child Safe Officer.**
- 3) **Once an issue has been reported, the Child Safe Officers will assume carriage of the report and any follow up. This is to protect all involved in the report.**
- 4) **Child Safe issues are of a confidential nature and no reports by email or txt are to be made. Child Safe Officer contact details are publicised on the MMuDS website and on posters at the Performing Arts Centre. An incident form can be downloaded from the website and this is the only copy to be made. This report remains confidential to the Child Safe Officers or relevant authorities.**
- 5) **If there is any doubt about an issue, no matter how small, contact should be made with a Child Safe Officer.**

MMuDS Child Safe Officers assess all incidents confidentially and are able to liaise with external agencies where appropriate to ensure all legal obligations are met.

Adhering to the above ensures that appropriate protective measures can be implemented, effective support provided and any subsequent investigation or action is lawful, proportionate and effective. Correct reporting upholds the privacy of the persons involved in any incident and seeks to preserve the integrity of any evidence that may need to be gathered.

MMuDS Child Safe Officer/s can be contacted via childsafemmuds.org.au or via mobile.

In emergency situations where there has been harm or injury and/or there is an ongoing or immediate threat of harm/injury contact;

Police – 000
Child Protection Crisis Line (DHHS) – 131 278

Given the complex and sensitive nature of Child Safe matters, professional legal advice is available to MMuDS via Moores Legal Services - 03 9843 2100 or info@moores.com.au

If in doubt about any matter or concern, contact a MMuDS Child Safe Officer.

Receiving Allegations

If you are approached by someone reporting information regarding an allegation or concern it is important that the person is taken seriously and that they are properly advised and supported.

Reports may come either internally or externally of the organisation. This may include;

- A child reporting a concern about a member or volunteer;
- An adult (e.g. a worker or volunteer) reporting a concern about another member or volunteer; and
- A child or adult reporting a problem with a parent or carer, or someone else external to the organisation.
- An external child, adult or agency reporting a problem or concern about a MMuDS member, worker or volunteer.

Each report is different and it can be hard to assess the severity or veracity of a complaint in the initial contact. If the person has approached you because they are comfortable discussing the matter with you, you should invite them to talk freely about what they have to say.

The details of any report **must** be accurately documented. Use of the MMuDS Child Safe Incident Report Form is encouraged and is available on the website.

A person providing you with information may be upset, distressed or not sure where to start/what to say. Some guiding questions that can be used to find out more information are;

- Can you tell me what happened from the start?
- When and where did the incident occur?
- Did anyone see the incident?
- Who was there?
- What was said/done?
- Are you/is anyone hurt or injured?

The information you receive may be critical to any future investigation or action.

It is important to remember that certain types of abuse including physical violence and sexual abuse are subject to mandatory reporting legislation. Failing to report information regarding such matters may be prosecuted as a criminal offence.

A MMuDS Child Safe Officer should be contacted as soon as possible either immediately after or during the taking of a report to ensure appropriate advice is given and action taken.

A reporting person should be treated respectfully and with due regard for their privacy however should not be promised complete anonymity or confidentiality. If the person is concerned about their identity or the impact of any report made, re-assure them that the matter will be handled sensitively.

Responding to Allegations

MMuDS Child Safe Officers bear the organisational responsibility of responding to allegations of child abuse and related misconduct.

Responses may include;

- Standing the accused member/volunteer down, or transferring them to a position that does not involve contact with children, until an investigation has been concluded;
- Making reasonable adjustments for the reporting person and/or victim that limits contact with the accused member/volunteer;
- Providing appropriate support to the child or children involved (eg. counselling);
- Conducting an internal investigation;
- Seeking professional legal advice;

- Engaging an external agency such as police or the Department of Health and Human Services;
- Reviewing organisation policies, procedures and operations to determine whether any changes are needed to better protect children.

Where a matter has engaged an external body such as police, MMuDS will assist that agency where possible. An external investigation may impact the responses available to MMuDS internally. The investigating agency should be consulted as to any appropriate action or assistance required in addition to professional legal advice from Moores Legal Service