



Mansfield Musical and Drama Society

## Child Safe and Wellbeing Reporting Procedure

*The purpose of this procedure is to enable and guide members, volunteers, and contractors to report improper behaviour, disclosures from children and allegations of abuse.*

MMuDS will not tolerate any abuse of children. All members, volunteers and contractors associated with MMuDS are responsible for the care and protection of children who participate in our organisation and for reporting information about abuse, by following this procedure. This procedure should be read in conjunction with MMuDS Child Safe and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct Policy.

### **Definitions:**

*What do we mean when we use these words?*

- Child means a person below the age of 18 years.
- Adult mean a person aged 18 years or over.

### **Reporting of abuse and legal responsibilities:**

Abuse against children is a crime. Any reasonable belief that a child has been sexually abused must be reported to police as part of "Failure to disclose" legislation.

Any reasonable belief that a child has been or is in danger of being abused and/or neglected in any other way should be reported to Child Protection services, or to family safety services such as Orange Door.

While MMuDS is not covered by mandatory reporting requirements, it is strongly encouraged that all allegations or reasonable beliefs of physical, emotional and psychological abuse are reported to an appropriate organisation to ensure the child receives support to be safe.

### **Reporting improper behaviour at MMuDS:**

If you are concerned about improper behaviour between any adult and a child, you should immediately inform MMuDS Child Safety Office, Erica Morgan on 0428 732 543 or at [childsafe@mmuds.org.au](mailto:childsafe@mmuds.org.au). If the incident is concerning the Child Safety Office, you can report to the MMuDS president, Michael Isbister at [president@mmuds.org.au](mailto:president@mmuds.org.au).

Incidents should not be disclosed to or discussed with other members or volunteers without first consulting the MMuDS Child Safety Officer.

Child Safety Office's contact details are publicised on the MMuDS website and on posters at the Performing Arts Centre.

### **What to do if a child discloses an incident of abuse to you:**

- Try and discreetly separate them from others and listen to them carefully.
- Let them use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure them that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, or the police/child protection.
- Do not make promises to them such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- If the disclosure includes an allegation of sexual abuse, explain to the child that this is a crime and must be reported to the police.

- If the disclosure is about any other non-life-threatening abuse, explain to the child that we would like to report to child protective services.
- Explain to the child that the reporting authorities will investigate the allegation and take action needed to make sure that they are safe. Some children may be distressed about potentially being removed from their abuser so it's important to reassure them that authorities will do their best to keep them safe and help their abuser.
- Do not leave them in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them. If you have to leave them, ensure they are handed over to a trusted adult.
- Take notes/complete a Child Safe Incident Report with them.
- Explain to the child the immediate next steps that will be taken (as far as you are aware) and ask them what action they would like to take.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately.

**What to do if a parent / carer says their child has been abused while in MMuDS care or raises a concern:**

- Explain that we take all abuse allegations very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them that you may need to repeat what they have told you to authorities or others, such as MMuDS Child Safety Officer, the police or child protection.
- Do not make promises, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Inform them that sexual abuse of children must be reported to the police and that MMuDS reports all other allegations of abuse to child protection services.
- Take notes/complete a Child Safe Incident Report with them.
- Explain to them the immediate next steps that will be taken (as far as you are aware) and ask them what action they would like to take.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately.

**As soon as possible after any disclosure:**

- Report the disclosure to the MMuDS Child Safety Officer. The Child Safety Officer will assess all incidents confidentially and are able to liaise with external agencies where appropriate to ensure all legal obligations are met.
- Complete a Child Safe Incident report, if you haven't already done so, recording the information using the words of the person making the disclosure.
- The person who heard the disclosure must report to police or child protection as required, the Child Safety Officer can support them.
- The Child Safety Officer will ensure the incident report is securely stored.

**Considerations:**

- Be aware that some people from certain backgrounds may face unique barriers in reporting allegations of abuse.
- For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking with police or have difficulty communicating in English. Be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a friend or family member).



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- For example, children with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters. For advice on communicating with people with a disability, please refer to the DFFH website.
- When responding to a report from a child or family member/parent that identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, from refugee or migrant backgrounds, who are LGBTIQ+, and/or have a disability, MMuDS in partnership with the Child Safe Officer, will seek additional advice from external organisations as required, to ensure an appropriate response.

### **Contact numbers:**

To make a report to Child Protection, consult the information on the DHHS website.

For concerns about the safety of a child after office hours or on weekends or public holidays, call the afterhours Child Protection Emergency Service on *131 278*.

Other contacts:

The Sexual Assault Crisis Line Victoria (SACL) is a state-wide, after-hours, confidential, telephone crisis counselling service for people who have experienced both past and recent sexual assault. SACL operates between 5pm weeknights through to 9am the next day and throughout weekends and public holidays. Call *1800 806 292*.

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria - Tel: *(03) 9486 9866*.

If you or someone you know has experienced child sexual abuse in an institutional context, you can contact Victoria Police's SANO Task Force via email [sanotaskforce@police.vic.gov.au](mailto:sanotaskforce@police.vic.gov.au). You may also wish to make a free call to the task force on *1800 110 007* to report matters relating to child sexual abuse.

The Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCITs) are made up of specialist detectives who are training to investigate the complex crimes of sexual offences and child abuse. SOCITs are based around the state and deal with cases from the time of disclosure, throughout the investigation process and then on to court.

To find your nearest SOCIT, search [www.police.vic.gov.au/sexual-offences](http://www.police.vic.gov.au/sexual-offences)