What Is Sexual Assault?

Sexual assault is defined as any unwanted sexual behaviour that causes humiliation, pain, fear or intimidation. Sexual assault includes rape, assault with intent to rape, and indecent assault.

Staff Responsibilities

- Respond sensitively to a disclosure of sexual assault from a student
- Provide clear information to the student about what will happen next
- Inform the Principal immediately of what is alleged to have occurred
- Provide support to the student who has disclosed sexual assault/sexual abuse

A student may disclose an allegation of sexual assault to a trusted member of staff.

Listen attentively and empathically to what they are saying – let them tell you in their own words.

Stay calm and non judgemental – accept what the student says and give them time to say it.

Give reassurance that telling somebody was the right thing to do and explain that you will need to inform the Principal and others.

Reassure the student that ongoing support will be provided and explain what will happen next.

Explain the role of police and of DHS Child Protection if required.

Staff have a duty of care to all students.

Refer to the Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide sections 4.6.1.2 and 4.6.1.3 for additional information.
Responding to Allegations of Student Sexual Assault

Compulsory Actions for Principals

This flowchart must be read in conjunction with Responding to Allegations of Student Sexual Assault – Procedures for Victorian Government Schools. The flowchart must be followed step by step in dealing with allegations of student sexual assault. This is Departmental policy and a mandatory requirement of all Principals.

Provide a safe environment for the alleged victim. Separate the alleged victim and others involved, and provide staff support for each individual. Address duty of care issues for all students involved.

Inform the student of your obligation to report the incident to the Department of Education, Victoria Police and, if appropriate, DHS Child Protection.

In the case of an emergency, call for medical assistance/police.

Report the incident to the Emergency and Security Management Unit (ESM). ESM will then contact the Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit and the Regional Office.

Report the incident to the Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse (SOCA) Unit.

If appropriate, report the incident to DHS Child Protection (Refer to section 3.2.5 of Responding to Allegations of Student Sexual Assault for further information.)

Contact the parents/carers of the alleged victim unless circumstances indicate this should not occur. (Refer to section 3.2.6 of Responding to Allegations of Student Sexual Assault for further information.)

Document the disclosure and ensure that staff have documented their actions.

Other than ensuring the safety of all involved, there should be no detailed communication with alleged perpetrators, their parents/carers and any other students involved until after approval from the Victoria Police SOCA Unit.

Allegations of sexual assault must be managed in partnership with the Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit and the Regional Office, who will provide ongoing advice and support to schools.

Police are the investigating body.

It is the responsibility of the Principal to develop a partnership with the Manager, Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit and the Regional Director.
Resources Available to Schools

**Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse (SOCA) Units**

The Victoria Police SOCA Units provide a specialist response to child victims of sexual and physical abuse and adult victims of sexual assault. There are 31 SOCA Units around Victoria, staffed by specially trained and experienced police officers.

**Department of Education – Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit (SCIAU)**

The SCIAU ensures appropriate supports are in place to maximise the health and wellbeing of students involved in assaults of a sexual nature. The SCIAU is available to provide advice and support to Principals and teachers 24-hours a day.

**Department of Education – Emergency and Security Management Unit (ESM)**

ESM provides a 24-hour Communications Centre for schools and the Department which provides advice and assistance to schools, both during and after emergencies.

**Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Protection**

DHS Child Protection is authorised under the *Children Youth and Family Act 2005* to protect children up to eighteen years of age by accepting notifications/reports of suspected child abuse and neglect, conducting investigations of specified concerns in consultation with police and taking action, if necessary, through the Children’s Court to protect children.

**Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASA)**

The Centres Against Sexual Assault are government funded organisations which provide services on a 24-hour basis to victims of rape or sexual assault. CASA can provide counselling, advocacy support, crisis care and support groups to victims of sexual assault.