

Child Safety Newsletter

Vol 1: Term 4 2020

Commitment to Child Safety:

Mary MacKillop Catholic Regional College commits to providing a safe and nurturing culture for all children and young people in its care by:

1. Upholding our highest priority for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
2. Empowering families, children, young people and staff to have a voice and raise concerns.
3. Implementing rigorous risk- management and employment practices.

Dear Parents, Guardians & Students,

Welcome to the first of what is planned as a special quarterly newsletter to help support child protection and child safety. Mary MacKillop Catholic Regional College is committed to maintaining and continuously improving the safety of every child and young adult in our care. Everyone has the right to feel safe at school. This safety has multiple facets, which we will explore over this and coming issues.

We commit ourselves to working to make the College not just child safe, but to further improve our culture of child safety over time. Everyone has an obligation to contribute to being a child safe organisation. This includes leadership, staff, parents, volunteers and anyone else who may come into contact with children in our care. Practices and policies within the College have child safety as an integral component in all that we do. Students need to be empowered and to have a regular voice, not just about their safety, but as part of normal practice, so that they develop the skills and confidence to advocate for themselves or others. This is consistent with the broader goals of the College, to develop young adults who will in turn contribute to society and their communities.

Parents have a key role to play as well, which is a main objective of this newsletter. By working together, we can all play our part in keeping our children safe and nurturing their growth into successful, capable adults. We hope that this newsletter is the start of many productive conversations.

Yours sincerely,

David Leslie
Principal



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Whats on in Term 4

- Feeling Safe** - Central to a positive school climate is a sense of safety - where children and young people are confident in adults' ability to keep them safe; where they are provided refuge from challenges that they experience outside of the school; and where they can relax (and learn) in an environment that is free from harm. This lesson, delivered at the commencement of the term provides students with an overview of what it means to feel and be safe. Students are provided with a brochure (below) which includes but is not limited to forms of abuse, who and where they can obtain support. This brochure is placed in the students planner for ease of reference.
- Safety Walks** - Children and young people learn, grow and develop best when they are safe and feel safe. One way of supporting their safety is to provide them opportunities to identify the risks they encounter and what worries and concerns them. In partnership with the College Executive, students tour the school and given opportunity to identify, develop and review strategies to prevent and respond to these environmental risks and concerns they have whilst onsite here at the College.
- Safe and Respectful Classrooms** - The College acknowledges that feeling safe and respected at school and being happy and healthy has a direct impact on each student's capacity for optimal learning - and for them to flourish in their chosen field. Equally, enjoying school and being engaged in learning influences a student's wellbeing - in particular their confidence and resilience. Each child will be empowered with the understanding of how to contribute to this style of environment and how to seek help if they feel unsafe or disrespected.

PROTECT
Protecting children & young people from abuse is our responsibility



What is child abuse?

- Child abuse includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological harm, neglect, and family violence.
- Child abuse can also include grooming.
- This is behaviour where an adult tries to establish a relationship or other emotional connection with you, to prepare you for a sexual relationship.

Child abuse does not have to involve physical contact or force. It can include:

- Controlling you through threats
- Exposing you to sexual material and sexual acts
- Exposing you to family violence.

Child abuse can be perpetrated by any member of a community or a family member. Abuse can impact anyone and it is never the victim's fault.

What are your rights?

- Everyone has the right to feel safe and be protected from abuse.
- No one is allowed to threaten you, hurt you, or touch you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable, unsafe or afraid.
- This includes all adults, other teenagers and children - it includes everyone from family members, coaches, teachers, to friends and strangers.
- Every relationship should be respectful.
- No one should ever involve you in sexual activity without your consent, and no one should behave in a way that makes you feel unsafe or afraid.
- You don't have to deal with abuse on your own. Talk to a trusted adult. Teachers and other adults at your school can support you to get help.

FEELING SAFE

This brochure has been designed to give you the facts about child abuse. It includes advice on what to do if you have been abused, are being abused, or are at risk of being abused.

This fact sheet also provides you with advice if you know someone who has been abused, or is at risk of being abused.



What should I do if I have been abused or I feel unsafe?

- If you have been abused, or feel unsafe or threatened in any way you don't have to deal with this on your own.
- If you are in immediate trouble call 000 and ask for the Victoria Police**
- Abuse is never your fault and you should tell a trusted adult so you can get the help and support you need to feel safe and protected. Talking to someone won't get you in trouble.
- You can tell a Child Safety Officer or Staff Member at our school. They will be able to help you.
- The Child Safety Officers contact details are on the back of this brochure.
- Visit eHeadSpace (which provides an online and a 1am-1am telephone support service) www.eheadspace.org.au or 1800 650 650.
- Call KidsHelp Line on 1800 55 1800 or visit www.kidshelpline.com.au for 24 hour support.

What if I don't feel like I can talk to anyone at my school?

- You should still find a trusted adult to talk to.
- Abuse or feeling uncomfortable is too big to deal with on your own.

What if my friend doesn't want to tell an adult?

- You should still tell an adult you trust on your friend's behalf.
- Even if your friend has specifically asked you not to tell an adult, you still should. It is more important to make sure that your friend is helped and feels protected.

What will happen if I tell an adult at the school that I feel unsafe, or that I know someone who is unsafe?

- You will be helped.
- Staff members at our school must listen to your concerns and help you.
- The information will not be shared with the person who is making you feel unsafe.
- Information will only be shared with people who can support and protect you.
- In some cases the people helping you are required by law to tell the police, the Department of Health and Human Services' Child Protection services and/or your family to prevent any further abuse, or risk of abuse.

What should I do if I think someone I know has been abused or is unsafe?

- You should talk to an adult you trust. Any staff member at your school will be able to help.
- You can also help your friend by encouraging them to tell a trusted adult.

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Personal safety and your child - Talking to your child about Safety

Encourage your children to feel comfortable telling you anything, especially if it involves another adult.

- Keep open communication

Tip: Remind your child that it is always ok to talk to you, no matter what the issue, you care about them and want to help them to stay safe.

- Listen and learn

Tip: Listen when a child tells you they don't want to see a particular person or go to a particular place. Most perpetrators are already known to a child and may include a family member or known adult or adolescent. Try and discuss in an open way.

- Talk often, talk early and keep talking

Tip: Regularly practice describing feelings and identifying body clues that might mean a person is scared, worried or unsafe. Develop a simple, clear and easy to follow action plan for these times.

Keeping kids safe online

Quick tips for parents

Educate yourself: Check out different sites, games, and apps for yourself. The more familiar you are with them, the easier it is for you to talk to your children. Check privacy settings and recommended age restrictions.

Talk with your children: have conversations with them about the importance of safety online and show them how to implement this. You can do this without frightening them. For example, let them know that you have been hearing about online safety and ask what they think the risks are and what they do to keep safe.

Teach your children to think about online behaviour:

How much should they be sharing online and what happens to information once posted or shared? Talk about respectful interactions and responsible behaviour, and encourage them to critically think about what they read and see online (remind them that not everything they read may be true, what they share will always be there, and that not everyone is who they say they are online).

Come up with a plan around safety: Talk about ways to not only stay safe but also how to respond to anything that happens that may concern them. Let them know they can talk to you or another adult they can trust. Encourage them to be proactive about keeping their online space safe and teach them how to report inappropriate online behaviour.

Commissioner for E-Safety
www.esafety.gov.au

Kids Helpline
<https://kidshelpline.com.au>



B E I N G

C O U R A G E O U S



Glossary of terms - Forms of abuse

Emotional abuse is any act by a person having the care of a child that results in the child suffering any kind of significant emotional deprivation or trauma. Children affected by exposure to family violence are also included in this category.

Family and Domestic violence is any violent, threatening, coercive or controlling behaviour that occurs in current or past family, domestic or intimate relationships.

Physical abuse: any non-accidental physical act inflicted upon a child by a person having the care of a child.

Sexual abuse: any act by a person, having the care of a child that exposes the child to, or involves the child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards.

Neglect: Any serious acts or omissions by a person having the care of a child that, within the bounds of cultural tradition, constitute a failure to provide conditions that are essential for the healthy physical and emotional development of a child.

As a parent, if am concerned about a child - What can I do?

- If a child is in immediate danger or if there is an emergency contact triple zero (000).
- Write down your concerns or observations, making note of times and incidents.
- Speak with the child gently, letting them know they can talk to you if they ever need to.
- Don't force or pressure the child to tell you what is happening, instead ask them how they are or let them know that you have noticed they are looking or behaving differently. This may provide an opportunity for the child to share what they may be experiencing.
- Be conscious of the child's safety and your own. If you think your direct intervention will affect yours or the child's safety, leave it to the people who are trained in this area to respond. You may be able to provide support later down the track.
- Report your concerns to child protection services on **1300 655 795**.
- At any stage you can contact the College for support.



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