

Failure to Disclose Child Sexual Abuse

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.

'Failure to disclose child sexual abuse' is a new offence that came into force on the 27th of October, 2014.

The law now requires any adult (aged 18 and over) who reasonably believes that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child (under the age of 16), disclose that information to police.

Reasonable belief may be formed when:

- A child states that they have been sexually abused.
- A child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves).
- Someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused.
- Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development lead you to believe that the child has been sexually abused.
- Signs of sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused (these can vary based on the age of the victim, e.g. inappropriate sexual knowledge for age, inappropriate engagement in sexualised play/behaviours for age, acting out sexual acts in play).
- There are no exemptions to IOE staff or volunteers reporting, despite the type of service the child is receiving at IOE, whether the offence occurred whilst being supported by IOE or not.
- When they have been informed of abuse that is occurring by a second person, even if they have been asked not to report it.
- Even when the victim who is under the age of 16, has requested you not to report it.
- If the person has an intellectual disability, you are required to report regardless of whether the person is over the age of 16 or not, or when the offence occurred.

The simple rule is: if you have a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child/or person with an intellectual disability who receives support from Interchange, you must report this immediately to the most relevant coordinator/team leader or general manager at IOE. If the office is closed please contact the after hours pager. If required, you will be supported to make a report to the Victorian Police and/or Child Protection Services. Any notification will be documented and/or an incident report completed, and a confirmation document of the report will be provided.

It is important to inform IOE of your concerns first as there may be knowledge of prior notifications, treatments and supports already in place.

If you fail to report, it can result in charges against you with a possible maximum of 3 years of imprisonment.

Any inappropriate behavior will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity

and urgency of the matter.

If you are unsure whether something needs to be reported, please discuss this with a senior staff member at IOE.