

NHS SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE REPORT FACT SHEET

Protecting Children/International students from Abuse for Homestay Parents

Children have the right to be safe and protected at school, at home and in the community. As adults we play a critical role in protecting them from all forms of abuse.

As a **homestay parent**, you have the responsibility for protecting and caring for **homestay students**. You also play a critical role in identifying and responding to suspected abuse within the community. In fact, it may amount to a criminal offence if you fail to report suspected child sexual abuse.

What is child abuse?

Child abuse means actions that hurt a child or teenager. Child abuse can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, grooming, emotional or psychological harm, neglect or family violence.

What are the signs that a child has been abused?

There are a range of physical and behavioural indicators of child abuse.

- A change in a child's behaviour e.g. withdrawal, regressive behaviour
- Physical indicators of abuse, e.g. unexplained bruise
- An inappropriate relationship between an adult and a child, e.g. unexplained gifts or phone/email contacts.

REPORTING ABUSE (Please also refer to Northcote High School Critical Actions for Homestay families)

What should I do if I suspect that *my homestay student* has been abused?

If you believe the homestay student has been abused, or is at risk of being abused, contact Victoria Police immediately via the local police station or on 000 if it's an emergency.

What should I do if I suspect that *another child* has been abused?

If you suspect the student's friend has been abused, or is at risk of abuse (such as physical abuse) you should report immediately to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection (see contact details at the end of this fact sheet).

- If you suspect a child has been sexually abused, you must also report your concerns to the Victoria Police. You may be committing a criminal offence if you fail to do so.
- You should report even if you're not sure. It is the role of authorities to investigate your concerns and determine if any further action needs to be taken.

What should I do if I have new grounds that the homestay student/child is being abused?

- You should report to DHHD Child Protection or Victoria Police if you have new grounds for believing that a child/homestay student is being abused, even though they have previously investigated and dismissed your report.
- Every report is critical as it builds evidence and helps authorities gain a clearer understanding of risks to the student.

What happens if someone at Northcote High School suspects that my homestay student has been abused?

All staff members at Northcote High School are required to report suspected child abuse to DHHS, Child Protection and, in some circumstances, to Victoria Police.

The school will contact you as soon as possible, unless they have been advised not to do so by authorities. Where appropriate the school will work with you to ensure the student is provided with support, which may include referring them to wellbeing professionals.

HELP TO KEEP HOMESTAY STUDENTS SAFE

Where appropriate have a chat to homestay student/students and make sure that they know that no one is allowed to threaten, hurt or touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Northcote High School will also be supporting international students in learning about their rights to be safe and respected.

If you have any concerns about the student talk to the principal or another staff member at the school about your concerns. You can also raise this matter with DHHS Child Protection and the Victoria Police.

Please visit www.education.vic.gov.au/protect for more information.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Victoria Police (24 hour services)	000
Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection (After hours emergency services)	131 278 (5:00pm-9:00am Mon-Fri, 24 hours on weekends and public holidays)
Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection Northern Division (LGAs)	Local Government Areas (LGAs) Brimbank, Hobson Bays, Maribyrnong, Melbourne 1300 664 977 (8:45am – 5:00pm)
Department of Education and Training South Eastern Victoria	General enquiries: 1300 333 232 General enquiries: 1300 338 738
Northcote High School (NHS)	General office: (03) 9488 2300 International Student Office: (03) 9488 2334 Year Level Program Leaders: - Year 10: (03) 9488 2227 - Year 11: (03) 9488 2286 - Year 12: (03) 9488 2312
NHS International Student Program International Student Coordinator ISC (English and Chinese speaking) ISC Assistant (English and Chinese speaking)	0411 716 024 0430 860 610