



## POLICY ON SAFEGUARDING COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

Scope:	Organisational
Section:	Org_SD.8a
Reviewed:	21 September 2022
Next Review Date:	21 September 2025
Version:	So1/2022

### Policy

Inspired by its mission and values, St Anthony's Family Care (SAFC) is committed to responding to disclosures, complaints, allegations, or suspicions of abuse respectfully, actively and in a timely manner, in accordance with its lawful obligations and its own policies and procedures. This includes contacting police immediately where there may be risk of imminent harm.

SAFC will maintain the confidentiality of any complaints made and will provide access to complaints records following its Privacy Policy. The SAFC CEO will consult with the Safeguarding Coordinator regarding the handling of all Safeguarding issues concerning children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

Allegations of historical abuse (prior to 17/10/2013) will be referred to the Sisters of St Joseph Safeguarding Coordinator for management.

### Scope

This policy applies to all SAFC employees, Board members, volunteers and long-term contractors engaged with the work of SAFC.

### Conflict of Interest

It is important that safeguarding matters are managed in a way that ensure impartiality and objectivity and that SAFC ensures that its processes are free from any actual or perceived conflict of interest. Therefore, any person who is involved in receiving, investigating, or advising of a complaint on professional standards matters must not be involved in a matter if that person:

- Is the subject of the complaint
- Has or had a close personal or working relationship with the person to whom the matter relates such that their judgement would or could be affected by the relationship and they would be placed in a position of actual or potential conflict.

## Guiding Principles for managing child safety complaints/allegations

1. Where a disclosure, allegation or suspicion of abuse or harm is made, the priority in responding is always the safety and wellbeing of the child, young person, or vulnerable adult. To ensure this, on receipt of a complaint, the SAFC CEO in consultation with the Safeguarding Coordinator, conducts an immediate assessment to identify and minimize any risk to children or vulnerable adults.

Where a complaint is plausible and there is a risk that the alleged perpetrator might come into contact with children or vulnerable adults, that person is stood down from their role while the complaint is investigated.

2. Everyone engaged with SAFC has a moral obligation to report any disclosure, complaint, allegation or suspicion of abuse or harm to the SAFC CEO (or to the SAFC Board Chair if the complaint is against the SAFC CEO) within 24 hours of becoming aware of it. Where a child, young person or vulnerable adults is in imminent danger, a report must be made to police immediately.
3. All incidents of abuse are to be viewed as damaging to children and vulnerable adults. Forms of abuse include physical abuse, psychological/emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, cultural/spiritual abuse, on-line abuse, grooming.
4. All relevant reporting, privacy and employment obligations are met.
5. SAFC personnel cooperate with law enforcement procedures and directives.
6. Complainants are responded to promptly and are kept informed of the progress of the complaint.

## Handling Disclosures/Complaints

### 1. Disclosure by a child.

If a child discloses abuse of themselves or another:

- Listen to the child without interrupting or expressing shock or alarm. Be aware of the child's circumstances, especially those that increase the child's vulnerability.
- Do not ask questions except to clarify your general understanding of what the child is saying. Do not dismiss the incident even if you are unsure whether the child is making a disclosure or not. Any concern about possible risk to a child must be reported to the CEO.
- Explain to the child that you cannot keep it a secret.
- Let the child know what you will do next, including with whom you need to share the information.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.

- As soon as possible, record the conversation including the date, time, and details of the disclosure. Avoid doing this in front of the child.
- Ring 000 immediately if you believe the child is in imminent danger and report your concerns to the police.
- Within 24 hours, inform the SAFC CEO, who will manage the situation, including assisting you with mandatory reporting if required.
- Observe strict confidentiality within the process.

## 2. Disclosure by an adult

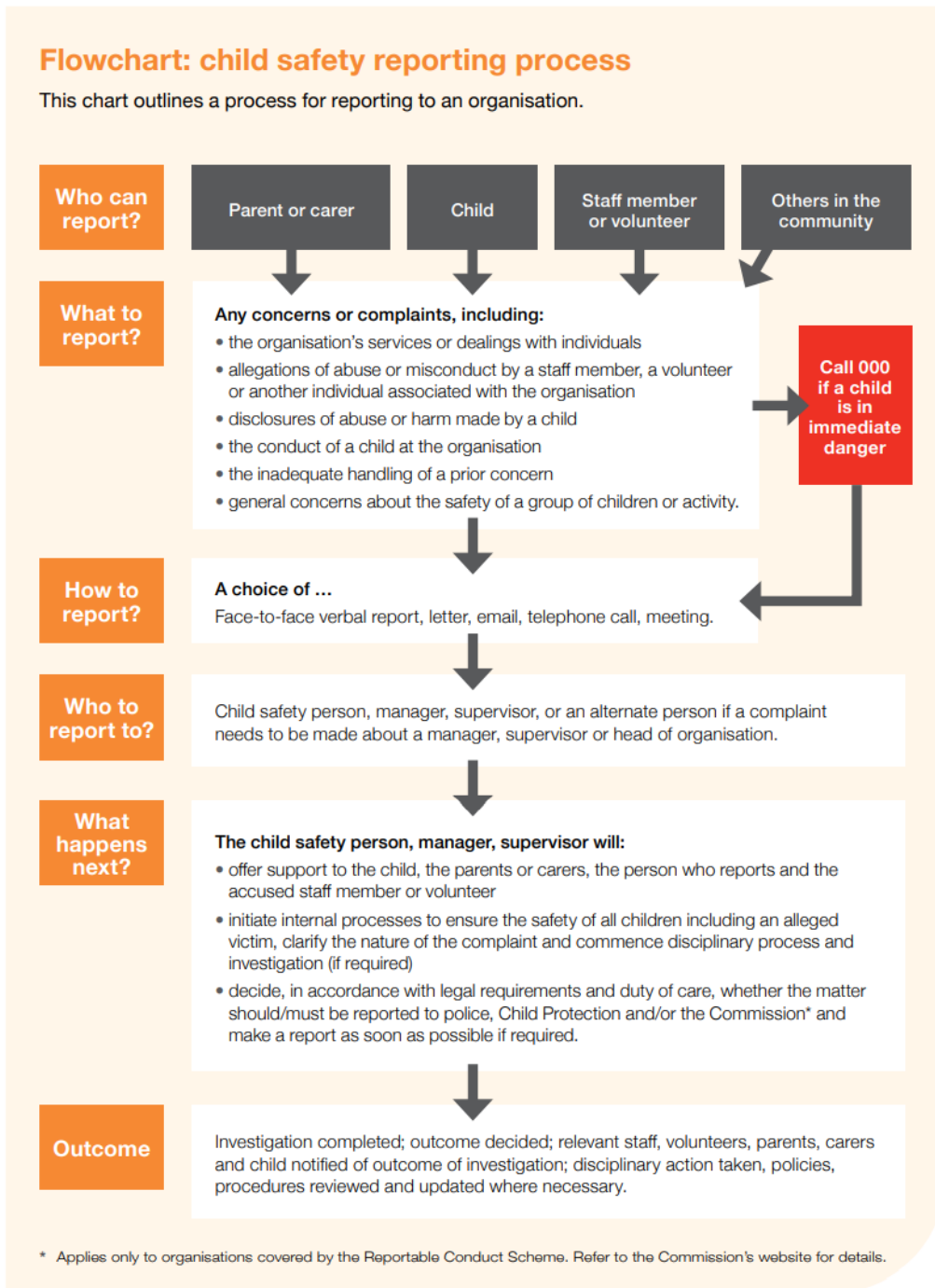
If an adult discloses abuse of themselves or another or if you suspect or witness abuse or are abused yourself in an SAFC context:

- Acknowledge the person's pain.
- Respectfully discourage the person from disclosing in detail to you; explain that such a serious matter needs to be handled by someone who is experienced in this area.
- Explain that if a person discloses abuse to you, you must report it to the SAFC CEO or to the SAFC Board Chair if the complaint is against the SAFC CEO.
- Offer the person the contact details of the SAFC CEO if they would like to report it themselves (phone: 02 9747 5782 or [enquiries@safc.org.au](mailto:enquiries@safc.org.au)).
- Reassure the person that the complaint will be followed up and that someone will contact them. Ask them for their preferred contact details including whether a message can be left.
- Make a written record of the conversation as soon as possible.
- Report the alleged abuse to the SAFC CEO within 24 hours (or to the SAFC Board Chair if the abuse is against the SAFC CEO). • Observe strict confidentiality within the process.

## 3. If an allegation of abuse is made against you.

- Contact the SAFC CEO immediately and advise of the information.

## Responsibilities and Obligations



**DOCUMENTATION**

Documents related to this policy		
Related policies and procedures	Policy & Procedure for Privacy Policy and Procedure for Staff Recruitment & Selection Policy & Procedure on Employment screening Policy & Procedure on Child Protection Safeguarding Code of Conduct	
Forms, record keeping or other organisational documents		
Reviewing and approving this policy		
Frequency	Person responsible	Approval
Every 3 years	CEO	CEO
Version History		
Version	Date	Details
S01/2022	21/09/2022	Revision by Management Team and addition of version control

**Authorised by**



Joanna Najdzion  
Chief Executive Officer