

Reporting critical incidents, injuries, hazards and near misses procedure

This is a mandated procedure under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this procedure must follow the process outlined on the [creating, updating and deleting operational policies](#) page.

Overview

This procedure provides a process for timely reporting, response and management of critical incidents, injuries and hazards, which occur at Department for Education sites. This includes statutory reporting requirements of serious and notifiable incidents to various regulatory authorities.

Scope

This procedure applies to all employees of the Department for Education (sites or services) who are required to report critical incidents, injuries, hazards and near misses including:

- schools
- preschools
- alternate education settings or offsite learning programs
- out of school hours care (OSHC), vacation care, or long day care
- family day care
- children's centres
- childcare centres
- corporate sites.



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Detail

A critical incident is any event that is deemed harmful either physically or psychologically to a child or young person, or where a child or young person is put at risk. This also includes Education employees or visitors to a site or service. A critical incident can affect one person, several people, or the whole school at one time. The severity of a critical incident can vary which can impact on the reporting requirements.

Note: throughout the procedure a critical incident of extreme severity is denoted by *.

Immediate response following a critical incident

The following must be actioned:

- enact the site's [emergency management plan](#), if required
- provide first aid to injured or distressed persons (if the area is deemed safe) and call emergency services (phone 000), if required
- preserve (ie do not disturb) the incident scene for investigation purposes
- consider the reporting requirements for certain serious injuries or illnesses, dangerous incidents, or deaths at work – refer to the [safety management procedure](#) for further information
- follow the [incident coordination: managing incidents of extreme severity procedure](#) and the corresponding [flowchart](#) if the site leader or education director has determined the incident is of extreme severity and requires immediate corporate business attention and action
- notify the parent or caregiver of the children or young persons involved, where appropriate
- make a notification to the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 or submit online via eCARL (if determined as required)
- report to South Australia Police (SAPOL) on 131 444 if the incident:
 - relates to an assault, weapons, sexual, drug or other criminal offence (refer to the [assault, weapons, sexual, drug and other offences reported on site – site responsibilities procedure](#) and [flowchart](#))
 - is in relation to suspected child sexual abuse by a prescribed person (refer to the [Statutes Amendment \(Child Sexual Abuse\) Act 2021](#) and the [responding to problem sexual behaviour page](#) guide)
- make a notification to the National Security Hotline on 1800 123 400 (if determined as required) and refer to the [countering violent extremism and fixated threats flowchart](#)
- report the critical incident through the [Incident Response Management System \(IRMS\)](#).

Reporting a critical incident

Critical incidents

Examples of reportable critical incidents include (but are not limited to):

- allegations of employee misconduct
- site property damaged deliberately by child or young person
- an incident that requires the closure of a site
- major disruption to a site's routine
- drug and alcohol related incidents
- threats of violence or assault
- verbal abuse
- any incident whereby emergency services have been called (ie ambulance)
- violent event in the community
- self-harm
- suicidal ideation
- sexual behaviour under department care:
 - concerning sexual behaviour between children and young people, or directed towards adults, occurring in the setting or when a duty of care applies
- sexual behaviour **not** under department care:
 - harmful sexual behaviour between children and young people, or directed towards adults, occurring off grounds and/or out of hours, where there is a reasonable connection between the child or young person's behaviour, the education and care service community, and relationships within the setting
- bullying behaviour
- dangerous life-threatening behaviours
- animal cruelty
- care concerns
- incidents relating to COVID-19
- natural disaster, eg fire or flood
- e-crime
- violence extremism and fixated threats behaviour
- serious complaints
- student arrest off-site.

If you are unsure if an incident should be reported through IRMS, please contact the Incident Response Management Unit (on 8463 6564) or your education director.

Critical incidents of extreme severity

Examples of reportable critical incidents of extreme severity include (but are not limited to):

- * A child or young person abducted or taken from the site by an unauthorised person.
- * A child or young person missing from the site or not able to be accounted for.
- * Allegation of child sex related crime against an employee, contractor, volunteer, or service provider.
- * Attempted suicide on site that requires medical attention.
- * Violent extremism and fixated behaviour such as internet searches concerning weapons and ideations or fixations relating to terrorism, mass violence, school shootings, religious or political extremism.
- * Death of a child or young person from any cause occurring in or related to department sites, care setting or services including suicide.
- * Death on site or in the department's care.
- * Harmful sexual behaviour between children and young people, or directed towards adults, occurring in the setting or when a duty of care applies.
- * Serious allegation of sexual abuse or assault of an adult by a child or young person on site.
- * Serious criminal charges against an employee, contractor, volunteer, or service provider who are directly or indirectly employed by the department.
- * Serious criminal charges against a child or young person who attends a departmental site.
- * Serious incident involving a child or young person under the guardianship of the Chief Executive, Department for Child Protection (DCP) occurring in or related to education and early childhood services.
- * Serious neglect of duty of care, such as:
 - failing to provide or providing incorrect medication for a serious condition or illness
 - a child or young person lost on an excursion
 - a child or young person left unattended, for example left on transport (ie bus) or in a building
 - a child or young person locked in or out of a building
 - any other preventable serious incident.
- * Extremely serious physical harm (deliberate or accidental) to a child or young person occurring at an education and early childhood service or when a duty of care applies (for example, on an excursion) that resulted in urgent medical attention requiring professional medical or dental treatment, including ambulance transport.
- * Extremely serious threat to the safety of the site - environmental or human (for example serious lockdown circumstances, fire, serious infectious disease, weapons or firearms).
- * Cyber security incident where a data breach of sensitive personal and/or business information occurs.
- * Any other incidents considered by the Incident Management Directorate (IMD) or the Chief Executive to be of acute sensitivity.

If you are unsure if an incident should be reported through IRMS, please contact the Incident Response Management Unit (on 8463 6564) or your education director.

For management of critical incidents of extreme severity please refer to the [incident coordination: managing incidents of extreme severity procedure](#).

Site action

For incidents that involve bushfire, lockdown, security or bomb threats, call Security and Emergency Management on 1800 000 279.

For critical incidents of extreme severity, site leader must immediately contact their education director, or the Incident Management Directorate (when the education director is unavailable).

Seek assistance through Social Work Incident Support Services (SWISS) for child/young persons and Employee Psychological Service for staff (call 8226 0744).

Report the incident to SAPOL on 131 444 as required (refer to the [assault, weapons, sexual, drug and other offences reported on site - site responsibilities procedure – site responsibilities procedure](#) and [responding to problem sexual behaviour](#) for guidance).

Make a notification to CARL on 13 14 78 or submit an eCARL, if determined as required. The notifier must complete a [mandatory notification record](#) and store on site confidentially.

Site leader must complete a critical incident report on IRMS within 2 working days, or within 24 hours if relating to an incident of extreme severity. Follow the directions on the [Incident and Response Management System \(IRMS\) page](#). When completing the incident report, consider if the following should be selected under the site actions tab:

- 'mandatory notification' to record that a CARL notification has been submitted (if required)
- 'injury tab completed' where an incident has resulted in an injury
- appropriate 'police' tabs selected and SAPOL reference number recorded where SAPOL has been contacted or attended site.

Critical incidents occurring at early childhood services / out of school hours care

In addition to the above reporting requirements, site leaders must also report critical incidents that occur within the early childhood service or out of school hours care (OSHC) to the [Education Standards Board](#) if the incident involves:

- * the death of a child while being educated and cared for by the service or following an incident while being cared for by the service
- any incident involving serious injury or trauma to a child which a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner, or for which the child attended, or ought to reasonably have attended a hospital

- any incident involving serious illness of a child for which the child attended, or ought to reasonably have attended a hospital
- * attendance of emergency services at the education and care service premises that was sought as a result of an emergency
- * a child missing from the service or not able to be accounted for
- * a child taken or removed from the service in a manner that contravenes the regulations
- * a child mistakenly locked in or out of the service premises or any part of the premises
- the requirement of the provider to close, or reduce the number of children attending the service, for a determined period (7-day notification period)
- any circumstance that poses a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child attending the service (7-day notification period)
- * a reasonable belief that physical and/or sexual abuse of a child has occurred, or is occurring, while the child is being educated and cared for by the service
- * any allegation that sexual or physical abuse of a child has occurred, or is occurring, while the child is being educated and cared for by the service
- complaints alleging that a serious incident has occurred or is occurring
- the centre-based service is educating and caring for extra children due to an emergency.

Complaints received to the service must be reported if:

- a serious incident has occurred while a child is being educated and cared for by a service
- the [National Law](#) and/or [National Regulations](#) have been contravened.

Site action

Notification to the [Education Standards Board](#) must be completed within 12 hours (unless the 7-day notification period is specified).

Once the Education Standards Board has been notified, immediately contact Early Childhood Education and Care Services, Regulation and Compliance on 8226 1646.

The site leader must record the critical incident on IRMS (follow the directions on the [Incident and Response Management System \(IRMS\) page](#)) and complete an [incident, injury, trauma and illness record](#) – sign and upload to the IRMS report. Ensure the ‘injury’ and ‘regulatory authority’ tabs are completed.

Notifying SafeWork SA and the Office for the Technical Regulator

The following critical incidents and injuries must be reported to SafeWork SA:

- * death
- * serious injury or illness:

- an injury or illness that requires immediate treatment as an in-patient in hospital (excluding outpatient treatment in emergency department)
- if immediate treatment is administered for:
 - amputation
 - serious head injury
 - serious eye injury
 - serious burn
 - degloving or scalping
 - spinal injury
 - loss of bodily function
 - serious lacerations
- if medical treatment is administered within 48 hours of exposure to a substance
- dangerous incident:
 - escape, spillage or leakage of a substance
 - implosion, explosion or fire
 - escape of gas or steam
 - escape of a pressurised substance
 - electric shock
 - fall or release from height
 - collapse, overturning, failure, or malfunction of, or damage to, any plant
 - collapse or partial collapse of a structure.

A notification is not required for sports or play injuries, except where the premises or sports/playground equipment was a factor in the incident and/or there was inadequate supervision. For further information, refer to Safe Work Australia's [incident notification information sheet](#) or contact Work Health and Safety on 8226 1440.

Site action

For a life-threatening issue or death, call SafeWork SA on 1800 777 209. For all other notifiable incidents, complete the online SafeWork SA [notifiable incident report form](#) as soon as reasonably practicable.

Contact the Office of the Technical Regulator on (08) 8226 5518 for electrical incidents or 1800 558 811 for gas incidents.

The site leader must report the incident/injury on IRMS (see the [Incident and Response Management System \(IRMS\) page](#)). Where an incident is notifiable to SafeWork SA an IRMS report must be submitted within 24 hours.

Where SafeWork SA contacts a site to request information about a notifiable incident, arrange a site visit or has issued a legal notice, the site leader must contact Work Health and Safety on 8226 1440 and their relevant education director immediately.

Reporting serious injuries relating to children and young people

A **serious injury** to a child or young person that requires an IRMS report includes:

- a child/young person requiring medical treatment other than first aid only
- the site leader believing legal action may result
- an injury that meets the requirements for notification to the [Education Standards Board](#) or SafeWork SA (see [ACECQA reporting requirements](#))
- medication incorrectly administered (eg administered to wrong child/young person or incorrect dose given)
- a child attended or ought reasonably to have attended a hospital
- a person/educator considers a child requires assessment and/or urgent attention from a registered medical practitioner
- any incident for which an ambulance attended.

Site action

All injuries to children that occur at any service on a department site (including OSHC, occasional care, long day care) that is regulated under the [Education and Early Childhood Services \(Registration and Standards\) Act 2011](#) must be reported on IRMS and not through the online injury report form in the EDU Portal.

If an injury is the result of an incident that meets the definition of a critical incident, then a critical incident report must be submitted along with an injury report. The critical incident must be entered within 24 hours of notification if:

- the injury/incident has been reported to the Education Standards Board, SafeWork SA and the Office of the Technical Regulator.

All injuries that occur at a site must be reported through the online injury form in [EDU Portal](#). The injury report can be completed by any employee for any person, including for children and young people.

An injury report is to be lodged, which can be completed by any employee for any person, including for children and young people in schools through the online injury form in [EDU Portal](#). For instructions, see [reporting injuries](#).

Ensure the correct service name and location code is used when completing an IRMS report. If an incident occurring at OSHC should use the OSHC name and location rather than the school.

Reporting serious injuries, hazards and near misses

All injuries, hazards and near misses for employees, volunteers, visitors and contractors must be reported. In cases of conflict between an injured worker and the site manager, the site name/location can be changed to the relevant corporate office for investigation. Refer to the [safety management procedure](#) for further information.

Roles and responsibilities

Site leader

For early childhood sites, submits incident reports on IRMS within 12 hours of incident.

For incidents that are determined to be of extreme severity, follow the [incident coordination: managing incidents of extreme severity procedure](#) and [flowchart](#).

For critical incidents determined not to be of extreme severity:

- lodges details of the incident on IRMS within 2 working days
- updates follow up in the action log
- notifies the parent/caregiver of the children involved where appropriate
- notifies the education director where appropriate.

For incidents that require a mandatory notification to [CARL](#), ensure the notifier follows the mandatory notification procedure and then record it in the critical incident report under the site action tab by selecting 'mandatory notification'.

For incidents that are required to be notified to a regulatory authority or dangerous incidents, immediately:

- preserves the incident scene until an inspector arrives to undertake an investigation or otherwise instructed by SafeWork SA
- completes the [SafeWork SA notifiable incident report form](#)
- notifies the Office of Technical Regulator on (08) 8226 5518 for electrical incidents or 1800 558 811 for gas incidents and emergencies
- submits a critical incident report within 24 hours of the incident on IRMS.

Complete the incident investigation details in the site leader tab for all injury reports that:

- May result in a workers compensation claim
- Has been notified to the Education Standards Board or SafeWork SA
- Indicate mental stress as the nature of injury.

Access hazard report within 24 hours of notification and completes risk assessment and submits within 5 days.

Director OSHC/Vacation Care/Long Day Care

Notifies site leader, preschool/centre director and school governing body and governing council/management committee.

Approved provider – school governing council/service management committee

Is responsible for ensuring that the service completes a notification to the Education Standards Board through the [National Quality Agenda IT System](#) and the Australian Government Department of Education within 24 hours of the incident.

Corporate Emergency Response Team (CERT)

Provides a coordinated corporate office response to the management of and recovery from large scale emergencies.

Critical key contacts

Provide support and advice to sites as required.

Director, Incident Management

For incidents of extreme severity, notifies the ALERT group, and refer to the [incident coordination: managing incidents of extreme severity procedure](#) and [flowchart](#).

Ensures that all follow up actions occur in a timely manner in liaison with the education director and the site.

In cases of allegations of sexual misconduct, appoints a Case Manager to guide and support site.

Coordinates all requests for further information from the Minister and/or the Chief Executive and other relevant corporate divisions.

Director, education/corporate

Immediately notifies the Director or Assistant Director, Incident Management upon notification of an incident of extreme severity on (08) 8226 1840, and the Media Unit on (08) 8226 7990.

Ensure that processes are in place to report incidents/injuries/hazards and investigations are conducted by site leaders to prevent future occurrences.

Employees

Report all injuries, near misses and hazards to IRMS or EDU Portal as soon as reasonably practicable.

Employee Psychological Services

Provides initial support to sites where the wellbeing of employees, contractors or volunteers has been adversely impacted from a critical incident. To arrange wellbeing or trauma support for adult persons that are directly or indirectly employed by the department.

Incident Report Management

Monitor and review all critical incident reports and, where necessary, refer to relevant corporate business units to provide support and assistance to site leader.

Work Health and Safety

Monitor and review injury reports and, where necessary, refer to relevant corporate business units to provide support and assistance to site leader.

Health and safety representatives

Accompany an inspector during an inspection of the workplace where they represent their workgroup.

Participate in the investigation process with site leader.

Injury Management

Provide support through early intervention for employees who are injured at work.

Social Work Incident Support Service (SWISS)

Provides initial support to sites where children and young persons have been adversely impacted and provides referrals to services, if required.

Definitions

Child Abuse Report Line (CARL)

Where a reasonable suspicion that a child or young person is, or might be, at risk (such as emotional or psychological harm; physical harm; sexual abuse; or neglect) a mandatory notification is required. A report needs to be made to CARL by phoning 13 14 78 or submitting online via [eCARL](#).

countering violent extremism (CVE) and fixated threats

Any instance of violent, extremist behaviour such as internet searches concerning weapons and ideations or fixations relating to terrorism, mass violence, school shootings, religious or political extremism.

critical incident

An incident that occurs at a department site or service that is deemed harmful either physically or psychologically, or places a child or young person at risk, whereby the incident needs to be recorded on IRMS.

extreme harm

An intolerable risk that may likely occur in a fatality or significant whole person impairment ie resulting in a permanent disability or illness.

extreme severity

Incidents categorised as extreme in nature, which require immediate notification and action. See the [incident coordination: managing incidents of extreme severity procedure](#) and corresponding [flowchart](#).

injury

Physical or psychological harm or illness caused, or made worse, by events or exposures.

Incident and Response Management System (IRMS)

[IRMS](#) is an online system accessed via [EDU Portal](#). It facilitates the process for reporting, recording, and investigating injuries, critical incidents, and incidents of criminality.

mandatory notification

A mandatory notification is a suspicion on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is, or might be, at risk (such as emotional or psychological harm; physical harm; sexual abuse; or neglect). Mandatory reporters are obligated under the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 to report to CARL (13 14 78) or submit an online notification via eCARL. If there is an allegation of child sexual abuse (perpetrated by a prescribed person) then it must also be reported to SAPOL on 131 444.

service provider

A person or group of persons (body corporate or company) that is directly or indirectly approved by the Department for Education to provide a service on a department site including: family day care providers; out of school hours care; long day care; governing council employees or members of governing councils.

significant harm

Multiple serious injuries that may result in an extended hospitalisation and a minor permanent impairment; and/or a major work health and safety (WHS) liability incident/issue.

site leader

Has the delegated overall management or control of a Department for Education site.

Policy information

[Incident coordination: managing incidents of extreme severity procedure flowchart](#)

[Emergency management for schools, preschools, education offices and corporate offices](#)

[Responding to students who threaten or use violence to promote a political, religious, or ideological position](#)

Supporting information

[Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority \(ACECQA\)](#)

[Countering Violent Extremism and Fixated Threats flowchart](#)

[Critical incident report form](#)

[Education Standards Board \(SA\)](#)

[Incident and Response Management System \(IRMS\)](#)

[Incidents, illness and complaints in early childhood services](#)

[Incident, injury, trauma and illness record form](#) (for early childhood sites)

[Incident notification information sheet \(Safe Work Australia\)](#)

[Mandatory reporting guide](#)

[Mandatory notification record](#)

[SafeWork SA notifiable incident report form](#)

[Suicide postvention](#)

Related legislation

[Statutes Amendment \(Child Sexual Abuse\) Act 2021](#)

[Education and Early Childhood Services \(Registration and Standards\) Act 2011](#)

[Education and Early Childhood Services \(Registration and Standards\) Regulations 2011](#)

[Return to Work Regulations 2015](#)

[Work Health and Safety Act 2012](#)

[Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012](#)

Related policies

[Assault, weapons, sexual, drug and other offences reported on site - site responsibilities procedure](#)

[Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector](#)

[Incident coordination: managing incidents of extreme severity procedure](#)

[Managing allegations of sexual misconduct guideline](#)

[Protective practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people: guidelines for staff working or volunteering in education or care settings](#)

[Provision of counselling for children, young people, parents and employees when responding to critical incidents of a sexual nature procedure](#)

[Responding to problem sexual behaviour in children and young people: guidelines for staff in education and care settings](#)

[Safety management procedure](#)

[Search and seizure procedure](#)

[Work health and safety policy](#)

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