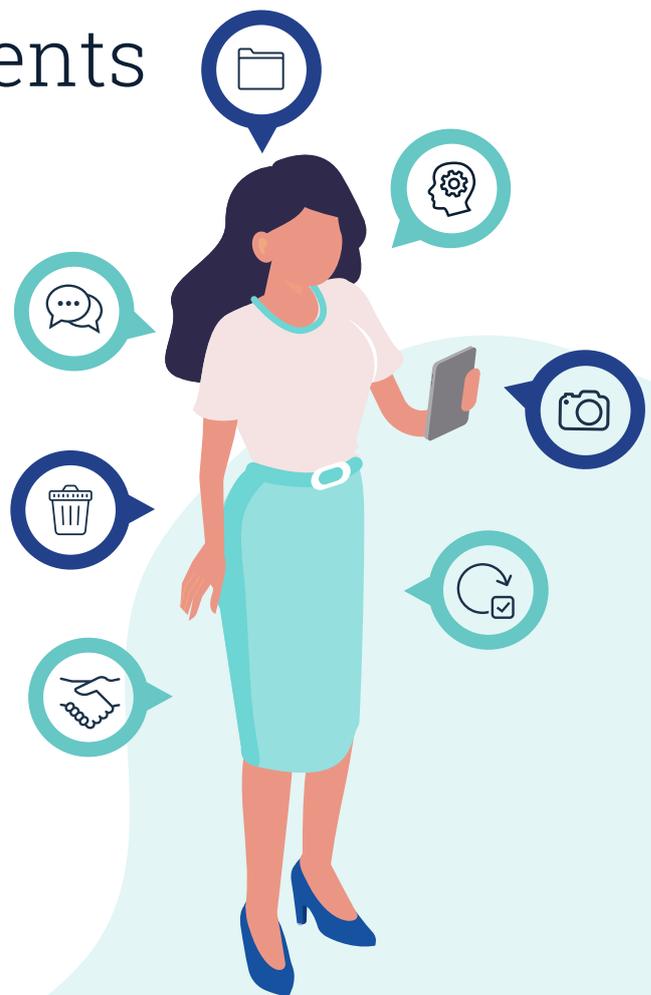# Quick reference guides for responding to online safety incidents

eSafety Toolkit for Schools
Creating safer online environments

This resource includes a series of quick reference guides for responding to online safety incidents. It can be used with eSafety's Online incident assessment tool. For further information or support, refer to eSafety's Guide for responding to serious online safety incidents and Guide to responding to the sharing of explicit material, or refer to education department or sector policies and procedures.

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eSafety's Quick reference guide for responding to mild incidents

Understand and assess

- Reassure students that they have done the right thing by reporting the incident.
- Consider the best interests of the student/s involved — this should guide a response.

Manage the response

- Manage the response internally in line with behaviour management wellbeing and online safety policies and procedures.
- Focus on providing support for all students and involve them in decision making.
- Explain the process and potential outcomes to all involved.
- Consider whether involving parents/carers would help to resolve the situation.

Resolve the conflict

- If a student/s knows strategies and can respond appropriately, only minimal teacher intervention may be needed beyond supporting students.
- Focus on restoring relationships and ensuring all students feel safe and supported.
- Address behaviours and provide education about acceptable use and respectful online behaviour.
- Encourage students to delete the inappropriate content and/or report it to the social media service.

Record and reflect

- For younger students, let parents/carers know that there has been an issue. Explain how the issue has been resolved, unless there a good reason not to involve parents/carers — for example, because it causes further harm.
- For older students, their level of maturity and autonomy should be considered, as well as whether it is appropriate to let them tell their parents/carers first.
- Record the incident, response and actions taken.

Monitor

- Monitor whether the behaviour has stopped.
- Regularly check that students feel safe and supported. Adjust plans if necessary.

eSafety's Quick reference guide
for responding to moderate incidents

Understand and assess

- Reassure students that they have done the right thing by reporting the incident.
- Consider the best interests of the student/s involved — this should guide a response.

Manage the response

- Manage the response internally in line with behaviour management, wellbeing and online safety policies and procedures
- Focus on providing support for all students and involve them in decision making.
- Explain the process and potential outcomes to all involved.
- Consider whether involving parents/carers would help to resolve the situation.

Resolve the conflict

- Focus on restoring relationships and ensuring all students feel safe and supported.
- Address behaviours and provide education about acceptable use and respectful online behaviour.
- Encourage students to delete the inappropriate content and/or report it to the social media service.

Record and reflect

- Let parents/carers know that there has been an issue. Explain how the issue has been resolved, unless there a good reason not to involve parents/carers — for example, it causes further harm or hampers a police investigation.
- Debrief with staff and students, where appropriate.
- Record the incident, response and actions taken.
- Review existing policies and procedures following the incident.

Monitor

- Monitor whether the behaviour has stopped.
- Regularly check that students feel safe and supported. Adjust plans if necessary.

eSafety's Quick reference guide
for responding to serious incidents

Understand and assess

- Reassure students that they have done the right thing by reporting the incident.
- Consider the best interests of the student/s involved — this should guide a response.
- Be aware that some cases may be unlawful and may activate state and territory critical incident or mandatory reporting requirements. Always seek support from the school Principal/school leadership team when responding.

Collect and preserve evidence

- Gather facts and document what has happened.
- Do not view or copy explicit images — refer to eSafety's Guide to responding to the sharing of explicit images.
- For non-explicit material, where possible, take screenshots or record URLs.
- Check state, territory or school policy. Only confiscate or search students' personal devices with informed consent or if permitted by policy.

Manage the response

- Focus on providing support for all students and involve them in decision making.
- Determine who to inform and when to involve others (e.g. parents/carers, other staff or students).
- Engage parents/carers as soon as possible so that the school and the family can work together to respond to the incident, unless there is a good reason not to involve parents/carers, for example when it causes further harm or hampers a police investigation.
- Explain the process and potential outcomes to all involved.

Remove content

- If material is circulating and causing harm, and evidence has been collected and preserved, encourage students to delete the material and/or report it to the social media service where it was posted.
- If cyberbullying content has not been removed 48 hours after a complaint was made to the social media service, lodge a complaint with eSafety, making sure that the student has given their permission.
- For cases of image-based abuse, lodge a complaint with eSafety, making sure the student has given their authorisation.

Resolve the conflict

- Focus on restoring relationships and ensuring all students feel safe and supported.
- Address behaviours and educate on acceptable use and respectful online behaviour.
- Assess whether school-wide communication is appropriate and or what type of intervention is required, such as engaging external providers or support services.
- Consider referring students to external organisations such as Kids Helpline for ongoing or one-off counselling, if required.

Record and reflect

- Record the incident, response and actions taken.
- Complete a Post-incident checklist.
- Review existing policies and procedures following the incident.
- Debrief with staff, students and parents/carers, where appropriate.
- Explain the process and potential outcomes to all involved.

Monitor

- Monitor whether the behaviour has stopped.
- Regularly check that students feel safe and supported. Adjust plans if necessary.

eSafety's Quick reference guide for responding to **severe** incidents
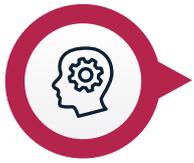
Understand and assess

- Reassure students that they have done the right thing by reporting the incident.
- Consider the best interests of the student/s involved — this should guide a response.
- Be aware of mandatory reporting obligations.

Support student safety, welfare and wellbeing

- If you are concerned about the safety, welfare and wellbeing of a student or suspect unlawful behaviour — report the matter immediately to the Principal or school leadership team.
- The Principal/school leadership team may consult with the child protection/student wellbeing officer before contacting local police or child protection agency.
- The Principal/school leadership team should contact local police and/or make a report online for cases of online grooming or inappropriate behaviour towards children online, for example:
  - adults making online contact with a child under 18 with the intention of facilitating a sexual relationship; or
  - an adult accessing, sending or uploading sexualised material depicting someone under 18.

Collect and preserve evidence

- Gather facts and document what has happened.
- Do not view or copy explicit images — refer to eSafety's Guide to responding to the sharing of explicit images.
- For non-explicit material, where possible, take screenshots or record URLs.
- Check state, territory or school policies. Only confiscate or search students' personal devices with informed consent or if permitted by policy.

Manage the response

- Engage parents/carers as soon as possible so that the school and students' family can work together to respond to the incident, unless there is a good reason not to involve parents/carers, for example when it causes further harm or hampers a police investigation.
- Focus on providing support for all students and, where appropriate, explain the process and potential outcomes to all involved.
- Consider referring students to external organisations such as Kids Helpline for ongoing or one-off counselling, if required.
- Assess whether school-wide communication is appropriate.

Remove content

- If material is circulating and causing harm, and evidence has been collected and preserved, encourage students to delete the material and/or report it to the social media service where it was posted.
- If cyberbullying content has not been removed 48 hours after a complaint was made to the social media service, lodge a complaint with eSafety, making sure that the student has given their authorisation.
- For cases of image-based abuse, lodge a complaint with eSafety, making sure the student has given their authorisation.

Record and reflect

- Record the incident in your school incident management system (or via school reporting documents) and follow up according to school or sector policies and processes.
- Complete a Post-incident checklist.
- Review existing policies and procedures following the incident.
- Debrief with staff, students and parents/carers, where appropriate.

Monitor

- Monitor whether the behaviour has stopped.
- Regularly check that students feel safe and supported. Adjust plans if necessary.