



Tips for responding to incidents that happen outside school hours

Creating safer online environments



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This resource provides guidance on responding to incidents that happen outside school hours. eSafety has developed key principles that can guide appropriate actions and responsibilities.

Disciplinary powers and policies about responding to incidents outside school hours differ across states, territories and sectors. School staff need to be familiar with the legal and ethical responsibilities set out in their school and/or education sector policies and procedures. Youth Law Australia offers valuable information about laws relating to [schools](#) and the [internet, phones and technology](#).

eSafety principles to help guide appropriate actions and responsibilities:

1.

Prioritise supporting the student if an issue is impacting their safety and wellbeing, and provide strategies to assist them.

2.

Act in the best interests of the student regardless of when or where an incident has occurred, or the type of incident. Consider the student's rights, views and wishes.

3.

Fulfil the duty of care that schools and staff have, as well as legal and ethical responsibilities, to respond to reasonably foreseeable harm and to mitigate risks.

4.

Address the factors affecting teaching and learning through education sector and/or school policies and procedures, for example, in the areas of student safety, wellbeing, and behaviour management.

5.

Work in partnership with parents/carers and support services if required, considering the rights, views and wishes of the students involved.

6.

Seek advice when uncertain about the circumstances surrounding an incident. Schools should consult relevant school and/or education sector critical incident response teams, school leadership teams and/or school board members.

Students have a right to be safe and well. School communities have a responsibility to promote student safety and wellbeing, including when they engage online. However, the traditional responsibility and authority that a school has for students is complicated by the 24/7 nature of technology. This complexity is evident when responding to issues that happen outside school hours.

Research suggests that students who are bullied online are often also bullied in person. There is crossover of bullying and other harmful behaviours in and outside of schools. The Australian Government's [Anti-Bullying Rapid Review](#) has recommended that schools intervene early and appropriately to prevent the development and/or escalation of harmful behaviours.