



GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING DRUG-RELATED INCIDENTS IN TASMANIAN SCHOOLS

between

**Tasmania Police and
Tasmanian Schools**

2025-2029

Endorsement

These guidelines are endorsed on behalf of Tasmania Police, Department for Education, Children and Young People, Catholic Education Tasmania and Independent Schools Tasmania.



.....

Donna Adams
Commissioner of Police



.....

Ginna Webster
Secretary, Department for Education, Children and Young People



.....

Gerard Gaskin
Executive Director, Catholic Education Tasmania



.....

Tony Crehan
Executive Director, Independent Schools Tasmania

Key Definitions

Drug-related incident	A drug-related incident is any occasion involving illicit drug use and/or possession, distribution or supply of an illicit drug or drug-related equipment. It also includes incidents involving licit drugs used illicitly (such as misuse of prescription medications, excluding vapes). For the purpose of these guidelines, a drug-related incident does not include alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes or vapes.
Child	Any person under 18 years of age as per the <i>Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997</i>.
Responsible adult	As per Section 3 of the <i>Youth Justice Act 1997</i>
School or Schools	Any Government, Catholic, or independent kindergarten, school, support school, senior secondary school or college. It also refers to any other location where an education program or activity is being undertaken under the management of a school in Tasmania.

Objective

This document forms guidelines that enable an effective response in addressing drug-related incidents involving students in schools. It is designed to:

- identify what police officers, teachers and other school staff need to know about responding to and managing drug-related incidents involving students in schools.
- provide Tasmanian schools and Tasmania Police with the necessary information to develop and implement their own procedures for drug-related incidents.

Schools requiring Tasmania Police assistance in relation to any non-urgent drug-related matter should contact the Police Assistance Line (131 444). Triple zero (000) must only be used in a life threatening or time critical emergency.

Scope

These guidelines relate to students only. Any drug-related matter involving staff, parents/guardians or any other adult should result in police notification, where standard procedures will be applied.

Roles and Responsibilities

Tasmanian Schools

School staff should make a report to Tasmania Police as soon as possible following the occurrence of a drug-related incident on a school premises, or at any other place where an education program is being undertaken under the management of a school.

School staff may request that students possessing illicit drugs or drug paraphernalia surrender any items to them.

To avoid harm from hidden sharp and dangerous objects, school staff are advised never to put their hands into a student's pocket or bag where they cannot see. Students should always be asked to retrieve such concealed property and place it onto a clear flat surface. Where possible, and in alignment with school procedures, school staff should, wherever

possible, maintain uninterrupted observations of a student suspected of possessing illicit drugs until police arrive. This aims to ensure that the student does not:

- Attempt to dispose of the drug, particularly in an unsafe manner (i.e. consuming the drug).
- Hide the drug, causing potential risk to staff and students who may come upon it at a later time.
- Destroy or alter evidence

Staff should take temporary possession of the suspected illicit drug and hand it to police at the first possible opportunity.

Staff should make a record of when and where a suspected drug is taken into possession, and any other information deemed relevant. This provides police with corroborative evidence. The drug should be stored securely until handed over to the police.

In the interests of safeguarding the health and safety of staff, unknown substances should be handled to a minimum and with extreme care.

Protective gloves should always be worn when handling suspected illicit drugs or drug paraphernalia.

Do not under any circumstances taste or sniff any suspicious substance.

Teachers and staff are not encouraged to put themselves in harm's way in order to maintain observations if the student behaves in a dangerous or threatening manner.

In the absence of exceptional circumstances, it is strongly recommended that searches of students and/or their property for illicit drugs or drug items should only be conducted by Tasmania Police. Upon attending, police will assess the situation and take appropriate action, including providing advice to school staff in respect of when to notify parents/guardians of an incident.

To assist police following a drug-related incident, school staff are encouraged to collate the following information prior to police arrival:

- Name, date of birth and address of student/s and their parent/ guardian.
- Description of incident including time, date, location and any other relevant factors.
- Description of substance or item located.

- Any similar previous incidents that the student/s may have been involved in.

School staff are not authorised by the *Poisons Act 1971* or *Misuse of Drugs Act 2001* to destroy or dispose of drugs seized. Any seized drug must be provided to Tasmania Police for destruction in accordance with relevant legislation.

Empty syringes or discarded injecting equipment are not prohibited items and whilst Tasmania Police can be made aware that such items have been located at a school, disposal should be in accordance with occupational health and safety procedures as determined by each educational sector.

Tasmania Police officers and school staff are 'prescribed persons' under the *Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997*. Mandatory reporting provisions apply in the event a prescribed person suspects on reasonable grounds a child is being abused, neglected or is at risk. Tasmania Police officers and school staff should also ensure they are familiar with the provisions of the *Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023* in regard to reportable conduct.

Tasmania Police

In accordance with the *Youth Justice Act 1997* and the Tasmanian Drug Strategy 2024-2029, Tasmania Police apply a diversionary approach to drug-related incidents in schools.

Tasmania Police uniform officers are responsible for the initial attendance and investigation of drug-related incidents in schools. Drug-related incidents involving the supply or distribution of drugs will be referred to the relevant area for investigation. For serious drug-related matters, a school liaison officer may be appointed with direct responsibility for liaising with schools within the relevant geographical area.

The primary objective of Tasmania Police in relation to drug-related incidents in schools is to ensure the safety of students attending educational facilities.

Tasmania Police prioritises identifying and apprehending people supplying and/or selling drugs to students. The prosecution of students in possession of, or using, an illicit drug is not a primary objective. In some cases, referral to Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS), Department

of Health, or other relevant services, is the preferred outcome for appropriate health intervention.

The responsibility for informing parents and guardians of any drug-related incidents in schools lies with the school, noting that there is a duty for police to involve parents and/or guardians or other responsible adult when interviewing children.

When informed by a school of a drug-related incident, the actions taken by Tasmania Police will vary depending on whether a student is identified as part of the incident. Table 1 summarises the Tasmania Police response.

Table 1 – Tasmania Police response to school/student drug-related incidents.

Incident involvement	No student identified in the drug-related incident (e.g. substance or drug-related item located on school premises)	Student/s identified in drug-related incident
Tasmania Police response	• Uniform police officers will attend and collect the substance or item. • Attending police will submit an internal report with relevant incident details.	• Uniform police officers will attend and investigate the incident in accordance with operational protocols. • Attending police will submit an internal report with relevant incident details. • If police determine that interviewing a student (under 18 years) is appropriate, it will be conducted in the presence of a parent, guardian or other responsible adult.

In circumstances where the drug-related incident reveals evidence of further illegal behaviour, police discretion will be applied as to whether the student will be proceeded against under provisions of the *Youth Justice Act 1997*. The Tasmania Police Manual, available via the Tasmania Police website, provides further guidance for police on this process.

Each incident will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, police will discuss the details and provide advice relating to the response to each incident accordingly.

Media Management

Formal media management will be undertaken if required in consultation with the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management and the involved education entity at the time of the incident.

Document information

A review of the Guidelines will be undertaken by all parties involved no later than 30 November 2029. An earlier review may be considered if needed.