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Rabbinical Council of Victoria

Religious Leadership for the Jewish Community

ועד הרבנים דויקטוריה

RCV Resolution Condemning and Combating Child Abuse

Whereas we have become increasingly aware of incidents of the sexual and physical abuse of children in our community; and

Whereas the lives and futures of many of these victims and their families are harmed in significant ways: suicide, post traumatic stress syndrome, inability to form healthy relationships, inability to develop healthy intimate relationships, etc.; and

Whereas many victims of abuse in our community still remain silent and do not come forward to accuse perpetrators or seek help for fear of stigma, personal and familial consequences, or perceived *halachic* concerns; and

Whereas the Rabbinical Council of Victoria condemns abuse and proclaims its censure of abusers, and affirms that the prohibitions of *mesirah* (reporting crimes to the civil authorities) and *arka'ot* (adjudication in civil courts) do not apply in cases of abuse and in fact, it is *halachically* obligatory to make such reports; and

Whereas reiterating this long held position can serve to provide pastoral and *halachic* leadership, support, direction and affirmation to abuse survivors and their families and advocates.

Therefore, the Rabbinical Council of Victoria resolves that:

- It affirms its unqualified condemnation of all forms of child abuse.
- It affirms its *halachic* position that the prohibitions of *mesirah* (reporting crimes to the civil authorities) and *arka'ot* (adjudication in civil courts) do not apply in cases of abuse.
- It will regularly issue on its website and to the media appropriate statements of condemnation when public attention is drawn to a case in which Jews are either victims or perpetrators of abuse.
- It will regularly evaluate the competence of its members in understanding and responding to issues of child abuse and initiate training and continuing educational opportunities for all of its members in this area.
- The members of the Rabbinical Council of Victoria address the issue of child abuse in their communities in at least one sermon per year, and that it be encouraged that contact information for local abuse services be displayed in a public place in all synagogues and Jewish community institutions serviced by its members.

The RCV works in partnership with the Jewish Taskforce Against Family Violence (JTAFV) and responds to disclosures of abuse confidentially and effectively. The RCV liaison to the JTAFV may be contacted on (03) 8517-5684.