

Child Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Prevention

Reporting Responsibilities

Staff are expected to report every instance of suspected child abuse or neglect. Since protection of children is the paramount concern, staff should discuss any suspected evidence with the principal, counselor or nurse regardless of whether the condition is listed among the indicators of abuse or neglect.

Staff are reminded of their obligation as district employees to report suspected child abuse, and professional staff are reminded of their legal obligation to make such reports. Staff are also reminded of their immunity from potential liability for doing so. The following procedures are to be used in reporting instances of suspected child abuse:

- A. When there is reasonable cause to believe that a student has suffered abuse, neglect, or exploitation by a parent or caregiver staff, or the principal will immediately report suspected child abuse and neglect to the intake hotline at 1-866-363-4276 (Child Protective Service (CPS) within the office of the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). This contact must be made within forty-eight (48) hours. If the situation is urgent, staff shall immediately contact the local law enforcement agency. For example, if a household member is believed to be the perpetrator of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

Staff will also advise the principal regarding instances of suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation as well as any reports that have been made to CPS and/or law enforcement. If the Principal is unavailable, notification of the report will be made to the counselor, school nurse or social worker. The counselor, nurse or social worker will inform the principal as soon as practical and within twenty-four (24) hours.

Child Protective Services has the responsibility of determining the fact of child abuse or neglect. Any doubt about the child's condition will be resolved in favor of making the report.

- B. A written report will be submitted promptly to the agency or agencies to which the phone report was made. (Exhibit A) The report will include:
1. The name, address, and age of the child.
 2. The name and address of the parent or person having custody of the child.
 3. The nature and extent of the suspected abuse or neglect.
 4. Any evidence of previous abuse or any other information that may relate to the cause or extent of the abuse or neglect; and
 5. The identity, if known, of the person accused of inflicting the abuse.

Abuse Indicators

Physical abuse indicators:

1. Bilateral bruises, extensive bruises, bruises of different ages, patterns of bruises caused by a particular instrument (belt buckle, wire, straight edge, coat hanger, etc.).
2. Burn patterns consistent with forced immersion in a hot liquid (a distinct boundary line where the burn stops), burn patterns consistent with a spattering by hot liquids, patterns caused by a particular kind of implement (electric iron, etc.) or instrument (circular cigarette burns, etc.).
3. Lacerations, welts, abrasions.

4. Injuries inconsistent with information offered by the child.
5. Injuries inconsistent with the child's age; or
6. Injuries that regularly appear after absence or vacation.

Sexual Abuse Indicators

Sexual abuse, whether physical injuries are sustained or not, is any act or acts involving sexual molestation or exploitation, including but not limited to incest, rape, carnal knowledge, sodomy or unnatural or perverted sexual practices. Indicators include:

1. Child having difficulty sitting down.
2. Child refusing to change into gym clothes (when he/she has been willing to change in the past).
3. Venereal disease in a child of any age.
4. Evidence of physical trauma or bleeding to the oral, genital, or anal areas.
5. Child running away from home and not giving any specific complaint about what is wrong at home; or
6. Pregnancy at 11 or 12 with no history of peer socialization.

Neglect Abuse Indicators

1. Lack of basic needs (food, clothing, shelter).
2. Inadequate supervision (unattended).
3. Lack of essential health care and high incidence of illness.
4. Poor hygiene on a regular basis.
5. Inappropriate clothing in inclement weather; or
6. Abandonment
7. Fearfulness of adults or authority figures; or
8. Revelations of highly inappropriate adult behavior, i.e., being enclosed in a dark closet, forced to drink, or eat inedible items

Some Behavioral Indicators of Abuse:

1. Wary of adult contact.
2. Frightened of parents.
3. Afraid to go home.
4. Habitually truant or late to school.
5. Arrives at school early and remains after school later than other students.
6. Wary of physical contact by adults.
7. Shows evidence of overall poor care.
8. Parents describe child as “difficult” or “bad;”
9. Inappropriately dressed for the weather — no coat or shoes in cold weather or long sleeves and high necklines in hot weather (possibly hiding marks of abuse); or
10. Exhibit behavioral extremes: crying often or never, unusually aggressive, or withdrawn and fearful.

NOTE: Behavioral indicators in and of themselves do not prove abuse has occurred. Together with other indicators they may warrant a referral.

Child abuse as defined by the statute can be inflicted “by any person” and may include student-on-student abuse. These cases also require reporting to DCYF or law enforcement. Child abuse in this and all other cases requires two elements. First, there must be injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, negligent treatment or maltreatment. Second, there must be harm to the child’s health, welfare or safety.

Interviews of Suspected Abused or Neglected Child

- A. If a CPS social worker, unaccompanied by law enforcement, requests to interview the suspected abused or neglected child at school, the CPS social worker will obtain the child's consent before interviewing the student. The CPS social worker will ask the child if he or she would like a third-party person (adult) to be present during the interview. Unless the child objects, the CPS social worker shall make reasonable efforts to include a third party in any interview if the presence of the third party will not jeopardize the course of the investigation.

The third-party will document the questions asked and the student's answers regarding consent. (Exhibit B). The CPS social worker will notify the student's family at the earliest point in the investigation that will not jeopardize the safety or protection of the child or the course of the investigation.

If a law enforcement officer requests to interview the suspected abused or neglected student, the law enforcement officer will notify the student's family at the earliest point in the investigation that will not jeopardize the safety or protection of the child or the course of the investigation.

The law enforcement officer will obtain the child's consent before interviewing the student. The law enforcement officer will whether the child wishes a third party to be present for the interview and if so, shall make reasonable efforts to accommodate the child's wishes. Unless the child objects, the law enforcement officer shall make reasonable efforts to include a third party in any interview if the presence of the third party will not jeopardize the course of the investigation. The third-party will document the questions asked and the student's answers regarding consent. (Exhibit B).

The CPS social worker and law enforcement officer shall have access to all relevant records of the child in possession of the mandated reporters and their employees.

Requests for Information

If office staff receive a call from a CPS social worker or law enforcement officer requesting information about a student, staff will take the following actions:

1. Request and record the name of the CPS social worker as well as their supervisor's name.
2. Request that the CPS social worker to fax or email the information requested and a statement regarding the purpose of the request, along with a copy of their CPS photo I.D. card.
3. If the CPS social worker states that the purpose of the request is in connection with its investigation of a report of alleged child abuse, neglect, or exploitation, respond to the request (in consultation with the General Counsel's office as needed) by supplying the relevant records of the child.
4. Make a record of the information that was accessed/released in response to the request and file the information in the student cumulative file. This record of access will include the date of access/release, name of the person to whom the information was released, and a statement that the access/release was in response to an investigation of a report of alleged child abuse or neglect.

Date: 8.14, 9.15, 12.16, 8.17, 7.19, 9.21