

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

By law, any school employee must report suspected child abuse to the Department of Children Services and local law enforcement. The report should be filed jointly by the employee and the school's child abuse coordinator. It is the duty of the employee and child abuse coordinator to immediately report, not investigate, suspected child abuse. The investigation is the responsibility of DCS and law enforcement.

The reporting of suspected child abuse is strictly confidential and should not be shared with anyone other than the child abuse coordinator.

An employee may suspect child abuse if:

1. The victim divulges pertinent information directly with the employee,
2. A third-party shares information with the employee, or
3. The employee observes signs of abuse.

If a victim begins to divulge information about being abused, the employee should:

1. Take the child to a quiet, private space,
2. Allow the child to share the information in his/her own words,
3. Be positive and reassuring; let the child know he/she is doing the right thing by telling,
4. Write down the information as accurately as possible, using the child's exact words,
5. Let the child know that the employee will have to report the information being given,
6. If the child is willing, have him/her meet with the employee and the child abuse coordinator; If the child is not willing to meet with the coordinator, the employee must still share the information obtained from the child with the coordinator,
7. Ask the child if he/she feels safe going home, and
8. The coordinator and employee should together report the suspected abuse to DCS and law enforcement (the SRO).

The employee and/or child abuse coordinator should not:

1. Ask probing or leading questions,
2. Try to determine if the child is being truthful,
3. Correct the child's vernacular,
4. Make judgment statements about the accused,
5. Take pictures of suspected injuries or video record the conversation,
6. Discuss the suspected abuse with anyone else, or
7. Contact the parents.

If a third-party shares information about child abuse, the employee should:

1. Encourage the third-party to report the suspected abuse to DCS and law enforcement,
2. Report the information to the school's child abuse coordinator, and
3. Together with the child abuse coordinator report the information to DCS and law enforcement (the SRO).

The employee should not:

1. Question the victim about the information, or
2. Discuss the information with anyone else, including the parents.

If signs of abuse or neglect are observed, such as unexplained bruising or injuries, sudden changes in behavior, or inappropriate sexual behaviors, then the employee should:

1. Report the signs to the child abuse coordinator,
2. Document, in writing, the signs observed,
3. Together with the child abuse coordinator, file a report with DCS and local law enforcement (the SRO).

The employee should not:

1. Take pictures of injuries, or
2. Ask or force the victim to remove clothes to look for signs of abuse.

Remember

It is not the employee's responsibility to investigate or determine if abuse has or has not occurred.

If an employee suspects child abuse, he/she is required by law to report, along with the coordinator, to both DCS and law enforcement.

Information regarding child abuse is confidential. Parents cannot be informed by the school even if they are not the suspected abusers.

Note: The child abuse coordinator in each school is the school counselor. The asst. coordinator is either the principal or asst. principal.