

Child Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Prevention

Each school principal will develop and implement an instructional program that will teach students:

1. How to recognize the factors that may cause people to abuse, neglect or exploit children;
2. How one may protect oneself from incurring these forms of maltreatment; and
3. What resources are available to assist an individual who does or may encounter an abusive situation.

To facilitate such a program, staff development activities may include such topics as:

1. Child growth and development;
2. Identification of child abuse, neglect and exploitation;
3. Effects of child maltreatment on child growth and development;
4. Personal safety as it relates to potential child abuse, neglect and exploitation;
5. Parenting and supervision skills;
6. Life situations/stressors which may lead to child maltreatment; or
7. Substance abuse.

Reporting Responsibilities

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

Staff are reminded of their legal obligation as district employees to report suspected child abuse, neglect or exploitation. Professional staff are reminded of their legal obligation to report these incidents. 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, neglect or exploitation:

- A. When there is reasonable cause to believe a student has suffered abuse, neglect or exploitation, staff or the principal will immediately contact the nearest office of the Child Protective Services (CPS) of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). Staff or the principal on Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) will also contact military police. If the situation is urgent and CPS cannot immediately respond, staff shall immediately contact the local law enforcement agency. This contact must be made within forty-eight (48) hours. Staff will also advise the principal or supervisor regarding instances of suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation as well as reports that have been made to CPS or law enforcement. If the principal or supervisor is absent, the report will be made to the nurse or counselor.

A staff member may contact CPS to determine if a report should be made. CPS 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 to which the report was made. 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.
- C. When the district receives a report that a school employee has committed an act of sexual misconduct, it will notify the parents of the alleged victim within forty-eight (48) hours.

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.) or unreasonable use of force (grabbing, pinching, dragging and/or other unapproved forms of restraint);
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 an absence or vacation.

Emotional Abuse Indicators

1. Lags in physical development;
2. Extreme behavior disorder;
3. Fearfulness of adults or authority figures; or
4. Revelations of highly inappropriate adult behavior, i.e., being enclosed in a dark closet, forced to drink or eat inedible items.

Sexual Abuse Indicators

Sexual abuse, whether physical injuries are sustained or not, is any act or acts involving intentional sexual contact, conduct or communication with a child. Beyond direct evidence of this kind of abuse, indicators may include, but are not limited to:

1. A child's developmentally inappropriate sexual conduct, regardless of the child's own mental status or development;
2. Child engaging in "sex talk," drawings or attempting to access pornography;
3. Child's disclosure of "grooming behaviors" or inappropriate conduct that does not necessarily rise to a specific sexual act;
4. An adult's attempt to form a secret or unreasonably special relationship with a child;
5. Venereal disease in a child of any age;
6. Evidence of physical trauma or bleeding to the oral, genital or anal areas; or
7. Pregnancy.

Physical Neglect Indicators

1. Lack of basic needs (food, clothing, safety, shelter);
2. Inadequate supervision ;
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.

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 or caretakers 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: Indicators in and of themselves do not necessarily prove abuse, neglect or exploitation has occurred. However, they still may warrant a referral to CPS or law enforcement. When in doubt, staff should consult with CPS about making a report.

Child abuse as defined by the statutes can be inflicted “by any person” and may include student-on-student abuse. These cases also require reporting to CPS or law enforcement.

Victim Interview by CPS or Law Enforcement at School

Upon receiving a report of suspected child abuse or neglect, CPS or law enforcement agency may interview children. School personnel should not conduct an interview. The interview may be conducted on school premises outside the presence of parents. Prior to permitting a student to be interviewed, proper identification of the interviewer as an employee of CPS or law enforcement shall be obtained. Parental notification of the interview is the responsibility of CPS or the law enforcement agency. School personnel should not notify the parents or guardian that a child has been interviewed or placed into protective custody. A third party, such as a teacher, counselor or principal, may be present during the interview, unless the child objects or the interviewer determines the third party may jeopardize the course of the investigation. In addition, pursuant to RCW 26.44.060, CPS or the investigating law enforcement agency shall have access to all relevant records of the child in the possession of the District or its employees.

The superintendent or designee will ensure staff is trained in CPS reporting procedures upon initial hire and a minimum of every three years thereafter.

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