



# LAWNDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Department of Pupil Services

### CHILD ABUSE REPORTING PROCEDURE

Child abuse reporting law (Penal Code Section 11166) requires that any school district employee who has reason to believe that a child has been subjected to physical abuse or neglect, report the incident to the proper authorities. In 2001, the law was changed to include that any mandated reporter who has knowledge of, or reasonably suspects that mental suffering has been inflicted upon a child or that his or her emotional well-being is endangered in any way may make a report to a child protective agency.

For the purposes of our District, the "proper authorities" are:

Department of Children's Services (800) 540-4000  
OR  
Lennox Sheriff's Station Dispatch (310) 671-7531

*The determination as to **WHO** should be contacted will depend greatly upon the situation at hand. Note that the Sheriff's station will dispatch a unit to the school as soon as possible. Children's services on the other hand, may take much longer to respond. While there are no "clear cut" guidelines to follow in determining who to call, school personnel should always take into consideration the severity of the abuse and the extent to which the student's safety is "at risk". If in doubt, it is probably better to err on the side of caution by calling the Sheriff.*

The following procedures have been established to assist you in reporting:

1. In all cases of suspected child abuse within the Lawndale School District, the school nurse and principal (or asst. principal) should immediately be notified and consulted. In cases where a classified employee suspects child abuse, he/she should notify and consult with the classroom teacher, nurse, assistant principal, and/or principal.
2. The person who suspected the child abuse shall call the Department of Children's Services (DCS) immediately or as soon as possible by phone and shall complete a written report within 36 hours of suspecting the child abuse. The nurse, VP, or principal may make the call to DCS or the Lennox Sheriff's Department and may write the report. However, the individual who first became aware of the suspected abuse remains legally responsible for reporting the suspected child abuse, and should not assume that someone else will complete the reporting.

When calling to make a report, it is best to have a copy of the report and/or form with you so that you will have all of the following information:

- a. Name of the child, birth date, parents' names, addresses, siblings
- b. Present location of the child
- c. Nature and extent of the injury, and
- d. Any other information including that which led the person to suspect child abuse.

3. It is the responsibility of DCS or the Lennox Sheriff's station to contact the child's parent/guardian regarding the suspected abuse incident. If the agency determines that it would be unsafe to disclose the child's location to the parent, the information (about the child's location) may be withheld from the parent for up to 24 hours. (EC 48906)
4. If the agency removes the child from the school, school personnel should obtain the name and telephone number of the peace officer/case worker. This information must be made available to the parent/guardian. In addition, the form entitled "Removal of Pupils from School during School Hours by a Peace Officer/Social Worker" (dated 9/84) should be completed.
5. The "SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE REPORT" form must be completed by the mandated reporter. One copy is kept at the school and a copy is sent to Pupil Services. The remaining copies are mailed to DCS. This report must be filed WITHIN 36 HOURS of the incident.

### **NOTE**

Child abuse reporting is an INDIVIDUAL'S DUTY and RESPONSIBILITY. Even though there are District procedures in place, employees suspecting child abuse should take steps to insure that a report has been filed. If the person designated to make the report FAILS TO DO SO, it is the responsibility of others who are aware of the situation to make the report IMMEDIATELY. Failure to do so is punishable by up to 6 months in jail, up to \$1,000 in fines, or both!

It should also be noted that:

1. The identity of the reporter is CONFIDENTIAL.
2. The law provides for immunity from civil or criminal liability for reporters of child abuse - unless the person makes a knowingly false report.

Remember, your DUTY is to report, but not to INVESTIGATE the child abuse case. Leave this matter to the police or the Department of Children's Services.

### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

For more information about child abuse, how to recognize it, how to report it and the specifics relating to legal issues, contact the Pupil Personnel Services Office at 973-1300 ext. 1214 or ask Human Resources for a copy of "Child Abuse Reporting Requirements".