



**DUNECREST
AMERICAN
SCHOOL**

*Raising
Student
Achievement
Every Day,
Every Way*

**CHILD PROTECTION
POLICY**

2023-2024

CHILD PROTECTION

All school employees are required to report any and all suspected cases of child abuse immediately to the Head of School. Child abuse incidents are to be reported immediately from the time that one becomes aware of a child abuse situation. Applicable U.A.E. laws will be followed.

Child abuse and neglect, particularly sexual abuse, are among the world's most serious concerns, with millions of cases reported to various children's protective service organizations each year. It is estimated globally that 150 million girls and 73 million boys under the age of 18 have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence involving physical contact (International Center for Assault Prevention). Yet, it is also estimated that much abuse is underreported either because the victims are afraid to tell anyone what has happened, or the adults who observe or suspect the abuse are unsure of what to do.

Dunecrest American School has a moral as well as legal duty to safeguard the welfare of our students, as well as those children using our facilities or involved with our programs and activities. The Child Protection Policy sets forth the steps our faculty, staff, students, volunteers, contractors, and consultants are required to take to minimize the threat of child abuse in our school and to respond promptly and effectively should abuse be observed, suspected, or disclosed.

Our goal is to build and maintain a proactive environment that protects children by either preventing child abuse before it occurs or by ensuring its earliest possible detection, intervention and reporting. Our strategy is to ensure that all school personnel, from professional faculty and staff, employees and contractual personnel, to student teachers, interns, volunteers, classroom assistants, students and parents understand the issues of child abuse and neglect; know how to recognize its signs and symptoms; are familiar with national, international and local reporting procedures; and know the responsibilities of mandated reporters, including how, when, and to whom to make a report. Our Policy strives to have procedures, and training in place so that if child abuse is suspected, observed, or disclosed to any member of the school community, that person will have the knowledge, information, and resources necessary to ensure that the child is safe, that the situation is communicated promptly and effectively, and that the suspicion or incident is reported to the appropriate authorities.

COMMONLY HELD MYTHS VS THE REALITIES ABOUT CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Myth: *Child abuse is carried out by strangers.*

Fact: Research indicates that 90% of abuse is from domestic causes and is committed by individuals known to the child. International school communities tend to have families that move often and are separated from their extended families in their home-of-record. When abuse is within the family, the transient life-style then increases the risk to international school students who tend not to have access to outside resources, and therefore cannot get help.

Myth: *Learning about child protection is harmful to your children.*

Fact: Research indicates that developmentally appropriate education makes children more confident and able to react to dangerous situations. Teaching using a specific population context increases protective behavior.

Myth: *Abuse education is sex education.*

Fact: Research-based programs prepare students to develop the skills and attitudes to keep themselves safe from perpetrators, and behaviors that include bullying, harassment and other forms of exploitation.

Myth: *Abuse is a matter of culture; physical or sexual abuse falls within the norms of some cultures and is acceptable.*

Fact: The reality is that there is no excuse for child abuse. No culture supports harming children.

Myth: *Child abuse is a result of poverty and happens in low socioeconomic circumstances.*

Fact: Research indicates that child abuse occurs in all racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and cultural sectors of society. A common characteristic of an abusive family is isolation, such as that commonly found in our international school families who move often or are separated from their extended families at home.

Following are some of the characteristics/attributes of international school communities that should be taken in account when considering the context for our Child Protection Policy.

- Characteristics/attributes of international school children:
 - Transience and mobility impacts development of identity and relationships (especially for support in times of need);
 - Early maturity/sophistication vs. naiveté and immaturity in other areas;
 - Separation from extended families; working and traveling parents, and separation from long term friendships/relationships results in attachment issues and thus support during times of crisis or need may be minimal or non-existent;
 - Lost between multiple and sometimes conflicting cultures and value systems resulting in confusion of behavioral expectations;
 - High expectations placed on students to achieve academically;
 - Access to maids and other daily helpers (drivers); and
 - Access to expensive international schools because companies pay tuition while they (and their peers) in their home-of-record, previously attended public school.
- Characteristics of international school families:
 - Isolation from extended family, previous community for support;
 - Power differential in marriage (who has the work permit) creates vulnerability;
 - Impact of absentee parents;
 - “Love-hate” relationship with host country for expatriates;
 - Lack of control over critical life decisions: company decides where, when, and how the family moves. Lack of stability; and
 - Superficial/tourist relationship with host country.
- Characteristics of international school communities:
 - School takes on sole role as center of family life and often provides superficial relationships that cannot meet mental health needs;
 - Power influence: family’s “position” in community can be an inhibitor for school to act; and
 - Sense of being “lost” in diversity of community can cause further isolation.
- Cultural dynamics of international school communities:
 - Multiple norms rooted in different cultural traditions can cause confusion: religious values, values of parenting, discipline, caregiving, sexuality, gender roles and responsibilities;
 - Impact of rapidly changing “pop culture” from developed nations;
 - Varying degrees of openness rooted in cultural traditions; and
 - Varying cultural attitudes toward gender issues and child development, different concepts of developmental needs through childhood.

International school communities are vulnerable to abuse because the nature of abuse requires secrecy, insularity, isolation and limited access to support resources, which are some characteristics of the

international community. International schools must respond to the reality that these characteristics are exactly the characteristics that perpetrators will use to their advantage in abusing children.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Child protection concerns include suspected, alleged, self-disclosed, or witnessed abuse of a child by anyone associated within or outside the school which must be investigated and followed by appropriate action.

Child Abuse according to the World Health Organization, constitutes “all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.” A person may abuse a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional (e.g. school) or community setting; children may be abused by individuals known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. Often children may experience multiple forms of abuse simultaneously, further complicating the problem. Most child abuse is inflicted by someone the child knows, respects or trusts.

Physical abuse may involve hitting, punching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, biting, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing intentional physical harm to a child. These symptoms could also indicate harm to self, such as, cutting and suicide ideation.

SIGNS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts.
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries.
- Injuries which have not received medical attention.
- Injuries that occur to the body in places that are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained stomach pains.
- Refusal to discuss injuries.
- Withdrawal from physical contact.
- Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather.
- Fear of returning home or of parents being contacted.
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults.
- Self-destructive tendencies.
- Being aggressive towards others.
- Being very passive and compliant.
- Chronic running away.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child so as to cause severe and adverse effects on a child’s emotional development. It may involve: conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved; that they are inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person; age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children; causing children frequently to feel frightened; or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may also occur alone.

SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- Physical, mental and emotional development is delayed.
- Highly anxious.

- Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder.
- Fear of new situations.
- Low self-esteem.
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations.
- Extremes of passivity or aggression.
- Drug or alcohol abuse.
- Chronic running away.
- Compulsive stealing.
- Obsessions or phobias.
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration.
- Attention seeking behavior.
- Persistent tiredness.
- Lying.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (i.e. rape) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production or viewing of pornographic material or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Children involved in commercial sex work are victims of sexual abuse, whether they perceive themselves as victims or not.

SIGNS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

- Pain or irritation to the genital area.
- Vaginal or penile discharge.
- Difficulty with urination.
- Infection, bleeding.
- STDs.
- Fear of people or places.
- Aggression.
- Regressive behaviors, bed wetting or stranger anxiety.
- Excessive masturbation.
- Sexually provocative.
- Stomach pains or discomfort walking or sitting.
- Being unusually quiet and withdrawn or unusually aggressive.
- Suffering from what seem physical ailments that can't be explained medically.
- Showing fear or distrust of a particular adult.
- Mentioning receiving special attention from an adult or a new "secret" friendship with an adult or young person.
- Refusal to continue with school or usual social activities.
- Age inappropriate sexualized behavior or language.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or physiological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development.

INDICATORS OF NEGLECT

- Medical needs unattended.
- Lack of supervision.
- Consistent hunger.

- Inappropriate dress.
- Poor hygiene.
- Inadequate nutrition.
- Fatigue or listlessness.
- Self-destructive.
- Extreme loneliness.
- Extreme need for affection.
- Failure to grow.
- Poor personal hygiene.
- Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school.
- Low self-esteem.
- Poor social relationships.
- Compulsive stealing.
- Drug or alcohol abuse.

The impact of child abuse can persist for a lifetime after the abuse has been committed. Some victims of abuse are resilient and thus manage to function and survive. Much research has established the relationship between long-term child abuse and lifetime health and well-being, especially if the children do not get appropriate support to help them cope with the trauma. The most important point to consider is that children often are exposed to multiple forms of abuse and suffer a myriad of symptoms. Furthermore, all forms of abuse have the potential for long term impact on the victims and can affect the victim's ability to function as a human being. Abuse challenges the self-value, self-esteem, and sense of worth of its victims, rendering them hopeless, helpless and unable to live a complete life.

LONG TERM IMPACT OF CHILD ABUSE

- Poor educational achievement.
- Inability to complete responsibilities.
- Inability to live according to plan/ability.
- Inability to care for self.
- Inability to coexist, cooperate or work with others.
- Lack of self-confidence, prone to addiction.
- Inability to express love/or accept love.
- Inability to lead family, constant health problem.
- Prone to mental health problems.
- Low self-esteem, depression and anxiety.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Attachment difficulties.
- Eating disorders.
- Poor peer relations, self-injurious behavior (e.g., suicide attempts).

In addition to knowing the signs of victimization, below are some early warning signs to look out for in potential offenders.

SIGNS OF OFFENDERS (STUDENTS)

- Unusual interest in sex, sexualizing inanimate objects and activities.
- Does not stop sexual misbehavior when told to stop.
- Uses force and coercion in social situations.
- Unusual intensity when discussing sex and sexuality.

- Socializes with children much younger.
- Gives gifts, requires secrecy in relationships.

SIGNS OF OFFENDERS (ADULTS)

- Has “favorite” student or child.
- Attempts to find ways to be alone with children.
- Inappropriate language, jokes and discussions about and with students/children.
- Sexualized talk in the presence of students/children.
- Gives private gifts or has private chats on Facebook/internet.

Dunecrest American School is committed to the safety and protection of children. This Code of Conduct applies to all faculty, staff, employees, volunteers and students who represent the school and who interact with children or young people in both a direct and/or unsupervised capacity.

Dunecrest American School’s teaching, support or administrative staff are prohibited at all times from physically disciplining a child.

We should be aware of our own and other persons’ vulnerability, especially when working alone with children and youth, and be particularly aware that we are responsible for maintaining physical, emotional, and sexual boundaries in such interactions. We must avoid any covert or overt sexual behaviors with those for whom we have responsibility. This includes seductive speech or gestures as well as physical contact that exploits, abuses, or harasses. We are to provide safe environments for children and young people. We must show prudent discretion before touching another person, especially children and young people, and be aware of how physical touch will be perceived or received, and whether it would be an appropriate expression of greeting, care, concern, or celebration. Physical contact with children can be misconstrued both by the recipient and by those who observe it and should occur only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and never in private.

We must intervene when there is evidence of, or there is reasonable cause to suspect, that children are being abused in any way. Suspected abuse or neglect must be reported to the Head of School.

Communication with children is governed by the key safety concept of transparency. The following steps will reduce the risk of private or otherwise inappropriate communication between parents, administration, teachers, personnel, volunteers, and minors.

- Where possible, email exchanges between a minor and a person acting on behalf of the school are to be made using a school email address.
- Electronic communication that takes place over a school network or platform may be subject to periodic monitoring.
- Faculty, staff, and volunteers who use any form of online communications including social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and text messaging to communicate with minors may only do so for activities involving school business.

It is obligatory for faculty, staff, and administrators to report incidents of physical or psychological violence, aggression, harassment, and physical or sexual abuse immediately to the Head of School. The Students are encouraged to report incidents for which they themselves or others may be the victims. Reporting by students may be verbal or in writing and shared with any school employee, who, in turn, shall communicate this information to a school counselor. The counselor shall gather information and provide written documentation including the date, person or persons involved, and any additional

relevant information. If there is reasonable cause to believe child abuse has occurred, the counselor will report to the Head of School who shall follow the steps noted in these guidelines, documenting all aspects of the investigation and resulting actions. Such actions include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:

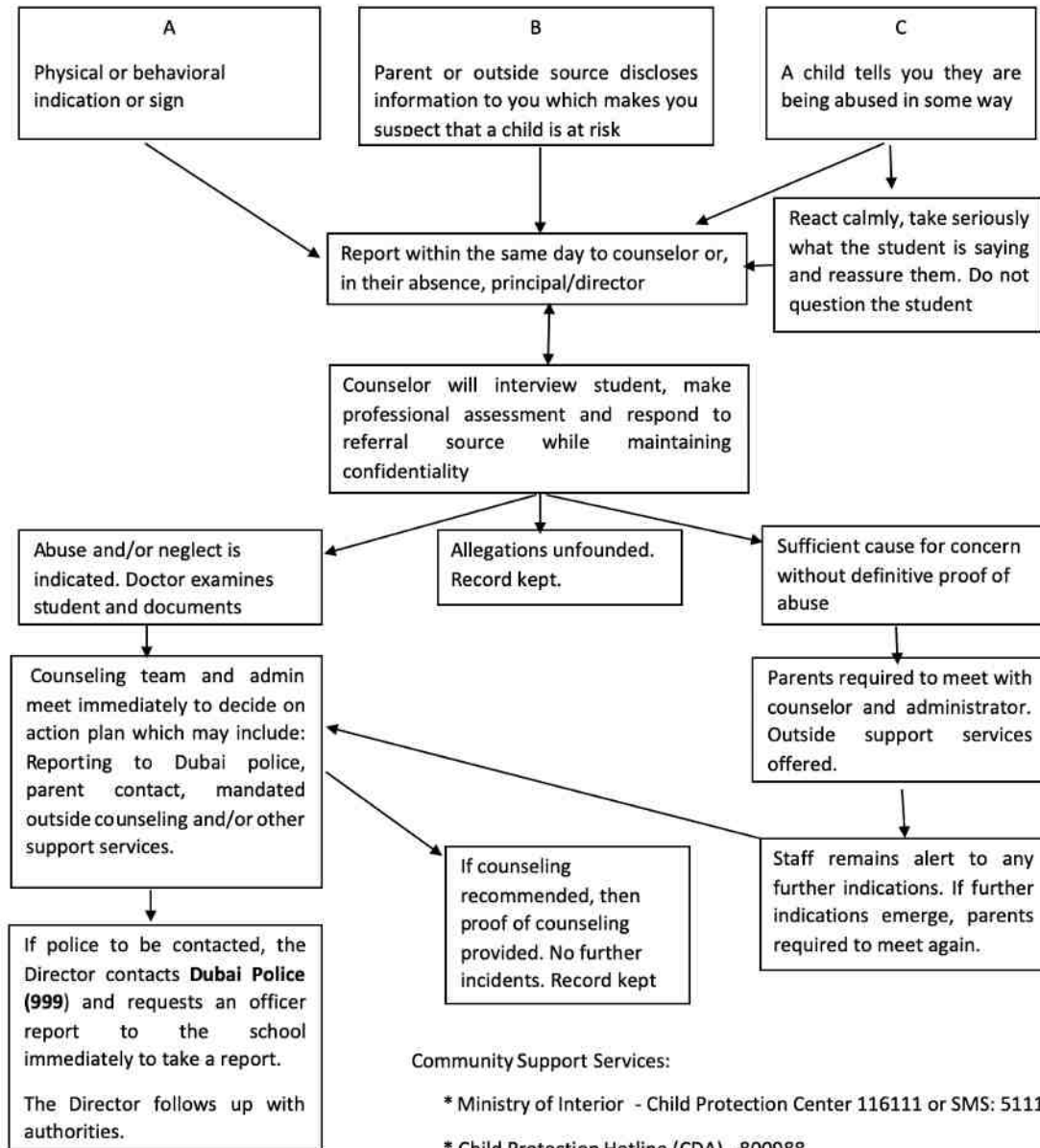
- Conference with students involved;
- Parent notification;
- Meeting with parents;
- Meeting with others pertinent to the case, including the alleged perpetrator(s);
- Contacting school nurse;
- Psychological assessment;
- Mandatory counseling sessions;
- Reporting to child protection services in UAE;
- Legal action and prosecution by the authorities;
- Suspension or termination of employment (if a school employee).

GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO A CHILD'S DISCLOSURE

- Do not let a child swear you to secrecy before telling you something. You may need to report, which the child will view as breaking your trust with them.
- If a child asks to speak with you try to find a neutral setting where you can have quiet and few interruptions.
- Do not lead the child in telling. Just listen, letting him/her explain in his/her own words.
- Don't pressure for a great amount of detail.
- Respond calmly and matter-of-factly. Even if the story that the child tells you is difficult to hear, it is important not to register disgust or alarm.
- Do not make judgmental or disparaging comments about the abuser, it is often someone the child loves or with whom he/she is close.
- Do not make promises to the child that things will get better.
- Do not confront the abuser.
- If the child does not want to go home, this should be considered an emergency. Report and handle immediately by contacting your Head of School. Do not take the child home with you.
- Respect the child's confidence. Limit the sharing of information.
- Explain to the child that you must tell someone else to get help.
- Try to let the child know that someone else will also need to talk with him/her and explain why.
- Empower the student by as much as possible allowing the child a part in the process.

CHILD PROTECTION REPORTING PROCEDURE

Child Protection Reporting Procedure



Community Support Services:

- * Ministry of Interior - Child Protection Center 116111 or SMS: 5111
- * Child Protection Hotline (CDA) - 800988
- * Dubai Foundation for Women and Children- Hotline 800111

<http://www.dfwac.ae/>

ALLEGATIONS, AVOIDANCE, RECOMMENDATIONS

- The privacy of children in situations such as toileting, showering and changing clothes should be respected. When it is necessary to supervise children in these situations, at least two adults should be present and intrude only to the extent that the health and safety of the children require. Adult volunteers should preserve their own privacy in these situations.
- Avoid touching areas that are normally covered by swimming suits; breasts, buttocks, and groin.
- Sexual jokes, comments of a sexual nature, kissing, sensual massages or sexual gestures are not appropriate behavior for an adult staff member or volunteer.
- When volunteering to supervise overnight activities, adults will not share sleeping quarters with children other than their own.
- Revealing personal information about one's sex life by an adult volunteer or staff member is never appropriate.
- It is the adult's responsibility to set and respect boundaries. When a child attempts to involve an adult in inappropriate behavior, the adult must reject the overture.

PREVENTION: RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING POLICY

Dunecrest American School reserves the right to conduct background screening checks and make this explicitly clear to all employees and volunteers, at any time prior to or after employment or volunteer service has begun. This process will periodically be reviewed.

The first and most effective means of preventing child abuse is screening out potential abusers before they come to the school. All personnel, staff, teachers, volunteers, and other members of the community whose potential employment or volunteer service involves direct contact with, and/or the potential for unmonitored access to children (including any individuals who regularly provides transportation to children) will be given thorough reference and background checks.

The Head of School along with the School's Business Manager are responsible for initiating and evaluating the applicants for positions that require background checks. The background check includes:

- A written application and a "statement of suitability" requiring a signature stating that the applicant knows of no reason or prior circumstance that would preclude him/her from working safely with minor children.
- That any previous criminal convictions have been declared on the application.
- A personal interview.
- Credential check depending on position being sought.
- Reference checks.
- Sex offender registry check where possible.
- A statement that all background screening accomplished by or on behalf of the organization will comply with UAE requirements such as police checks on all employees for previous five years prior to working at Dunecrest American School.

This policy serves notice to all employees that any misrepresentations, falsifications, or material omissions in the information provided to the School during the application, interview and hiring process, whenever discovered, may result in disqualification from, or termination of employment or volunteer service at Dunecrest American School.

If a check indicates that the applicant has an adult criminal record that has not been declared on the application, it must be reviewed by the school and placed into one of the following two categories:

CATEGORY ONE

- The member of staff will be immediately dismissed.

CATEGORY TWO

Before a determination can be made the school can review additional information and consider the relevance of the criminal offense to:

- The nature of the employment or volunteer service being sought.
- The seriousness and specific circumstances of the offense.
- The age of the candidate at the time of the offense.
- The number of offenses.
- The length of time since the offense occurred.
- Whether the applicant has pending charges.
- Any relevant evidence of rehabilitation or lack thereof.
- Any other relevant information, including information submitted by the candidate.