

SALEM SCHOOL DISTRICT
Salem, Connecticut

PERSONNEL – CERTIFIED/NON-CERTIFIED
STUDENTS

REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT and SEXUAL ASSAULT

The Board of Education (Board) recognizes its legal and ethical obligations in the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect. Any person applying for employment with the Board shall submit to a record check of the Department of Children and Families Child Abuse and Neglect Registry before the person may be hired. Mandated reporters include all school employees, specifically Superintendent, administrators, teachers, substitute teachers, guidance counselors, school counselors, paraprofessionals, coaches of intramural and interscholastic athletics, as well as licensed nurses, physicians, psychologists and social workers and licensed behavior analysts either employed by the Board or working in one of the District schools, or any other person who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in District schools. Such individual(s) who have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child has been abused, neglected, placed in imminent risk of serious harm, or sexually assaulted by a school employee is required to report such abuse and/or neglect or risk and/or sexual assault.

The Board shall annually distribute the mandated reporter policy electronically to all school employees. The Board shall annually distribute electronically, to all school employees, Board members, and parents and guardians of enrolled students, (1) guidelines on identifying and reporting child sexual abuse, starting in the 2022-23 school year, and (2) information on DCF's sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention program.

A mandated reporter's suspicions may be based on factors including, but are not limited to, observations, allegations, facts by a child, victim or third party. Suspicion or belief does not require certainty or probably cause.

In furtherance of CGS 17a-101 et. seq., and its purpose, it is the policy of the Board of Education to require ALL EMPLOYEES of the Board of Education to report suspected abuse and/or neglect, or imminent risk of serious harm, in accordance with the procedures set forth in this policy.

Furthermore, the Board of Education requires all personnel who have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child, under the age of eighteen (18), except in the case of sexual assault by a school employee, has been abused, neglected, has had non-accidental physical injury, or injury which is at variance with the history given of such injury, is placed in imminent danger of serious harm or has been sexually abused by a school employee to report such cases in accordance with the law, Board policy and administrative regulations. The mandatory reporting requirement regarding the sexual assault of a student by a school employee applies based on the person's status as a student, rather than his or her age.

A mandated reporter shall make an oral report, by telephone or in person, to the Commissioner of Children and Families or a law enforcement agency as soon as possible, but not later than twelve (12) hours after the mandated reporter has reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child has been abused, neglected or placed in imminent risk of serious harm. In addition, the mandated reporter shall inform the building principal or his/her designee that he/she will be making such a report. Not later than forty-eight hours of making the oral report, the mandated reporter shall file a written or electronic report with the Commissioner of Children and Families or his/her designee. (The Department of Children and Families has established a 24-hour Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline, "Careline" at 1-800-842-2288 for the purpose of making such oral reports.)

A mandated reporter may make the required oral report electronically in the manner prescribed by the Commissioner of Children and Families. An employee making an electronic report shall respond to further inquiries from the Commissioner of Children and Families or designee made within twenty-four hours. Such

employee shall inform the Superintendent or his/her designee as soon as possible as to the nature of the further communication with the Commissioner or designee.

Online reports may be made to the Careline by mandated reporters if the report is of a non-emergent nature. A non-emergent situation is one in which a report is mandated but the child is not in immediate risk. (*Note: Mandated reporters reporting electronically when they reasonably suspect that a child has been abused, neglected or placed at risk of imminent harm in a “non-emergent” situation, can do so without risk that they will be subject to a failure to report finding and subsequent penalties.*)

The oral and written reports shall include, if known: (1) the names and addresses of the child and his/her parents/guardians or other persons responsible for his/her care; (2) the child’s age; (3) the child’s gender; (4) the nature and extent of the child’s injury or injuries, maltreatment or neglect; (5) the approximate date and time the injury or injuries, maltreatment or neglect occurred; (6) information concerning any previous injury or injuries to, or maltreatment or neglect of, the child or his/her siblings; (7) the circumstances in which the injury or injuries, maltreatment or neglect came to be known to the reporter; (8) the name of the person(s) suspected to be responsible for causing such injury or injuries, maltreatment or neglect; (9) the reasons such person or persons are suspected of causing such injury or injuries, maltreatment or neglect; (10) any information concerning any prior cases in which such person or persons have been suspected of causing an injury, maltreatment or neglect of a child; and (11) whatever action, if any, was taken to treat, provide shelter or otherwise assist the child.

If the report of abuse, neglect or sexual assault involves an employee of the District as the perpetrator, the District may conduct its own investigation into the allegation, provided that such investigation shall not interfere with or impede any investigation conducted by the Department of Children and Families or by a law enforcement agency.

The Board recognizes that the Department of Children and Families is required to disclose records to the Superintendent of Schools in response to a mandated reporter’s written or oral report of abuse or neglect or if the Commissioner of Children and Families has reasonable belief that a school employee abused or neglected a student. Not later than five (5) working days after an investigation of child abuse or neglect by a school employee has been completed, DCF is required to notify the school employee and the Superintendent and the Commissioner of Education of the investigation’s results. If DCF has reasonable cause, and recommends the employee be placed on DCF’s Child Abuse and Neglect Registry, the Superintendent shall suspend such employee.

The Board, recognizing its responsibilities to protect children and in compliance with its statutory obligations, shall provide to each employee in-service training regarding the requirements and obligations of mandated reporters. District employees shall also participate in training offered by the Department of Children and Families. Each school employee is required to complete a refresher training program, not later than three years after completion of the initial training program and shall thereafter retake such refresher training course at least once every three years.

The Principal of each school in the district shall annually certify to the Superintendent that each school employee working at such school has completed the required initial training and the refresher training.

State law prohibits retaliation against a mandated reporter for fulfilling his/her obligations to report suspected child abuse or neglect. The Board shall not retaliate against any mandated reporter for his/her compliance with the law and Board policy pertaining to the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect.

In accordance with the mandates of the law and consistent with its philosophy, the Board in establishing this policy directs the Superintendent of Schools to develop and formalize the necessary rules and regulations to comply fully with the intent of the law.

This policy will be distributed annually to all employees. Documentation shall be maintained that all employees have, in fact, received the written policy and completed the required initial and refresher training related to mandated reporting of child abuse and neglect as required by law.

The Board of Education will post the telephone number of the Department of Children and Families' child abuse hotline, Careline, and the Internet web address that provides information about the Careline in each District school in a conspicuous location frequented by students. Such posting shall be in various languages most appropriate for the students enrolled in the school.

Establishment of the Confidential Rapid Response Team

The Board of Education shall establish a confidential rapid response team to coordinate with DCF to (1) ensure prompt reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect; or 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th degree sexual assault; 1st degree aggravated sexual assault; or 3rd degree sexual assault with a firearm of a student not enrolled in adult education by a school employee and (2) provide immediate access to information and individuals relevant to DCF's investigation of such cases.

The confidential rapid response team shall consist of (1) a local teacher and the Superintendent, (2) a local police officer, and (3) any other person the Board of Education deems appropriate.

DCF, along with a multidisciplinary team, is required to take immediate action to investigate and address each report of child abuse, neglect or sexual abuse in any school.

Hiring Prohibitions

The Board of Education will not employ anyone who was terminated or resigned after a suspension based on DCF's investigation, if he or she has been convicted of (1) child abuse or neglect or (2) 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th degree sexual assault; 1st degree aggravated sexual assault; or 3rd degree sexual assault with a firearm of a student who is not enrolled in adult education.

The Boards of Education will not employ an individual who was terminated or resigned, if he or she (1) failed to report the suspicion of such crimes when required to do so or (2) intentionally and unreasonably interfered with or prevented a mandated reporter from carrying out this obligation or conspired or attempted to do so. This applies regardless of whether an allegation of abuse, neglect, or sexual assault has been substantiated.

(cf. 5141.511 – Sexual Abuse Prevention and Education Program)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes: 10-220a Inservice training. Professional development committees. Institutes for educators. Cooperating teacher program, regulations 10-221d Criminal history records check of school personnel. Fingerprinting. Termination or dismissal. 10-221s Investigations of child abuse and neglect. Disciplinary action. 17a-28 Definitions. Confidentiality of and access to records; exceptions. Procedure for aggrieved persons. Regulations. 17a-101 Protection of children from abuse. Mandated reporters. Educational and training program. Model mandated reporting policy. 17a-101a Report of abuse, neglect by or injury of child or imminent risk of serious harm to the child. Penalty for failure to report. Notification of Chief State's Attorney. Report of danger of abuse. 17a-101b Report by mandated reporters. Notification of law enforcement agency when allegation of sexual abuse or serious physical abuse. Notification of person in charge of institution, facility or school when a staff member suspected of abuse or neglect. 17a-101c Written or electronic report by mandated reporter. 17a-101d Contents of reports. 17a-101e Employer prohibited from discriminating or retaliating against employee who makes a good faith report or testifies re child abuse or neglect. Immunity from civil or criminal liability. False report of child abuse. Referral to Office of the Chief State's Attorney. Penalty. 17a-101g Classification and evaluation of reports. Determination of abuse or neglect of child. Investigation. Notice, entry of recommended finding. Referral to local law enforcement authority. Home visit. Removal of child in imminent risk of harm. Family assessment response program. Development of service plans and plans of care. Monitoring. Disclosure of information to community providers. Annual report. 17a-101i Abuse or neglect by school employees or staff member of public or private institution or facility providing care for children. Notice. Adoption of policy. Employee training program. 17a-101o School employee failure or delay in reporting child abuse or neglect. Policy re delayed report by mandated reporters. 17a-106 Cooperation in relation to prevention, identification and treatment of child abuse/neglect. 10-151 Teacher Tenure Act. DCF Policy 22-1-3 Mandated Reporter's Failure to Report. PA 22-87 An Act Concerning the Identification and Prevention of an Response to Adult Sexual Misconduct Against Children

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