Students

Child Abuse and Neglect Procedures

Reporting Responsibilities

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

The following procedures are to be used in reporting instances of suspected child abuse or neglect:

Reporting Procedure

1. When there is reasonable cause to believe that a student has suffered abuse or neglect, staff or the principal will immediately contact the nearest office of Child Protective Services (CPS) or the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) or the local law enforcement agency. This report must be made at the first opportunity, but in no case longer than forty-eight (48) hours after there is reasonable cause to believe that the child has suffered abuse or neglect.

   Staff will also advise the principal regarding instances of suspected abuse or neglect as well as reports that have been made to CPS or law enforcement. In the principal's absence, staff will advise the counselor or nurse.

   A staff member may contact CPS to determine if a report should be made. Any doubt about the legal necessity of making a report will be resolved in favor of making the report.

2. A written report will be submitted promptly to the agency to which the telephone report was made. The report will include the following information, if known:

   a. The name, address and age of the child;
   b. The name and address of the child's parent(s), stepparents, guardians or other persons having custody of the child;
   c. The nature and extent of the suspected abuse or neglect;
   d. Any evidence of previous abuse or any other information that may relate to the cause or extent of the abuse or neglect; and
   e. The identity, if known, of the person accused of inflicting the abuse or neglect.

3. The district will within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving the report alleging sexual misconduct by a school employee notify the parents of a student alleged to be the victim,

target, or recipient of the misconduct. The notice will include information regarding their rights under the public records act, chapter 42.56 RCW, to request the public records regarding school employee discipline. This information will be provided to all parents on an annual basis.

4. Child abuse as defined by the statues can be inflicted "by any person" and may include student on student abuse. These cases also require reporting to CPS or law enforcement.

Defining Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse or neglect means:

1. An injury of a child by any persons under circumstances which cause harm to the child's health, welfare, or safety;

2. Sexual abuse or sexual exploitation by any person under circumstances which cause harm to the child's health, welfare, or safety; or

3. The negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by a person responsible for or providing care to the child.

Physical abuse means the nonaccidental infliction of physical injury or physical mistreatment on a child that harms the child's health, welfare, or safety. It may include, but is not limited to, such actions as:

- Throwing, kicking, burning or cutting a child;
- Striking a child with a closed fist;
- Shaking a child under age three;
- Interfering with a child's breathing;
- Threatening a child with a deadly weapon; or
- Doing any other act that is likely to cause and that does cause bodily harm greater than transient pain or minor temporary marks or that is injurious to the child's health, welfare or safety.

Physical discipline of a child, including the reasonable use of corporal punishment, is not considered abuse when is reasonable and moderate and is inflicted by a parent or guardian for the purposes of restraining or correcting the child.

Sexual abuse means committing or allowing to the committed any sexual offense against a child as defined in the criminal code. The intentional touching, either directly or through the clothing, of the sexual or other intimate parts of a child or allowing, permitting, compelling, encouraging, aiding, or otherwise causing a child to engage in touching the sexual or other intimate parts of another for the purpose of gratifying the sexual desire of the person touching the child, or a third party.

A parent or guardian of a child, a person authorized by the parent or guardian to provide childcare for the child, or a person providing medically recognized services for the child, may touch a child in the sexual or other intimate parts for the purpose of providing hygiene, child care, and medical treatment or diagnosis.

Sexual exploitation includes, but is not limited to, sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation and includes such actions as allowing, compelling, encouraging, aiding, or otherwise causing a child to participate in one or more of the following:

- Any sex act when anything of value is given to or received by any person for the sext act;
- Sexually explicit, obscene, or pornographic activity to be photographed, filmed, or electronically reproduced or transmitted;
- Sexually explicit, obscene, or pornographic activity as part of a live performance or for the benefit or sexual gratification of another person.

Negligent treatment or maltreatment means an act or failure to act, or the cumulative effects of a pattern of conduct, behavior, or interaction, on the part of a child's parent, guardian, or caregiver that shows a serious disregard of the consequences to the child and creates a clear and present danger to the child's health, welfare, or safety.

These signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect:

The child:

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance.
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention.
- Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes.
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen.
- Lacks adult supervision.
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn.
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home.

The parent or other adult caregiver and the child:

- Shows little concern for the child.
- Denies the existence of-or blames the child for-the child's problems in school or at home.
- Asks teachers or other caretakers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves.
- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome.
- Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve.
- Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of emotional needs.

The Parent or other adult caregiver and child:

- Rarely touch or look at each other.
- Consider their relationship entirely negative.
- State that they do not like each other.

Common Indicators of Physical Abuse:

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the **child**:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes.
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school.
- Is frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home.
- Shrinks at the approach of adults.
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver.

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury.
- Describes the child as "evil," or in some other very negative way.
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child.
- Has a history of abuse as a child.

Common Indicators of Emotional Abuse:

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the **child**:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression.
- Is either inappropriately adult-like (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example).
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development.
- Has attempted suicide.
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent.

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child.
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems.
- Overtly rejects the child.

Common Indicators of Sexual Abuse:

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the **child**:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting.
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or participate in physical activities.
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting.
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite.
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior.
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14.
- Runs away.
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver.

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex.
- Is secretive and isolated.
- Is jealous or controlling with family members.

Common Indicators of Neglect:

Consider the possibility of neglect when the **child**:

- Is frequently absent from school.
- Begs or steals food or money.
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses.
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor.
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather.
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs.
- States that there is no one at home to provide care.

Consider the possibility of neglect when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Appears to be indifferent to the child.
- Seems apathetic or depressed.
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner.
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs.

Note: Indicators in and of themselves do not necessarily prove that abuse 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.

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