

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF TANGIER



CHILD PROTECTION
HANDBOOK

Letter to the Community from the Head of School

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Staff,

At the American School of Tangier, the safety and well-being of our students is our highest priority. We strive to create a secure, nurturing environment that enables every child to thrive. As part of this commitment, I am writing to update you on our Child Protection Policy, which reflects our dedication to safeguarding all members of our school community.

Our Child Protection Policy outlines the measures we take to ensure the physical, emotional, and psychological safety of our students. This includes procedures for identifying, reporting, and addressing any concerns, as well as ongoing training for staff to recognize and respond to potential risks. We work closely with local authorities and adhere to all legal and best-practice guidelines to maintain the highest standards of care.

Key aspects of our policy include:

- **Prevention:** Robust recruitment processes, including background checks for all staff and volunteers, and regular safety education for students.
- **Awareness:** Training programs to equip our team with the knowledge and skills needed to protect our students effectively.
- **Response:** A confidential and efficient reporting system ensures we promptly and sensitively address all concerns.

We encourage open communication and invite you to familiarize yourself with the policy, which is available on our school website or by request from the main office. If you have questions, please contact me or our designated Child Protection Officer.

We value your trust and dedicate ourselves to providing a safe and supportive environment for your children. Thank you for your continued partnership in this important endeavor.

Warm regards,

Dr. Robert Evans
Head of School

We want to thank the American International School of Johannesburg for their exceptional work in crafting the original version of this document.

Safeguarding Statement

The American School of Tangier (AST) believes and recognizes that every student may live in a safe environment. AST also recognizes that abuse and neglect affect a child's well-being and ability to learn. The UNCRC, to which Morocco is a signatory, and national laws, including those of our host country, detail these rights.

All staff employed at AST must report suspected incidences of child maltreatment (abuse and neglect) and bullying. Whenever the staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect, and bullying. The Head of School will annually review administrative regulations (see Appendix A: AST Board Policy on Child Protection) governing the reporting and follow-up of all suspected child maltreatment and bullying incidents. Report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to the child protection agency in the home country and/or local authorities.

As part of our overall effort to ensure all members of our community effectively implemented and understood this policy, AST will provide age-appropriate lessons that address issues of personal safety, needs, and rights. We will engage with parents to support their understanding of our program, policies, and procedures. AST will also communicate this policy and provide annual training for our faculty and staff to recognize child abuse, neglect, bullying, and harassment; and to be aware of how to respond to safeguarding concerns. We will strictly enforce hiring practices for employees and contracted service providers, requiring appropriate criminal background checks and the signing of the AST Safeguarding Agreement.

Scope of Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a broad term to describe philosophies, policies, standards, guidelines, and procedures to promote and protect all children from harm, harassment, bullying, abuse, and neglect, regardless of ability, age, ethnicity, faith, gender, and culture.

Child protection is part of the safeguarding process that involves being ready to respond quickly and safely with disclosure or concern. The policies and procedures outlined in this handbook apply with a threat of harm, actual harm, or misconduct (either in person or online) by: parent/guardian to student, employee to student, non-employee (adult or child) to student, and student to student.

Definitions of Abuse & Related Terminology

Child

A *child* is anyone under the age of 18, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. For “safeguarding” at AST, a *child* also refers to any person enrolled at AST as a student, even if that individual is over the age of 18.

Child maltreatment (abuse and neglect)

Child maltreatment, often referred to as abuse and neglect, encompasses all forms of physical and emotional maltreatment, sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation that result in actual or possible harm to the child’s health, development, or self-worth (WHO, 2017). AST believes that discrimination, harassment, bullying, and self-harm can harm a child’s health, development, or dignity, and recognizes that our Safeguarding Policies and Procedures may sometimes cover such actions.

Emotional (Psychological) Abuse

Emotional abuse is the maltreatment of a child, which results in impaired psychological growth and development. This type of maltreatment often manifests itself through words, actions, and/or deliberate indifference; it includes rejecting, isolating, belittling, dominating, and frequently criticizing the child. Children who suffer emotional abuse often, but not always, suffer from other forms of abuse.

Under Article 19, UNCRC, examples of emotional child abuse include but are not limited to:

- All forms of persistent harmful interaction with the child, such as conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved, unwanted;
- Scaring, terrorizing or threatening children;
- Using verbiage to insult, name-call, humiliate, belittle, and ridicule a child;
- Placing a child in solitary confinement, isolation or degrading conditions of punishment;
- Frequent exposure of a child to family violence;
- Psychological bullying or hazing via social media.

(United Nations Human Rights, 2018)

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse occurs when there is a physical use of force against a child, resulting in harm and injury to the child. It includes, but is not limited to, hitting, beating, kicking, shaking, strangling, scalding, burning, poisoning, and suffocating. Sometimes, corporal punishment or the use of a physical means of discipline may meet the criteria of physical abuse.

DISCIPLINE OR PUNISHMENT?

Discipline for children involves training and helping them develop judgment, a sense of boundaries, self-control, self-sufficiency, and positive social conduct. Discipline is frequently confused with punishment, particularly by caregivers who use corporal punishment in an attempt to correct and change children's behavior. There are several differences between discipline and punishment.

Positive strategies of discipline recognize children's worth. They aim to strengthen children's belief in themselves and their ability to behave appropriately and to build positive relationships.

On the other hand, punishment involving either physical or emotional measures often reflects the caregiver's anger or desperation, rather than a thought-out strategy intended to encourage the child to understand expectations of behavior. Such punishment uses external controls and involves power and dominance. It is also frequently not tailored to the child's age and developmental level.

Corporal punishment entails the use of physical force. It has been commonly used in many societies in the past and the exact form it takes varies according to culture and religion. Research has shown, though, that it is not effective in promoting the desired change in behavior in any lasting way. The behavioral and emotional consequences of corporal punishment vary according to how frequently and how severely the punishment is applied, as well as to the age, developmental state, vulnerability, and resilience of the child. Corporal punishment can cause relationships to break down. It serves to humiliate children and can lead to physical injury and serious impairment in development.

All children need discipline and it is best if children can be supported in developing their self-discipline. An approach to discipline should be encouraged that uses alternatives to corporal punishment. These include such methods as distraction and redirection, the fixing of a cooling-off period, the setting of rules and limits appropriate to the child's age and developmental level, problem-solving, and the withdrawal of privileges.

Source: [Preventing Child Maltreatment: A Guide to Taking Action & Generating Evidence](#). Geneva: WHO, 2006.

Neglect and Negligent Treatment

Frequently, people define neglect as a parent or other responsible person's failure to provide a child with needed food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision, endangering the child's health, safety, and well-being. Types of neglect can be medical, physical, or emotional. Negligent treatment would include failure to provide age-appropriate adult guardianship.

Note: The School recognizes within our community that at times parent(s) are required to travel away from home overnight or for extended periods. Therefore, AST has outlined a process to assist parents who encounter this challenge and to ensure that legalities are covered so that parents are legally compliant with the laws governing temporary guardianship.

When single parents, both parents or legal guardians travel out of Morocco, without their children while AST is in session, a temporary guardian must be appointed who will assume full responsibility, including medical responsibility, for the child for the duration of the absence. In the case of parental absence from home for one night or more, the [Declaration of Temporary Guardianship](#) must be completed and returned to the respective principal's office.

Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in a sexual act that he/she cannot fully understand or give consent to. People often think that child sexual abuse only occurs between a child and an adult. However, one child can also abuse another if an imbalance of responsibility, trust, or power (because of age, development, or position) exists, the sexual activity fulfilling the needs of the more powerful or responsible child (UNICEF, 2012). Also considered child sexual abuse are instances of child exploitation, such as the coercion of children into illegal sexual activity, for example, prostitution or the production of pornography.

Grooming

Grooming is the process by which an individual prepares a child, significant adults, and the environment for abuse of the child. Perpetrators of grooming manipulate their victims over time, sometimes years, gradually gaining the victim's trust, desensitizing and sexualizing them for abuse. Perpetrators teach victims to respect, trust, and sometimes love them, and the betrayal of that trust causes severe long-term trauma. Grooming can occur in person and/or online. It frequently takes place undetected by others, and the victim rarely discloses it.

Exploitation

Child exploitation refers to the use of a child for another individual's advantage, gratification and/or profit, resulting in physical, emotional, educational, moral and/or social-emotional harm to the child. Exploitation can include situations of manipulation, misuse, abuse, victimization, oppression, or maltreatment.

The two main areas of child exploitation are sexual and economic.

- Examples of sexual exploitation include: child pornography, prostitution and trafficking, and sexual slavery, as well as an inappropriate online presence and suspected intimate relations with an adult.
- Examples of economic exploitation include: child labor, child soldiers, the use of children for criminal activities, and the involvement of children in harmful or hazardous work.

(NSPCC, 2017)

Bullying

Bullying is not conflict, as conflict occurs naturally in human interaction. Bullying can be physical, verbal, social/relational, and/or damaging of property. Bullying can also occur through technology, referred to as cyberbullying or electronic bullying. Important defining factors of bullying include a real or perceived power imbalance (physical or social) and a pattern of behavior that is usually repeated. This behavior reasonably appears dehumanizing, intimidating, hostile, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress.

Harassment

Harassment is unwanted and annoying behavior that is offensive and unreasonable and causes mental, physical, or economic harm. This includes threats, demands, and discrimination that are directed at a person based on certain characteristics, such as gender, race, faith, or sexual orientation. Harm includes personal harm or humiliation, as well as hostile, intimidating, or abusive environments that interfere with teaching-learning. Harassment can take many forms, including physical, verbal, sexual, social/relational, and/or electronic means.

Non-Suicidal Self Injury (NSSI)

Researchers define NSSI, or "self-harm," as the deliberate, self-inflicted destruction of the body without suicidal intent and for purposes not socially sanctioned. As research has identified a link to child maltreatment and NSSI, a reported concern or disclosure of self-harming behaviors may be subject to safeguarding policies and protocols if there is subsequent evidence of child maltreatment and/or the involvement of significant or potential self-harm (Serafini et. al, 2017).

Roles & Responsibilities

Safeguarding Committee

This committee is a working group of members who have the collective responsibility of implementing, managing, and annual review of all aspects of the AST Safeguarding Program.

Safeguarding Response Team (SRT)

The members and size of any response team will vary on a case-by-case basis. At a minimum, the SRT will comprise the Designated Safeguarding Lead, a Counselor, and a Divisional Principal. Other individuals, such as the Head of School, School Nurse or IT staff, may also serve on the SRT. Depending on the case, individuals with specific expertise may be called on (e.g. legal, medical professional, mental health professional.)

Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL)

The DSL serves as one of the lead contacts for core aspects of the program, such as incident disclosures, inquiries, education, supervision, and health, social, and emotional support. The DSL will maintain up-to-date professional development training in child protection to implement best practices within their specific roles.

AST Employees, Interns, and Volunteers

The school mandates that all employees and engaged individuals whose duties involve contact with children sign and abide by the AST Safeguarding Agreement and follow the safeguarding policies and procedures in this handbook. This includes substitutes, contracted instructors, and external coaches.

Contracted Partner Agencies, Vendors, and Invited Guests

The school informs all significant partner agencies, vendors, and guests (defined by written contract) of the AST safeguarding policies and procedures; background checks and the AST Safeguarding Agreement (for non-employees) may or may not be mandated depending on their student contact.

AST Parents

All parents play a vital role in protecting the safety and well-being of students through prevention, education, support, and reporting.

Education & Training

There will be annual training and educational opportunities for the AST community to develop and maintain the knowledge and skills to safeguard children.

Employees, Interns, Volunteers

- Initial induction safeguarding training will be mandatory for all incoming employees, interns, and volunteers, and will include instruction on definitions, signs, and symptoms of child maltreatment, reporting expectations, a detailed review of the AST Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and code of conduct expectations as outlined in the Safeguarding Agreement. Any established employees who have not been through the induction training will be required to do so retroactively.
- After induction training, we will require all employees, interns, and volunteers with direct contact with children to complete annual refresher training that includes interactive learning. This training will enhance their practical understanding and problem-solving skills regarding child safeguarding, incorporate lessons learned, and update practices.

Contracted Partner Agencies, Vendors, and Invited Guests

We will instruct contracted partner agencies, vendors, student mentors, and guests (with whom the school has a written contract) on the AST Safeguarding Program. Those with extended student contact must also undergo screening and agree to, and abide by, the non-employee Safeguarding Agreement.

Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians will have annual opportunities to attend educational workshops on safeguarding, with specific guidance on how to raise a concern or make a report, as well as opportunities to attend positive discipline and digital parenting workshops.

Students

Currently, students from PK-12 receive age-appropriate curricular and extra-curricular instruction on health and safety topics, including online safety, relevant to their age. As a school, we recognize the vital role curriculum-based programs such as Social Emotional Learning (SEL), and Digital Citizenship play in educating and empowering students on their right to live free from maltreatment and harm, and have committed to prioritizing and strengthening school-wide best practices in the delivery of these curriculums.

Recruitment and Selection of Staff

Ensuring that all current and potential employees, outsourced contractors, interns, and volunteers are safe to work with children is paramount to the safeguarding at AST. A thorough and standardized process applies to the recruitment and hiring of personnel, and includes the following.

- Advertisements for vacancies clearly state that AST enforces safeguarding policies and procedures for all employees, and will screen applicants during recruitment.
- Criminal background checks which are undertaken for all newly hired and contracted employees.
- The requirement is that all potential employees sign a self-disclosure statement reporting any criminal or misdemeanor convictions.
- We will examine any suspicious aspects of the employment history (including gaps), and will contact references to clarify concerns.
- There will be at least one interview question that involves a child safeguarding question or scenario to assess the candidate's response.
- The employee must read, understand, and agree to comply with the AST Safeguarding Policies as part of the terms and conditions of employment.
- A minimum of two professional references shall be required, at least one of which will be a verbal reference check.
- The verbal reference check will include questions about the candidate's safety in working with children.

Safeguarding Agreement

The AST Safeguarding Agreement outlines clear behavioral expectations for all employees, interns, volunteers, and contracted employees interacting with children, and it clearly states that the organization will enforce discipline for violations. All employees must sign this agreement, contracted employees, interns, and volunteers every year, showing their agreement to abide by the guidelines.

Contracted Partner Agencies and Vendors with whom there are written contracts are also mandated to sign and agree to abide by the behavioral expectations outlined in the AST Safeguarding Agreement for Non-Employees.

Reporting & Responding Procedures

Recognizing potential signs and symptoms of child maltreatment, managing a disclosure, reporting a safeguarding concern or disclosure, and taking action on the report are essential steps in safeguarding policies and procedures.

AST stages of reporting and responding procedures

- Stage 1: Disclosure/Concern
- Stage 2: Reasonable Cause
- Stage 3: Ensuring Safety
- Stage 4: Team Inquiry
- Stage 5: Response Plan
- Stage 6: Follow-Up

Throughout the six reporting and responding stages, AST will support students, staff, and parents to the best of their abilities by:

- Taking all concerns, reports, and disclosures seriously
- Carefully following policies and procedures to ensure due process
- Ensuring regular communication between school and home to keep all parties informed of the process
- Ensuring secure and comprehensive documentation
- Maintaining confidentiality as indicated and sharing information on a need-to-know basis only with relevant individuals and agencies
- Making referrals to outside agencies, counseling or other avenues of support and protection as appropriate
- Ensuring that our approach to safeguarding remains child-centered and in the best interests of the child

Stage 1: Disclosure / Concern

Mandatory Reporting

Per AST policy, all AST employees must report, without undue delay, a suspected safeguarding concern or disclosure. This concern or disclosure may take the form of observing an indicator of abuse, receiving a disclosure or allegation of abuse, and/or having knowledge that causes you to believe that harm to a child will or has taken place. Mandatory reporting also includes incidents of abuse that have occurred outside of school hours or school events.

What to Report?

A reportable safeguarding concern is one in which there indicates harm or a threat of harm to a student. We define "harm" as physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect, exploitation, non-suicidal self-injury, bullying, or harassment. These indicators of harm or a threat of harm do not always mean abuse is occurring. However, report any allegation or low-level concern (the distinction is noted below) to the DSL immediately.

- The term 'allegation' refers to any instance in which someone alleges that an adult (or peer) has:
 - behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
 - possibly committed a criminal offense against or related to a child; or
 - behaved towards a child or children in a way that shows they may pose a risk of harm to children.
- The term low-level concern, no how small, about an adult, even if only a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult may have acted in a manner which:
 - contradicts providing a safe environment for a child;
 - is not consistent with AST's Safeguarding Agreement; and/or
 - relates to conduct, which may lead one to question an individual's suitability for working with children.

The circumstances in which a low-level concern might be reclassified as an allegation are where:

- the threshold is met for an allegation;
- there is a pattern of low-level concerns which collectively amount to an allegation; and/or
- there is other information which when taken into account leads to an allegation.

To Whom Should You Report

If you receive a report or disclosure, or if you wish to report a personal concern, report it to one of the school administrators, or to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Stage 2: Reasonable Cause

Within 24 hours of a report, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Divisional Counselor, and Divisional Principal will meet and decide reasonable cause to proceed.

Policy dictates how we will address a report outside the scope of the safeguarding policy and deemed a low-level concern; this may or may not include further consultation with the DSL.

- The Divisional Principal and/or the Divisional Counselor will address low-level concerns that involve a non-employee. The Divisional Principal and/or the Divisional Counselor will record the low-level concern in Rediker under the student(s)' name.
- The Divisional Principal will address low-level concerns that involve an employee. Guidance and training will probably address most low-level concerns. The Divisional Principal will document the report.

A low-level concern might be reclassified as an allegation when:

- the threshold is met for an allegation;
- there is a pattern of low-level concerns which collectively amount to an allegation; and/or
- there is other information which when taken into account leads to an allegation.

If reasonable cause is found, we will start documentation with a Concern/Disclosure Report Form and undertake a collaborative response, as outlined in the response flowchart. The procedures vary slightly if the allegations of misconduct/abuse involve an AST employee. The separate reporting protocol flowcharts for employees and non-employees detail these differences.

We will create a Safeguarding Response Team (SRT) with at least three individuals. At a minimum, the SRT will comprise the DSL, a counselor, and a principal. Other individuals, such as the School Nurse or IT staff, may also serve on the SRT.

If the allegation involves an AST employee and reasonable cause exists, the School Director will receive notification and join the SRT. If the allegation is against an employee or the family member of an employee, who would normally be part of the SRT, the other team members will ask the individual to recuse him/herself, and request a second DSL to join the SRT.

Stage 3: Providing Safety

The SRT will then assess and assure short-term safety for the child to the best of their abilities, and if applicable by law, inform the local authorities or local police.

Stage 4: Team Inquiry

The SRT will then undertake an inquiry process of the disclosure or concern by gathering information and facts pertaining to the report received, and documenting all communication and findings on the Disclosure/Concern Report Form. We will undertake this inquiry process and subsequent documentation promptly.

Stage 5: Response

A response plan is written, implemented, and documented in response to the SRT inquiry. The response plan may comprise, but is not limited to:

- Employee supervision & monitoring plan
- Employee termination of employment
- Outside referrals for parenting support and education
- Safety plan/contract with student and/or parents/guardians
- Contact with Parent/Guardian Employer
- Contact with Embassy/Consulate of involved family
- Reporting to the Provincial Department of Social Development or local police.

Stage 6: Follow-Up

All activated cases will be part of an annual audit to ensure fidelity to the policies and procedures, and provide the team with learning opportunities for improvement throughout the six stages of reporting and responding.

Documentation and Confidentiality

Secure documentation will accompany the reporting and response procedures throughout the process. The appropriate Designated Safeguarding Lead, Divisional Counselor, and/or Divisional Principal will start this documentation and maintain its confidentiality. After completion, the school will store the documentation securely, following its records management and data protection guidelines.

The documentation for a reported allegation will clearly outline the nature of the concern, the steps of the inquiry process, the response plan, implementation of the response plan, and any audit/review results. We will keep a separate confidential record apart from student and personnel files.

When an AST employee communicates a low-level concern, we will keep a confidential record of it in a central file that logs employee low-level concerns. This is necessary to enable any patterns to be identified. However, we will not add the concern to the individual's personnel file or job references unless we reclassify the concern (or a group of concerns) as an allegation.

Upon communication of a low-level concern regarding the health and/or safety of an AST student, someone will enter a confidential record into Rediker. Only the counselor and principal in the student's current division will access these records.

Monitoring & Evaluation

To maintain the relevance of all safeguarding policies and procedures, and allow a forum for review, reflection, and revision, the Safeguarding Committee will undertake an annual review of the following documents and procedures:

- AST Board Policy
- AST Safeguarding Handbook
- AST Safeguarding Agreement for Employees and Non-Employees
- All formal reporting channels

Peer-on-Peer Abuse

AST recognizes that prevention, early identification, and management are all important parts of a comprehensive whole-school approach to addressing harm between peers. Peer-on-peer abuse can take various forms, including (but not limited to): serious bullying, cyberbullying, abuse within intimate relationships, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, physical abuse, prejudice-based violence, and initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

All behavior takes place on a spectrum, and may or may not constitute abuse. In order to effectively manage peer-on-peer allegations, the following aspects of the behavior will be considered:

- Is the behavior a single episode or has it occurred over a period of time?
- Is the behavior problematic and concerning?
- Is the behavior deliberate and contrived?
- Does the behavior involve any overt elements of victimization or discrimination (related to race, gender, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability)?
- Does the behavior involve a power imbalance between the child/children involved?
- Does the behavior involve a misuse of power?

(Farrer & Co, 2017)

If the behavior is sexual, we will reference the Hackett Continuum of Sexual Behavior and Sexual Behaviors Traffic Light Tool (Brook, 2018) to locate the behavior on a continuum from normal and developmentally appropriate to highly abnormal and abusive, thus informing the response process.

All reported peer-on-peer allegations found to have reasonable cause will:

- Include a thorough investigation of the concerns/allegations and the wider context in which they may have occurred
- Inform parents of the investigation, unless doing so would cause significant risk to the child
- Treat all children involved as being at potential risk, and ensure a response is in place for both the child who has allegedly experienced the abuse, and the child who has allegedly been responsible for it
- Consider during the investigation:
 - The abuse may show wider safeguarding concerns for any of the children involved
 - The potential complexity of peer-on-peer abuse and the interplay between power, choice, and consent
 - The views of the child/children affected, including keeping them and their parents informed of developments where appropriate and safe to do so.

AST is required by Moroccan law to report all known incidents of criminal abuse (including peer-on-peer abuse), even if the behavior or action occurs outside of school hours or school events and the school has knowledge of the incident. The school will scrutinize all allegations of peer-on-peer abuse, following the same policies and procedures used for other safeguarding allegations.

AST considers any identified bullying and/or harassment involving its students a serious rules violation, subject to inquiry under existing school policies, procedures, and/or disciplinary actions (depending on the context). The Divisional Principal as per the divisional handbooks will handle all discipline issues.

AST reserves the right to become involved in student disciplinary action, even if the behavior or action occurs outside of school hours or school events. Students often experience the continuing effects of off-campus misconduct while at school, sometimes through the use of digital media, and it is important for the school to respond as warranted. A hostile environment can include any situation in which there is misconduct that limits, interferes with or denies educational benefits or opportunities, which can include compromised physical and emotional safety.

The aim of safeguarding is to protect all members of our community. Adult employees must report any harassment or abuse between themselves to the Human Resources Manager. The school will receive and follow up on reports according to its policy and procedures.

Child Safe Communication Guidelines

Use of Images & Information

AST maintains and compiles student data that, as a matter of law and of ethics, is confidential. School employees shall not reveal specific personal information concerning any pupil enrolled in the school except to a parent or guardian or to a court official.

AST uses photographs and video of school activities and events to support the learning process, to record the individual progress and accomplishments of our students and for marketing. Annually, the school requests parent permission for the use of student images in school marketing and publications on AST managed platforms, including official AST accounts on Facebook and Instagram.

Responsible Use Agreements

All employees and students must follow the guidelines on Technology Responsible Use, Use of Digital Images, and Social Media Acceptable Use, found in the Faculty Handbook, Operations Handbook, and respective Student Handbooks, to share student learning while protecting personal information (including photographs and videos).

AST employees should communicate with students via AST managed platforms. Employees should never use phone calls, texting, social media, emails, or similar technology to communicate with students in ways that are outside their professional relationship with students, as detailed in the Safeguarding Agreement.

Online Learning

AST aims to educate, enable, and empower students to navigate the online world in a safe, responsible, and positive manner. The internet also poses risks for children, and as such, employees, students, and parents should understand their role in preventing, identifying, and responding to harm caused by its use.

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable, but can be categorized into three areas of risk:

- **content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful material; for example pornography, fake news, racist or radical and extremist views;
- **contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example commercial advertising as well as adults posing as children or young adults; and
- **conduct:** personal online behavior that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example making, sending, and receiving explicit images, or online bullying.

(Keeping Children Safe, 2020)

The Safe Online Learning Protocol outlines safe and unsafe guidelines for all employees, students, and parents. Report any concerns about a student's technology use to the Divisional Principal, Divisional Counselor, or Designated Safeguarding Lead.

All employees should be familiar with the school's [Technology Responsible Use Statement](#) in the Faculty Handbook. These guidelines aim to ensure that AST technology systems support employees and students in processing school-related tasks as safely, efficiently, and effectively as possible.

AST students must engage with technology respectfully, honestly, responsibly, and safely. The respective Student Handbooks outline student expectations, and divisional discipline policies apply to violations.

Sexting and Sexual Imagery

As children grow and develop, they show a range of sexual behaviors, which may include sharing sexually explicit text messages and sexual imagery (also known as sexting). Once children and adults share information online, other people control its use, leaving children vulnerable to bullying, blackmail, online grooming, or abuse (NSPCC, 2020).

In Morocco, it is illegal to possess, create, share and/or distribute sexual imagery (including photos and videos) of a child, even if the person engaged in the activity is a minor. All members of staff (including non-teaching staff) should know how to recognize and refer, any disclosure or knowledge of incidents involving sexual imagery of a child, and sexually explicit text messages.

Incidents to report to the Divisional Counselor or Divisional Principal:

- Children exchanging sexually explicit text messages which do not contain sexual imagery

Incidents to report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

- A student creates sexual imagery (of themselves or someone else)
- A student has sexual imagery (of themselves or someone else) on their digital device(phone, tablet, laptop, etc.)
- A student has shared sexual imagery (of themselves or someone else)
- A student is asking someone under the age of 18 for sexual imagery
- A student has shown any kind of pornography (not just child pornography but also adult pornography) to someone under the age of 18 on their digital device

The **creating and sharing of sexual imagery of children by adults constitutes child sexual abuse** and, by policy, **all AST employees have a duty to report** this to the DSL without delay.

Reported incidents that fall within the scope of safeguarding will engage the DSL in a collaborative response, as outlined in the response flow charts. For reported incidents outside the safeguarding policy, the Divisional Principal and/or Counselors will respond according to divisional policy, with consultation with the DSL.

In both instances, the school's response will include a thorough investigation of the incident and the wider context in which they may have occurred. The school will inform parents of the investigation, unless doing so would pose a significant risk to the child. It is important to consider that these incidents may show wider safeguarding concerns for any of the children involved.

Safety & Security

Off-Campus Activities, Sporting Events & Field Trips

For all field trips, sporting events and off-campus activities, AST's board policy on child protection, the procedures, guidelines and mandatory reporting outlined in this handbook, apply to all employees, interns, volunteers, as well as, contracted partner agencies and vendors.

Integrating safeguarding into all off-site, school-sponsored events and trips requires considering how our students may be vulnerable and doing everything reasonably possible to mitigate their risks. This involves requiring up-to-date risk assessment and mitigation documentation for all off-campus trips, events and activities completed by the divisional faculty in collaboration with the school administration.

The relevant divisional and activities office handbooks detail specific guidelines for all off-site, school-sponsored events and trips. We consider guidelines for chaperones, participant rules and responsibilities, hosting agreements, and documentation for assessing and mitigating risks.

Facilities (Bathroom, Locker Room & Change Rooms)

AST maintains bathroom facilities that are differentiated between female students, male students and single-user facilities that are designated for adult use. Adults are not to use bathroom facilities designated for student use only.

Appendices

Appendix A: AST Board Policy on Child Protection

ADOPTED January 2023

Child abuse and neglect are concerns throughout the world. Child abuse and neglect are violations of a child's human rights and are obstacles to the child's education as well as to their physical, emotional, and spiritual development. The American School of Tangier Corporation (ASTC) and its member schools¹ endorse the UN Convention on the *Rights of the Child*, of which our host country, Morocco, is a signatory. ASTC hereby adopts this Policy.

Schools fill a special institutional role in society as protectors of children. Schools need to ensure that all children in their care are afforded a safe and secure environment in which to grow and develop, both at school and away. Educators, having the opportunity to observe and interact with children over time, are in a unique position to identify children who are in need of help and protection. As such, educators have a professional and ethical obligation to identify children who are in need of help and protection, and to take steps to ensure that the child and family avail themselves of the services needed to remedy any situation that constitutes child abuse or neglect.

All staff employed by ASTC member schools must report suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect whenever a staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered, or is at significant risk of suffering abuse or neglect. Reporting and follow up of all suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect will proceed in accordance with administrative regulations respective to this Policy.

ASTC member schools seek to be a safe haven for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives. As such, ASTC member schools will distribute this Policy annually to all parents and applicants, will communicate this Policy annually to students, will provide training for all staff, will make every effort to implement hiring practices to insure the safety of children, and will review the Policy annually for compliance and effectiveness.

If a staff member is reported as an alleged offender, ASTC will conduct a full investigation following a carefully designed course of due process, keeping the safety of the child at the highest priority.

Appendix B: Selected Child Protection Laws from Morocco

Appendix C: Selected Articles from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 1 (Definition of the child):

The Convention defines a 'child' as a person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the monitoring body for the Convention, has encouraged States to review the age of majority if it is set below 18 and to increase the level of protection for all children under 18.

Article 2 (Non-discrimination):

The Convention applies to all children, whatever their race, religion or abilities; whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from. It doesn't matter where children live, what language they speak, what their parents do, whether they are boys or girls, what their culture is, whether they have a disability or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

Article 3 (Best interests of the child):

The best interests of children must be the primary concern in making decisions that may affect them. All adults should do what is best for children. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. This particularly applies to budget, policy and law makers.

Article 19 (Protection from all forms of violence):

Children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally.

View the full document: [UNCRC in Child-friendly language](#)

Appendix D: AST Safeguarding Agreement

The AST Child Safeguarding Agreement for Employees outlines clear behavioral expectations for all employees, interns, volunteers, and contracted employees interacting with children, and it clearly states that the organization will enforce discipline for violations. All employees must sign this agreement, indicating their agreement to abide by the guidelines.

I will:

- Treat everyone with respect, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition, or comparison when working with students.
- Maintain appropriate physical boundaries at all times and touch children only, when necessary, in ways that are appropriate, public, and non-sexual.
- Exercise care with my use of language in my professional capacities.
- Follow the policy, procedures, and guidelines in the AST Child Safeguarding Handbook.
- Comply with the mandatory reporting regulations of AST to report suspected child abuse.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of students.

I will not:

- Be alone with students, outside of normal professional responsibilities, at school or non-school activities on weekends or evenings without an administrator being notified.
- Hit, physically assault or physically or psychologically abuse children.
- Have relations with a child, or act in a way that can be considered sexual, exploitation, maltreatment, or abuse.
- Use language, make suggestions, or offer advice that is offensive or abusive.
- Behave in a manner that is sexually inappropriate or provocative.
- Sleep in the same room as the children with whom I am working, without another adult present, and with the advanced authorization of the school administration.
- Provide transport in my car to a student alone, outside of my professional role, without express parental and administrative permission unless in the case of an emergency.
- Condone or participate in behavior by children that is abusive or endangers their safety.
- Act in ways that shame, humiliate, or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse, or favor particular children to the exclusion of others.
- Smoke or use tobacco products, or possess, or be under the influence of alcohol, or illegal drugs in the presence of students while in a professional capacity outside normal family and social events.
- Accept intimate and elaborate gifts or give private gifts to students without the knowledge of their parents/guardians and division principal.
- Engage in private communications with students via phone calls, text messaging, social media, or similar forms of electronic media in ways that are outside my professional relations with students.

I have read, understand, and agree to abide by the AST Child Safeguarding Agreement. I understand that any violation of this Safeguarding Agreement may result in disciplinary action and/or legal proceedings.

Signed Name

Date

Printed Name

Appendix E: Recognizing Indicators of Abuse and Neglect

The following identified indicators need to be considered in the context of the child's age, capabilities, medical and developmental history. Most child abuse or neglect is not identified based on a single event or indicator. Rather, indicators often occur in clusters or may not be present at all.

Physical abuse	
Possible physical and behavioral indicators of physical abuse that may or may not be present:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bruises, welts, 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.• Refusal to discuss injuries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	
Possible physical and behavioral indicators of emotional abuse that may or may not be present:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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

Appendix E: Recognizing Indicators of Abuse and Neglect (continued)

Sexual abuse (see Appendix G - Recognizing Indicators of Grooming)	
Possible physical and behavioral indicators of sexual abuse that may or may not be present:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reported or physician reported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Pain or irritation to the genital area ◦ Discharge from genitals ◦ Difficulty with urination ◦ Infection, bleeding ◦ Sexually Transmitted Diseases • Stomach pains or discomfort walking or sitting • Suffering from what seem physical ailments that can't be explained medically • Excessive masturbation/Sexually provocative • Age-inappropriate sexualized behavior or language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being unusually quiet and withdrawn or unusually aggressive • Fear of people or places • Aggression • Sleep disruptions, nightmares • Attention deficits • 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

Neglect	
Possible physical and behavioral indicators of neglect that may or may not be present:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical or dental needs unattended • Lack of supervision • Consistent hunger or Inadequate nutrition • Inappropriate dress • Poor personal hygiene • Fatigue or listlessness • Self-destructive behaviors • Drug or alcohol abuse • Compulsive stealing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme loneliness • Extreme need for affection • Low self-esteem • Poor social relationships • Failure to grow • Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school • Reluctance to return home

Source: International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC). [Definitions, signs, and indicators of abuse](#). June 2020

Appendix F: Recognizing Indicators of Grooming

Grooming is often undetected by others and is particularly difficult to spot. Disclosures by victims are rare and adults (and children) within organizations must therefore be particularly alert to the signs of grooming exhibited by both victims and offenders.

Indicators of grooming manifested by victims

- Sexual health issues
- Changes in weight
- Missing from home or school
- Secretive use of mobile phones or the internet
- Unexplained gifts
- Suicidal ideation or attempted suicide
- Non-suicidal self-harm
- Depressed and unworthy
- Alcohol or drug use

Indicators of grooming manifested by sex offenders:

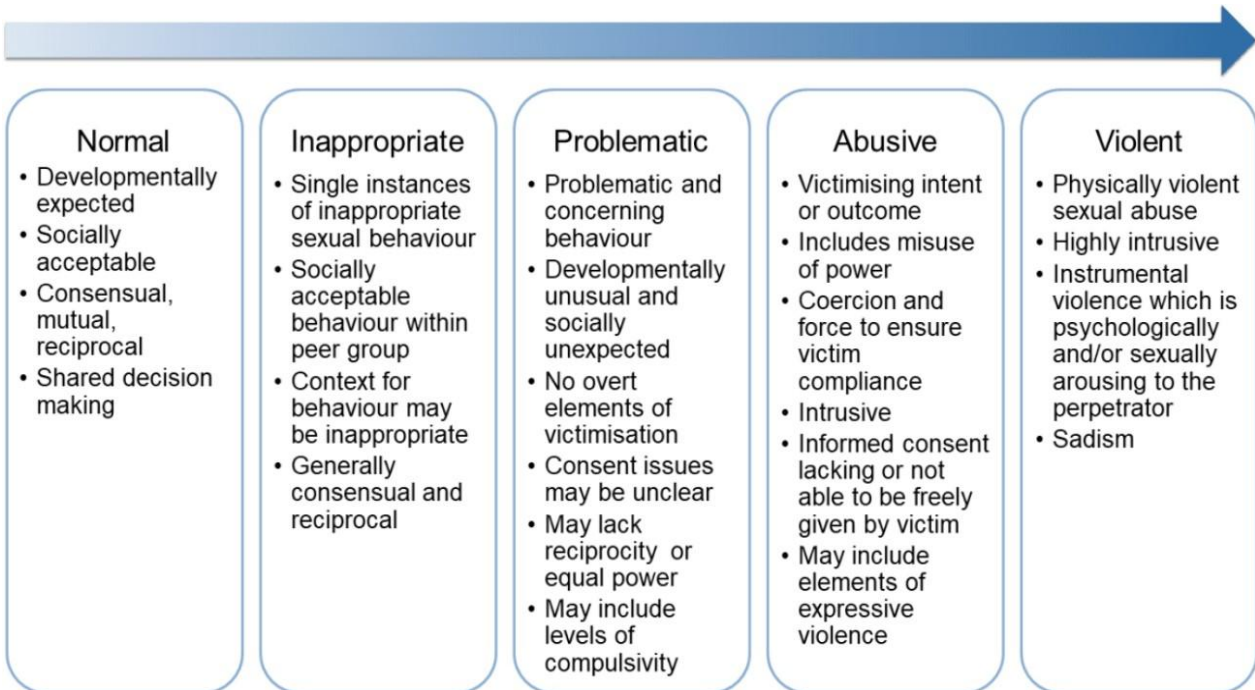
- Overly affectionate behavior with a child
- Making close physical contact sexual, such as inappropriate tickling and wrestling/play fighting
- Affording special attention or preferential treatment to a child
- Time spent alone with a child outside of the classroom/school or in private or isolated areas
- Making friends with a child's parents and visiting their home
- Acting as a particular child's confidante
- Giving gifts, money, toys, cards, letters to a child
- Using texts, telephone calls, e-mails or social networking sites to inappropriately communicate with a child
- Openly or pretending to accidentally expose the victim to nudity, sexual material and sexual acts (this in itself is classified as child sexual abuse but can also be a precursor to physical sexual assault)
- Flirtatious behavior or making suggestive remarks or comments of a sexual nature around a child
- Pattern of rule breaking or breaching the school Code of Conduct

*It is important to remember that not all sex offenders will exhibit the signs listed above and if an individual exhibits some or all of these signs, it does not mean that they are a sex offender.

Appendix-G: Recognizing Harmful Sexual Behavior

Signs and Indicators of Harmful Sexual Behavior based on the Hackett Continuum

Children and young people demonstrate a range of sexual behaviors as they grow up, and this is not always harmful. Sexualized behavior sits on a continuum with five stages:

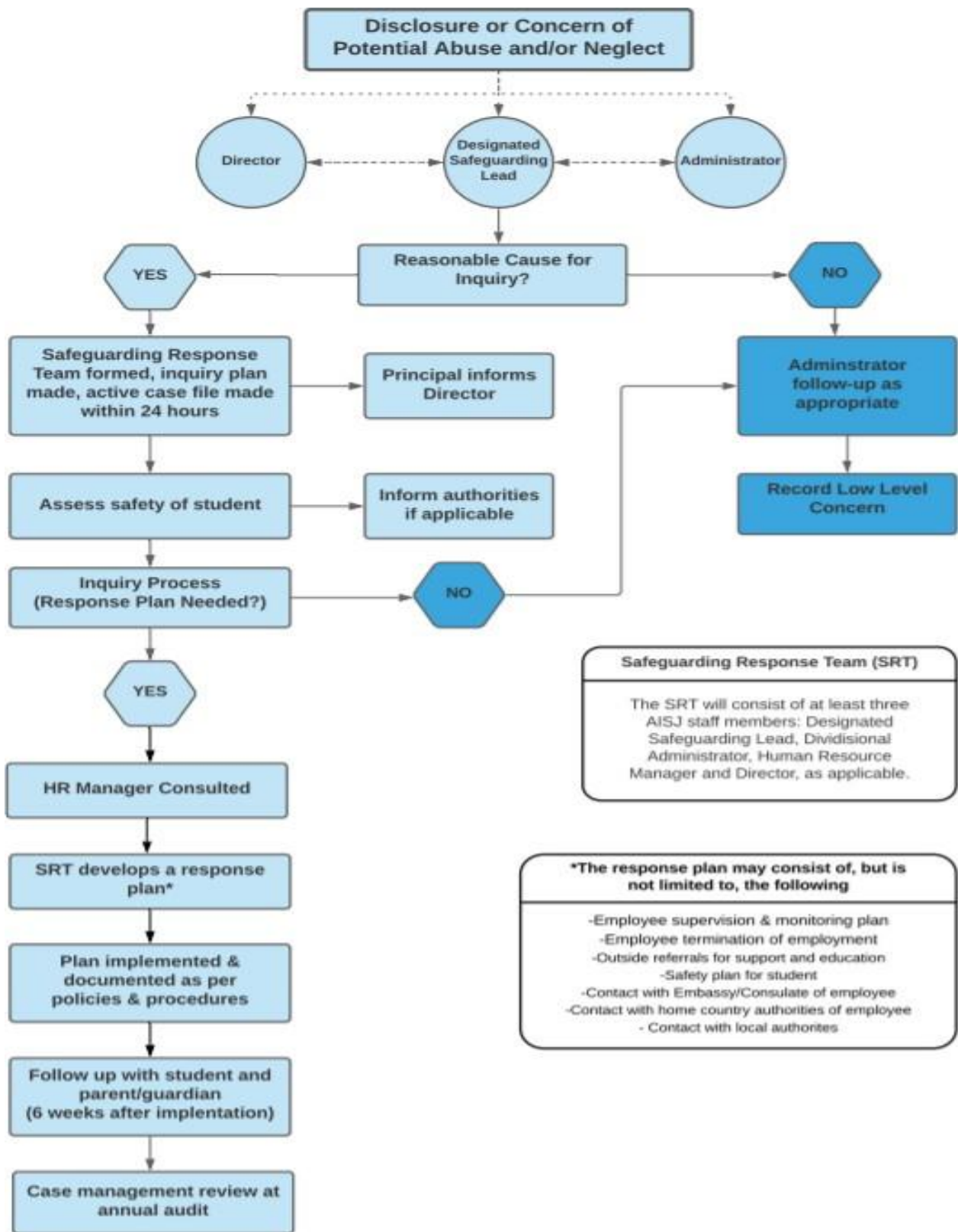


A child's behavior can change depending on the circumstances they are in, and sexual behavior can move in either direction along the continuum. So, it is important not to label all of a child's behavior as belonging to one category.

Source: NSPCC. [Protecting Children from Harmful Sexual Behaviourful-sexual-behavior](#). June 2020.

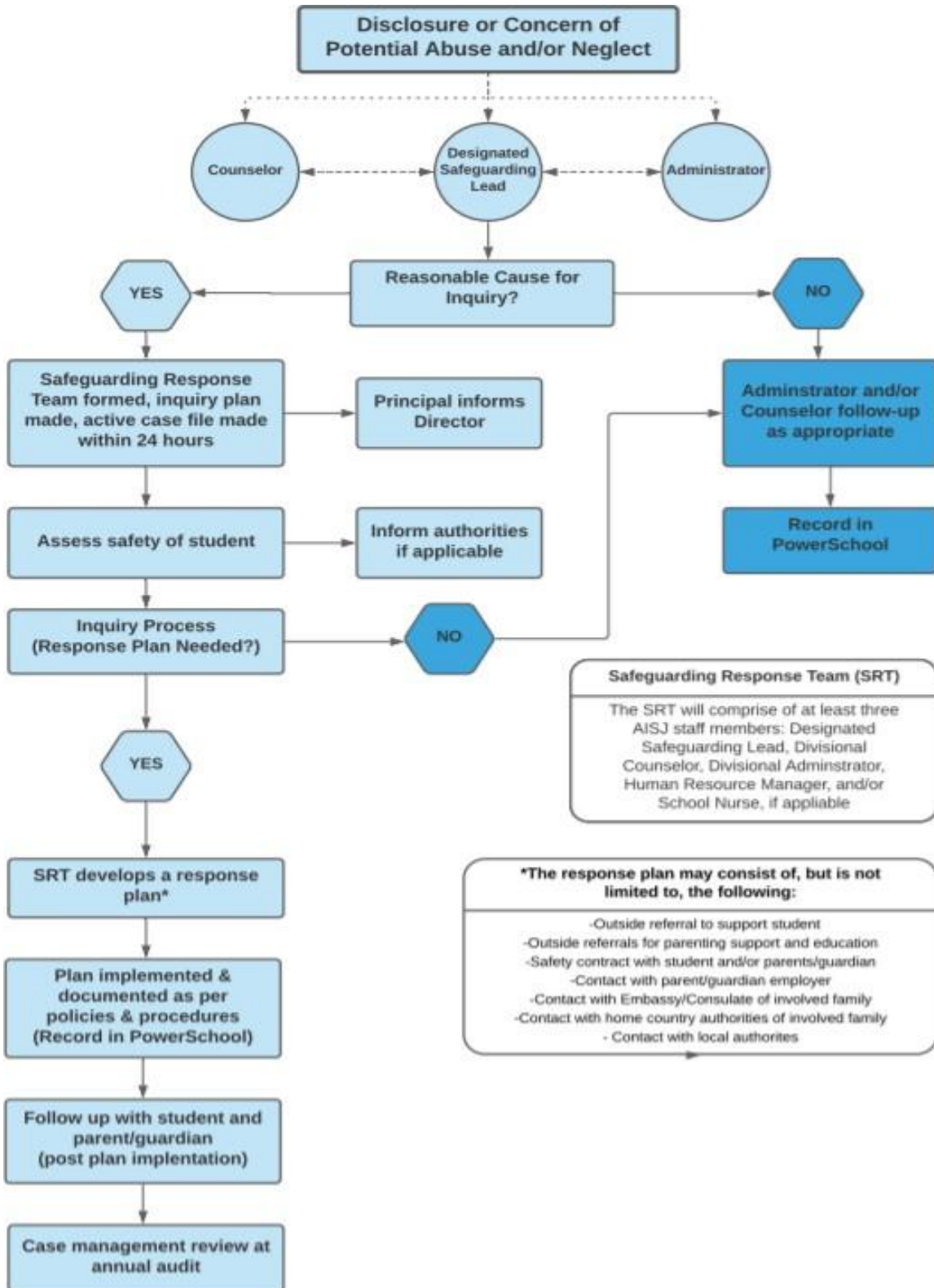
Appendix-H: Reporting and Inquiry Protocols (Flow Charts)

Employee - Reporting and Inquiry Protocol



Non-Employee - Reporting and Inquiry Protocol

(this includes students in the case of peer-on-peer abuse)



Appendix-I: Bullying Reporting and Inquiry Protocol (Flow Chart)

Bullying Reporting and Inquiry Protocol

