



Category: Student Services	Responsible Owner: Director of Student Services	Effective Date: February 2023
Policy Number: 7.8	Approval Body: Board of Governors	Policy Name: Child Abuse Reporting Policy

A. POLICY:

PURPOSE/COMMITMENT:

Columbia College is committed to the prevention of child abuse and the enhancement of the well-being and safety of the students entrusted to its care. This commitment is made first and foremost as an ethical and legal responsibility, but is also recognized as a response to government and societal expectations for the well-being and safety of students.

The Child, Family and Community Service Act imposes a legal duty on any person who has reason to believe that a child/youth needs protection to promptly report the matter to the appropriate authorities. "Reason to believe" means that, based on what you have seen or information you have received, you believe that a child/youth under the age of 19 has been or is likely to be at risk of harm.

There are three categories of abuse/neglect:

1. Physical or sexual abuse (physical injuries, molestation, incest or sexual abuse, use of a child for sexual gratification which includes sexual touching and non-touching abuse)
2. Physical neglect (gross lack of supervision or abandonment, gross or repeated failure to meet the child's/youth's nutritional needs, failure to seek or comply with needed medical advice)
3. Emotional injury or neglect (failure to meet the emotional needs of the child/youth for normal development, refusal to recognize and seek help for a child's/youth's emotional disturbance).

Responding to child/youth abuse and neglect is a societal responsibility. Understanding child/youth abuse and neglect and knowing how to take appropriate action are critical in protecting our students. School district personnel share this responsibility with parents, child protection social workers, police, and every citizen. School district personnel can help with the safety and protection of our students by identifying and reporting suspected child abuse and neglect, cooperating with all investigations, and supporting our students, both emotionally and socially, in our classrooms and schools.

SCOPE: The purpose of this policy is to provide specific guidance to the employees of Columbia College in fulfilling the commitment to assist in child abuse prevention and in providing reporting protocols if child abuse is suspected or known to have occurred.

WHEN TO USE THE POLICY: This policy is to respond to incidents of suspected child abuse and neglect and to ensure that children are protected, and underscores the importance of a collaborative approach between Columbia College administration, faculty, staff, police, and the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

POLICY STATEMENTS

1. The safety and well-being of children is the paramount consideration.
2. Children are entitled to be protected from abuse, neglect, harm or threat of harm.
3. A family is the preferred environment for the care and upbringing of children and the responsibility for the protection of children rests primarily with the parents.
4. If a Columbia College employee suspects that a child is being abused or neglected, there is a legal duty to report that concern to a child welfare worker. If the child is in immediate danger, the employee should call 911.
5. The Appointed School Official is the Principal of Columbia College. The Alternate Appointed School Official is the Head of High School.

DEFINITIONS:

- **Child:** In British Columbia, under the CFCSA, a child is anyone under the age of 19.

B. Procedures

1. Duty to Report
 - a. The legal duty to report is the responsibility of all members of the CC community.
 - b. Any person with reason to believe that a child/youth needs protection, or is likely to need protection, has a duty to report directly to a Child Protection Social Worker at the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
 - c. If you have any doubts or questions about the Ministry of Children and Family Development term “reason to believe,” contact the Child Protection Social Worker and seek advice. Also, if you have any doubts about whether a report should be made, or whether further questions need to be asked, contact the Child Protection Social Worker and seek advice.

Keep in mind that:

- You do not need proof – it is the Child Welfare Workers job to determine whether abuse or neglect has taken place; your role is to report your concerns, including any disclosures or indicators that you have witnessed.
 - It does not matter if you think someone else is reporting the situation – you still must make a report.
 - It does not matter if a Child Welfare Worker is already involved with the child/youth - you still must make a report.
- d. Inform the Appointed School Official after Child Protection Social Worker has been called. Please provide the following information:
 - Your name
 - Date the call was made
 - Who made the call (if not you)
 - Note if your Dean/Head of High School is aware
 - Note if you needed to involve police
 - Note if the suspected abuser is a staff member, or another child

Do not provide specific details about the call, such as the student’s name or the alleged suspected abuser. If needed, the Appointed School Official will follow-up with you.

- e. Informing another person (e.g. colleague, Principal) does not discharge your legal duty to report directly to a Child Protection Social Worker.
- f. If a child/youth is in **imminent danger**, police should be called first. Call **911**.

Phone **1-800-663-9122 (24 hours)** and request to talk to a Child Protection Social Worker. E.g. **“I would like to talk to a Child Protection Social Worker about an allegation of abuse.”**

- Detail and clarify your reason(s) for the child/youth needing protection to a Child Protection Social Worker
- Request information about the next step(s)
- Request that the Child Protection Social Worker phone you about the results of their assessment

The Appointed School Official or the Alternate Appointed School Official will help to support the individual reporting and determine appropriate next steps in any instances of suspected or reported child abuse in alignment with the *B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect* (2017; https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/public-safety/protecting-children/childabusepreventionhandbook_serviceprovider.pdf) and *Supporting Our Students: A Guide for Independent School Personnel Responding to Child Abuse*.

2. Reporting Procedures

a. When the suspected abuser is **an adult outside the school**:

- Document the information
- Immediately report the incident to a **Child Protection Social Worker** at the Ministry of Children and Family Development – 1 800 663-9122 (24 hours)
- Employees must inform the Appointed School Official.
- Do not inform parent(s), suspected abuser or any other parties.

b. When the suspected abuser is **a school employee, contract service provider or a volunteer**:

- Document the information
- Immediately report the incident to a Child Protection Social Worker at the Ministry of Children and Family Development – 1 800 663-9122 (24 hours)
- Inform the Appointed School Official. The Appointed School Official, in consultation with HR will determine if an investigation by the College is warranted.
- If a parent is reporting, they must inform the RCMP.
- Do not inform parent(s), suspected abuser or any other parties.

3. When the abuser is **a child/youth**:

- Notify and consult with the Appointed School Official. It may or may not result in a report to the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Suggestions for supporting the child/youth during a disclosure

When it becomes apparent that a child/youth may be communicating to you verbally or non-verbally that they need support:

1. Remain calm and proceed slowly. Set aside the time needed to listen carefully to the student and be supportive.
2. Listen to the child/youth as they tell their story. Allow the child/youth to communicate at their pace and comfort level. Document only the facts as the student has told them to you.
3. Wherever possible, questions should be framed in an open-ended manner. Leave more detailed questioning to MCFD and/or police.
4. Reassure the child/youth that they have not done anything wrong in sharing this information and that doing so will lead to accessing help.
5. Be honest and up front about the fact that you will need to share this information with people who are specialized in helping children and their families. Reassure the child/youth that you will inform them of what will happen next.
6. Ensure that supports are in place for the child/youth. Clarify with MCFD what the counsellor's role will be during the investigative phase.

LINKS TO SUPPORTING FORMS, DOCUMENTS, WEBSITE:

[B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect](#)

[Supporting Our Students: A Guide for Independent School Personnel Responding to Child Abuse](#)

REFERENCE TO EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT CLAUSES:

n/a

REFERENCE TO BYLAWS:

n/a

RELATED ACTS AND REGULATIONS:

[Child, Family and Community Service Act, 1996](#)

[Independent School Act, 1996](#)

RELATED POLICIES:

APPROVALS:

IF APPLICABLE:

Chair, Academic Board	Date:
Chair, Marketing and Recruitment Committee:	Date:
Chair, Finance Committee:	Date:

APPROVAL FOR ALL POLICIES:

Responsible Owner:	Date:
Principal or Designate:	Date:
Chair, Board of Governors:	Date:

Proposed Review Date:	Dates(s) revised:	Replaces Policy Number:
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February 2028		
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