# 414 MANDATED REPORTING OF CHILD NEGLECT OR PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ABUSE

## I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to make clear the statutory requirements of school personnel to report suspected child neglect or physical or sexual abuse.

## II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

A. The policy of the school district is to fully comply with Minnesota Statutes Chapter 260E requiring school personnel to report suspected child neglect or physical or sexual abuse.

B. A violation of this policy occurs when any school personnel fails to immediately report instances of child neglect or physical or sexual abuse when the school personnel knows or has reason to believe a child is being neglected or physically or sexually abused or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused within the preceding three years.

## III. DEFINITIONS

A. “Accidental” means a sudden, not reasonably foreseeable and unexpected occurrence or event that:

1. is not likely to occur and could not have been prevented by exercise of due care; and

2. if occurring while a child is receiving services from a facility, happens when the facility and the employee or person providing services in the facility are in compliance with the laws and rules relevant to the occurrence of event.

B. "Child" means one under age 18 and, for purposes of Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 260C (Juvenile Safety and Placement) and Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 260D (Child in Voluntary Foster Care for Treatment), includes an individual under age 21 who is in foster care pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 260C.451 (Foster Care Benefits Past Age 18).

C. "Immediately" means as soon as possible but in no event longer than 24 hours.

D. "Mandated reporter" means any school staff member or personnel who knows or has reason to believe a child is being maltreated or has been maltreated within the

preceding three years, meaning they are legally required to report any suspected cases of child abuse, vulnerable adult abuse (for students 18-21) or neglect to the appropriate authorities.

E. “Mental injury” means an injury to the psychological capacity or emotional stability of a child as evidenced by an observable or substantial impairment in the child’s ability to function within a normal range of performance and behavior with due regard to the child’s culture.

F. "Neglect" means the commission or omission of any of the acts specified below, other than by accidental means:

1. failure by a person responsible for a child's care to supply a child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, health care, medical or other care required for the child's physical or mental health when reasonably able to do so;

2. failure to protect a child from conditions or actions that seriously endanger the child's physical or mental health when reasonably able to do so, including a growth delay, which may be referred to as a failure to thrive, that has been diagnosed by a physician and is due to parental neglect;

3. failure to provide for necessary supervision or child care arrangements appropriate for a child after considering factors such as the child's age, mental ability, physical condition, length of absence or environment when the child is unable to care for the child’s own basic needs or safety or the basic needs or safety of another child in his or her care;

4. failure to ensure that a child is educated in accordance with state law, which does not include a parent’s refusal to provide his or her child with sympathomimetic medications;

5. prenatal exposure to a controlled substance as defined in state law used by the mother for a nonmedical purpose, as evidenced by withdrawal symptoms in the child at birth, results of a toxicology test performed on the mother at delivery or the child’s birth, medical effects or developmental delays during the child’s first year of life that medically indicate prenatal exposure to a controlled substance or the presence of a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder;

6. medical neglect as defined by Minnesota Statutes, Section 260C.007, Subdivision 6, Clause (5);

7. chronic and severe use of alcohol or a controlled substance by a person responsible for the care of the child that adversely affects the child’s basic needs and safety; or

8. emotional harm from a pattern of behavior that contributes to impaired emotional functioning of the child, which may be demonstrated by a substantial and observable effect in the child's behavior, emotional response or cognition that is not within the normal range for the child's age and stage of development, with due regard to the child's culture.

Neglect does not occur solely because the child's parent, guardian or other person responsible for the child's care in good faith selects and depends upon spiritual means or prayer for treatment or care of disease or remedial care of the child in lieu of medical care.

G. "Non-maltreatment mistake" occurs when: (1) at the time of the incident, the individual was performing duties identified in the center's child care program plan required under Minnesota Rules, Part 9503.0045; (2) the individual has not been determined responsible for a similar incident that resulted in a finding of maltreatment for at least seven years; (3) the individual has not been determined to have committed a similar non-maltreatment mistake under this paragraph for at least four years; (4) any injury to a child resulting from the incident, if treated, is treated only with remedies that are available over the counter, whether ordered by a medical professional or not; and (5) except for the period when the incident occurred, the facility and the individual providing services were both in compliance with all licensing requirements relevant to the incident. This definition only applies to child care centers licensed under Minnesota Rules, Chapter 9503.

H. "Person responsible for the child's care" means (1) an individual functioning within the family unit and having responsibilities for the care of the child such as a parent, guardian or other person having similar care responsibilities or (2) an individual functioning outside the family unit and having responsibilities for the care of the child such as a teacher, school administrator, other school employee or agent or other lawful custodian of a child having either full-time or short-term care responsibilities including, but not limited to, day care, babysitting whether paid or unpaid, counseling, teaching and coaching.

I. "Physical abuse" means any physical injury, mental injury (under subdivision 13) or threatened injury (under subdivision 23) inflicted by a person responsible for the child's care on a child other than by accidental means; or any physical or mental injury that cannot reasonably be explained by the child's history of injuries or any aversive or deprivation procedures or regulated interventions, that have not been authorized by Minnesota Statutes, Section 125A.0942 or Section 245.825.

Abuse does not include reasonable and moderate physical discipline of a child administered by a parent or legal guardian that does not result in an injury. Abuse does not include the use of reasonable force by a teacher, principal or school employee as allowed by Minnesota Statutes, Section 121A.582.

Actions that are not reasonable and moderate include, but are not limited to, any of the following: (1) throwing, kicking, burning, biting or cutting a child; (2) striking a child with a closed fist; (3) shaking a child under age three; (4) striking or other actions that result in any non-accidental injury to a child under 18 months of age; (5) unreasonable interference with a child's breathing; (6) threatening a child with a weapon, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, Section 609.02, Subdivision 6; (7) striking a child under age one on the face or head; (8) striking a child who is at least age one but under age four on the face or head, which results in an injury; (9) purposely giving a child poison, alcohol or dangerous, harmful or controlled substances that were not prescribed for the child by a practitioner, in order to control or punish the child or other substances that substantially affect the child's behavior, motor coordination or judgment or that result in sickness or internal injury or that subject the child to medical procedures that would be unnecessary if the child were not exposed to the substances; (10) unreasonable physical confinement or restraint not permitted under Minnesota Statutes, Section 609.379 including, but not limited to, tying, caging or chaining or (11) in a school facility or school zone, an act by a person responsible for the child's care that is a violation under Minnesota Statutes, Section 121A.58.

J. "Report" means any communication received by the local welfare agency, police department, county sheriff or agency responsible for child protection pursuant to this section that describes maltreatment of a child and contains sufficient content to identify the child and any person believed to be responsible for the maltreatment, if known.

K. "School personnel" means professional employee or professional's delegate of the school district who provides health, educational, social, psychological, law enforcement or child care services.

L. "Sexual abuse" means the subjection of a child by a person responsible for the child's care, by a person who has a significant relationship to the child (as defined in Minnesota Statutes, Section 609.341, Subdivision 15) or by a person in a current or recent position of authority (as defined in Minnesota Statutes, Section 609.341, Subdivision 10) to any act which constitutes a violation of Minnesota statutes prohibiting criminal sexual conduct. Such acts include sexual penetration, sexual contact, solicitation of children to engage in sexual conduct and communication of sexually explicit materials to children. Sexual abuse also includes any act involving a minor which constitutes a violation of Minnesota statutes prohibiting prostitution or use of a minor in a sexual performance. Sexual abuse includes all reports of known or suspected child sex trafficking involving a child who is identified as a victim of sex trafficking. Sexual abuse includes threatened sexual abuse which includes the status of a parent or household member who has committed a violation which requires registration under Minnesota Statutes, Section 243.166, Subd. 1b(a) or (b).

M. "Threatened injury" means a statement, overt act, condition or status that represents a substantial risk of physical or sexual abuse or mental injury. Threatened injury includes, but is not limited to, exposing a child to a person responsible for the child's care who has (1) subjected the child to, or failed to protect a child from, an overt act or condition that constitutes egregious harm under Minnesota Statutes, section 260E.03, subdivision 5, or a similar law of another jurisdiction; (2) been found to be palpably unfit under Minnesota Statues, section 260C.301, subdivision 1, paragraph (b), clause 3, or a similar law of another jurisdiction; (3) committed an act that resulted in an involuntary termination of parental rights under Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.301, or a similar law of another jurisdiction; or (4) committed an act that resulted in the involuntary transfer of permanent legal and physical custody of a child to a relative or parent under Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.515, subdivision 4, or a similar law of another jurisdiction.

## IV. REPORTING PROCEDURES

A. A mandated reporter shall immediately report the information to the local welfare agency, agency responsible for assessing or investigating the report, police department, county sheriff, tribal social services agency or tribal police department. The reporter will include his or her name and address in the report.

B. An oral report shall be made immediately by telephone or otherwise. The oral report shall be followed by a written report within 72 hours (exclusive of weekends and holidays) to the appropriate police department, the county sheriff, local welfare agency or agency responsible for assessing or investigating the report. Any report shall be of sufficient content to identify the child, any person believed to be responsible for the maltreatment of the child if the person is known, the nature and extent of the maltreatment and the name and address of the reporter.

C. Regardless of whether a report is made, as soon as practicable after a school receives information regarding an incident that may constitute maltreatment of a child in a school facility, the school shall inform the parent, legal guardian or custodian of the child that an incident has occurred that may constitute maltreatment of the child, when the incident occurred and the nature of the conduct that may constitute maltreatment.

D. A mandated reporter who knows or has reason to know of the deprivation of custodial or parental rights or the kidnapping of a child shall report the information to the local police department or the county sheriff.

E. With the exception of a health care professional or a social service professional who is providing the woman with prenatal care or other health care services, a mandated reporter shall immediately report to the local welfare agency if the

person knows or has reason to believe that a woman is pregnant and has used a controlled substance for a nonmedical purpose during the pregnancy, including, but not limited to, tetrahydrocannabinol or has consumed alcoholic beverages during the pregnancy in any way that is habitual or excessive.

F. A person mandated by Minnesota law and this policy to report who fails to report may be subject to criminal penalties and/or discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

G. An employer of a mandated reporter shall not retaliate against the person for reporting in good faith maltreatment against a child with respect to whom a report is made, because of the report.

H. Any person who knowingly or recklessly makes a false report under the provisions of applicable Minnesota law or this policy shall be liable in a civil suit for any actual damages suffered by the person or persons so reported and for any punitive damages set by the court or jury, plus costs and reasonable attorney fees. Knowingly or recklessly making a false report also may result in discipline.

## V. INVESTIGATION

A. The responsibility for assessing or investigating reports of suspected maltreatment rests with the appropriate state, county or local agency or agencies. The agency responsible for assessing or investigating reports of maltreatment has the authority to interview the child, the person or persons responsible for the child's care, the alleged offender and any other person with knowledge of the maltreatment for the purpose of gathering facts, assessing safety and risk to the child and formulating a plan. The investigating agency may interview the child at school. The interview may take place outside the presence of the alleged offender or parent, legal guardian or school official. The investigating agency, <u>not</u> the school, is responsible for either notifying or withholding notification of the interview to the parent, guardian or person responsible for the child's care. School officials may not disclose to the parent, legal custodian or guardian the contents of the notification or any other related information regarding the interview until notified in writing by the local welfare or law enforcement agency that the investigation or assessment has been concluded.

B. When the investigating agency determines that an interview should take place on school property, written notification of intent to interview the child on school property must be received by school officials prior to the interview. The notification shall include the name of the child to be interviewed, the purpose of the interview and a reference to the statutory authority to conduct an interview on school property.

C. Except where the alleged offender is believed to be a school official or employee, the time and place and manner of the interview on school premises shall be within the discretion of school officials, but the local welfare or law enforcement agency shall have the exclusive authority to determine who may attend the interview. The conditions as to time, place and manner of the interview set by the school officials shall be reasonable and the interview shall be conducted not more than 24 hours after the receipt of the notification unless another time is considered necessary by agreement between the school officials and the local welfare or law enforcement agency. Every effort must be made to reduce the disruption of the educational program of the child, other students or school employees when an interview is conducted on school premises.

D. Where the alleged offender is believed to be a school official or employee, the school district shall conduct its own investigation independent of MDE and, if involved, the local welfare or law enforcement agency.

E. Upon request by MDE, the school district shall provide all requested data that are relevant to a report of maltreatment and are in the possession of a school facility, pursuant to an assessment or investigation of a maltreatment report of a student in school. The school district shall provide the requested data in accordance with the requirements of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 United States Code, section 1232g.

## VI. MAINTENANCE OF SCHOOL RECORDS CONCERNING ABUSE OR POTENTIAL ABUSE

A. When a local welfare or local law enforcement agency determines that a potentially abused or abused child should be interviewed on school property, written notification of the agency's intent to interview on school property must be received by school officials prior to the interview. The notification shall include the name of the child to be interviewed, the purpose of the interview and a reference to the statutory authority to conduct the interview. The notification shall be private data. School officials may not disclose to the parent, legal custodian or guardian the contents of the notice or any other related information regarding the interview until notified in writing by the local welfare or law enforcement agency that the investigation has been concluded.

B. All records regarding a report of maltreatment, including any notification of intent to interview which was received by the school as described above in Paragraph A., shall be destroyed by the school only when ordered by the agency conducting the investigation or by a court of competent jurisdiction.

## VII. PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ABUSE AS SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR VIOLENCE

Under certain circumstances, alleged physical or sexual abuse may also be sexual harassment or violence under Minnesota law. If so, the duties relating to the reporting and investigation of such harassment or violence may be applicable.

## VIII. DISSEMINATION OF POLICY AND TRAINING

A. This policy shall appear in school personnel handbooks.

B. The school district will develop a method of discussing this policy with school personnel.

C. This policy shall be reviewed at least annually for compliance with state law.

**Legal References**:
Minn. Stat. Ch 13 (Minnesota Government Data Practices Act)
Minn. Stat. § 121A.58 (Corporal Punishment)
Minn. Stat. § 121A.582 (Student Discipline; Reasonable Force)
Minn. Stat. § 125A.0942 (Standards for Restrictive Procedures)
Minn. Stat. § 243.166, Subd. 1b(a)(b) (Registration of Predatory Offenders)
Minn. Stat. § 245.825 (Use of Aversive or Deprivation Procedures)
Minn. Stat. § 260C.007, Subd. 6, Clause (5) (Child in Need of Protection)
Minn. Stat. § 260C.301 (Termination of Parental Rights)
Minn. Stat. § 260C.451 (Foster Care Benefits Past Age 18)
Minn. Stat. Ch. 260D (Child in Voluntary Foster Care for Treatment)
Minn. Stat. Ch. 260E (Reporting of Maltreatment of Minors)
Minn. Stat. § 609.02, Subd. 6 (Definitions – Dangerous Weapon)
Minn. Stat. § 609.341, Subd. 10 (Definitions – Position of Authority)
Minn. Stat. § 609.341, Subd. 15 (Definitions – Significant Relationship)
Minn. Stat. § 609.379 (Reasonable Force)
20 U.S.C. § 1232g (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)

**Cross References:**
Policy 415 (Mandated Reporting of Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adults)

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