Procedure - Child Abuse and Neglect

Each school principal will develop and implement an instructional program that will teach students:

1. How to recognize the factors that may cause people to abuse or neglect children;
2. How one may protect oneself from experiencing abuse or neglect; and
3. What resources are available to assist an individual who does or may encounter an abusive or neglectful situation.

To facilitate such a program, staff will receive training regarding reporting obligations during their initial orientation and every three years after initial employment. Training may include such topics as:

1. Child growth and development;
2. Identification of child abuse or neglect;
3. Effects of abuse or neglect on child growth and development;
4. Personal safety as it relates to potential child abuse or neglect;
5. Parenting and supervision skills;
6. Life situations/stressors which may lead to child abuse or neglect; and
7. Substance abuse.

Reporting Responsibilities under RCW 26.44.030

Staff are required to report every instance of suspected child abuse or neglect.

The following procedures are required when reporting instances of suspected child abuse or neglect:

A. When there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect, staff or the principal will orally report it to the nearest office of Child Protective Services (CPS) of 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 nurse or counselor.

   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.

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

   1. The name, address, and age of the child;
   2. The name and address of the child's parents, stepparents, guardians, or other persons having custody of the child;
   3. The nature and extent of the suspected abuse or neglect;
   4. Any evidence of previous abuse or neglect, including the nature and extent;
   5. Any other information that may relate to the cause or extent of the abuse or neglect; and
   6. The identity of the person accused of inflicting the abuse.

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

Reporting Responsibilities under RCW 28A.320.160 and RCW 28A.400.317

A staff member or contractor who has knowledge or reasonable cause to believe that a student has been a victim, target, or recipient of physical or sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, or assault by another school employee or contractor must report the abuse, misconduct, or assault to the appropriate school administrator. If the administrator determines they have reasonable cause to believe that the sexual misconduct, physical or sexual abuse, or assault has occurred, they will make a report to law enforcement in accordance with RCW 26.44.030.

While determining whether reasonable cause exists, the administrator will contact all parties involved in the complaint and will immediately notify the parents and legal guardians of the student who is alleged to be the victim, target, or recipient of the physical or sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, or assault.

The district will provide parents and legal guardians with 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 and legal guardians on an annual basis.

Defining Child Abuse and Neglect

For definitions regarding abuse and neglect, staff should review RCW 26.44.020, RCW 26.44.030, and WAC 110-30-0030.

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 explanations 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, neglect, or exploitation 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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