The #1 Rule: You Must Report

- School employees are mandatory reporters.
- If you have reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused or neglected, you must report.
- You do NOT have to prove abuse occurred.
- Your responsibility is to report the concern—not investigate it.

The 24-Hour Requirement

- Professionals must report suspected abuse or neglect no later than 24 hours after first having reasonable cause to believe it occurred.
- The clock starts when YOU first have reasonable cause.
- Do not wait for additional evidence, an administrator, or an investigation.
- SB 571 changed the professional reporting deadline from 48 hours to 24 hours.

Where Do I Report?

- Report directly to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) or an appropriate law-enforcement agency.
- DFPS Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400
- Online reporting is available through the Texas Abuse Hotline.
- If the child is in immediate danger: call 911.
- School district police are not the substitute for the state/local law-enforcement agencies identified in the law.

You Cannot Delegate the Report

- Do NOT tell a principal, counselor, nurse, HR, or coworker: “You report it.”
- You may notify your supervisor as required by district policy, but internal notification does NOT replace your legal report.
- A supervisor cannot approve, delay, or make the decision for you.
- When in doubt: report.

What Should I Report?

- Report facts that give you reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect.
- Examples: physical injury, sexual abuse, neglect, exploitation, or other conduct meeting the statutory definition.
- Listen calmly. Do not conduct your own investigation.
- Document factual observations according to district procedures.
- Avoid promising confidentiality to a student.

If the Alleged Perpetrator Is a School Employee

- The child-abuse report still goes directly to DFPS or law enforcement.
- Do not investigate the allegation yourself.
- Follow district procedures for notifying appropriate administrators.
- Separate reporting duties may apply to educator/service-provider misconduct and TEA/SBEC reporting.
- One report does not replace another required report.

Quick Scenario: What Would You Do?

- A student tells you: “My mom’s boyfriend hit me last night.”
- 1. Ensure immediate safety.
- 2. Listen and avoid leading questions.
- 3. Make the required report directly to DFPS or law enforcement within 24 hours—or immediately when circumstances require.
- 4. Follow district notification/documentation procedures.
- 5. Do not investigate or wait for someone else to report.

Remember: REPORT — DON'T INVESTIGATE

- Recognize a concern.
- Report directly to DFPS or law enforcement.
- Report within the required 24-hour window.
- Do not delegate.
- Follow district procedures in addition to the legal report.
- When a child's safety is at stake, act promptly.

Key Resources

- Texas Family Code §261.101 — Mandatory Reporting
- Texas Education Code §38.004 — Child Abuse Reporting and Programs
- Texas Education Agency — Report Abuse, Neglect, and Misconduct
- DFPS Texas Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400
- Emergency: 911

FERPA – Protecting Student Privacy

What FERPA Protects:

- Student education records and personally identifiable information
- Grades, attendance, discipline, IEP/504 information, health-related school records
- In any format: paper, electronic, verbal or digital

Staff Responsibilities:

- Share information with authorized individuals: Campus Administration (not other staff members)
- Do not discuss details in public areas such as hallways, lobbies, cafeteria, duty, lounge areas
- Do not photograph or post student information using personal devices
- Access student information only when you have a legitimate educational interest