

Students

Child Abuse Reporting Procedures

Step 1 When any member of our staff suspects child abuse, he/she may immediately report (verbally or in writing) the concern to the principal of the school that the student attends. It is important that contact with parents and other staff members should not occur until after Step 2. Staff members may contact the appropriate child protection agency or utilize Step 2 of these procedures.

Step 2 Upon receiving the oral or written report of the suspected child abuse, the principal will immediately review the case and involve appropriate individuals in determining further action. The principal will report the suspicion and the results of his/her review to the Superintendent and inform all individuals involved of his/her recommendations and/or action.

Step 3 After reviewing the report of the principal, the Superintendent may take further appropriate action to protect the welfare of the child. This may include filing a report and additional measures if the immediate safety of the child is in jeopardy. In extreme cases, action seeking court custody of the child may be necessary.

None of the above procedures are designed to impede or prohibit the direct reporting by employees to child protective agencies.

Definitions

Child Abuse or neglect includes the following: (Penal Code 11165.5, 11165.6)

1. A physical injury inflicted by other than accidental means on a child by another person
2. Sexual abuse of a child as defined in Penal Code 11165.1
3. Neglect as defined in Penal Code 11165.2
4. Willful harming or injuring of a child or the endangering of the person or health of a child as defined in Penal Code 11165.3
5. Unlawful corporal punishment or injury as defined in Penal Code 11165.4

Child abuse or neglect does not include:

1. A mutual affray between minors (Penal Code 11165.6)
2. An injury caused by reasonable and necessary force used by a peace officer acting within the course and scope of his/her employment (Penal Code 11165.6)

Students

Child Abuse Reporting Procedures (continued)

3. An injury resulting from the exercise by a teacher, vice principal, principal or other certificated employee or the same degree of physical control over a student that a parent/guardian would be privileged to exercise, not exceeding the amount of physical control reasonably necessary to maintain order, protect property, protect the health and safety of students, or maintain proper and appropriate conditions conducive to learning (Education Code 44807)

(cf. 5144 – Discipline)

4. An injury caused by a school employee's use of force that is reasonable and necessary to quell a disturbance threatening physical injury to persons or damage to property, to protect himself/herself or to obtain weapons or other dangerous objects within the control of the student (Education Code 49001)
5. Physical pain or discomfort caused by athletic competition or other such recreational activity voluntarily engaged in by the student (Education Code 49001)

Mandated reporters include by are not limited to teachers; instructional aides; teacher's Aides or assistants; classified employees; certificated pupil personnel employees; administrative officers or supervisors of child attendance; administrators and employees of a licensed day care facility; Head Start teachers; district police or security officers; and administrators, presenters, or counselors of a child abuse prevention program. (Penal Code 1165.7)

“Reasonable suspicion” means that it is objectively reasonable for a person to entertain a suspicion, based upon facts that could cause a reasonable person in a like position, drawing when appropriate on his/her training and experience, to suspect child abuse or neglect. (Penal Code 11166)

Reportable Offenses

A mandated reporter shall make a report using the procedures provided below whenever in his/her professional capacity or within the scope of his/her employment, he/she has knowledge of or observes a child whom the mandated reporter knows or reasonably suspects has been the victim of child abuse or neglect. (Penal Code 11166)

Any mandated reporter who has knowledge of or who reasonably suspects that a child is suffering serious emotional damage or is at a substantial risk of suffering serious emotional damage based on evidence of severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal or untoward aggressive behavior toward self or others may make a report to the appropriate agency. (Penal Code 11166.05)

Students

Child Abuse Reporting Procedures (continued)

Any person shall notify a peace officer if he/she reasonably believes that he/she has observed the commission or a murder, rape, or lewd or lascivious act by use of force, violence, duress, menace or fear of immediate and unlawful bodily injury where the victim is a child under age 14. (Penal Code 152.3, 288)

Responsibility for Reporting

The reporting duties of mandated reporters are individual and cannot be delegated to another person. (Penal Code 11166)

When two or more mandated reporters jointly have knowledge of a known or suspected instance of child abuse or neglect, and when there is agreement among them, the report may be made by a member of the team selected by mutual agreement and a single report may be made and signed by the selected member of the reporting team. Any member who has knowledge that the member designated to report has failed to do so shall thereafter make the report. (Penal Code 11166)

No supervisor or administrator shall impede or inhibit a mandated reporter from making a report. (Penal Code 11166)

Any person not identified as a mandated reporter who has knowledge of or observes a child who he/she knows or reasonable suspects has been a victim of child abuse or neglect may report the known or suspected instance of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate agency. (Penal Code 11166)

1. Initial Telephone Report

Immediately or as soon as practicably possible after knowing or observing suspected child abuse or neglect, a mandated reporter shall make a report by telephone to any police department, sheriff's department, county probation department if designated by the county to receive such reports or county welfare department.

2. Written Report

Within 36 hours of receiving the information concerning the incident, the mandated reporter shall prepare and send to the appropriate agency a written report, which includes a completed Department of Justice form. (Penal Code 11166, 11168)

Mandated reporters may obtain copies of the above form from either the district or the appropriate agency.

Students

Child Abuse Reporting Procedures (continued)

3. Internal Reporting

Employees reporting child abuse or neglect to the appropriate agency are encouraged, but not required, to notify the principal or designee as soon as possible after the initial telephone report to the appropriate agency. When so notified the principal shall inform the Superintendent or designee.

The principal or designee so notified shall provide the mandated reporter with any assistance necessary to ensure that reporting procedures are carried out in accordance with law, Board policy and administrative regulation. At the mandated reporter's request, the principal may assist in completing and filing the necessary forms.

The mandated reporter shall not be required to disclose his/her identity to the principal. (Penal Code 11166)

He/she may provide or mail a copy of the written report to the principal, Superintendent or designee without his/her signature or name. Reporting the information to an employer, supervisor, school principal, school counselor, co- worker or other person shall not be a substitute for making a mandated report to the appropriate agency.

Victim Interviews

Whenever a representative of an agency investigating suspected child abuse or neglect deems it necessary, a suspected victim may be interviewed during school hours, on school premises, concerning a report of suspected child abuse or neglect that occurred within the child's home or out-of-home care facility. The child shall be given the choice of being interviewed in private or in the presence of any adult school employee or volunteer aide selected by the child. (Penal Code 11174.3)

A staff member or volunteer aide selected by a child may decline to be present at the interview. If the selected person accepts, the principal or designee shall inform him/her of the following requirements: (Penal Code 11174.3)

1. The purpose of the selected person's presence at the interview is to lend support to the child and enable him/her to be as comfortable as possible.
2. The selected person shall not participate in the interview.
3. The selected person shall not discuss the facts or circumstances of the case with the child.

Students

Child Abuse Reporting Procedures (continued)

4. The selected person is subject to the confidentiality requirements of the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act, a violation of which is punishable as specified in Penal Code 11167.5.

If a staff member agrees to be present, the interview shall be held at a time during school hours when it does not involve an expense to the school. (Penal Code 11174.3)

Release of Child to Peace Officer

When a child is released to a peace officer and taken into custody as a victim of suspected child abuse, the Superintendent and/or principal shall not notify the parent or guardian as required in other instances of removal of a child from school, but rather shall provide the peace officer with the address and telephone number of the child's parent or guardian. It is the responsibility of the peace officer to notify the parent or guardian of the situation. (Education Code 48906)

Peace officers will be asked to sign an appropriate release or acceptance of responsibility form.

(cf. 5145.11 – Questioning and Apprehension)

Parent/Guardian Complaints

Upon request, the Superintendent or designee shall provide parents/guardians with procedures that describe how to report suspected child abuse occurring at a school site to appropriate agencies. For parents/guardians whose primary language is other than English, such procedures shall be in the primary language of the parent/guardian and, when communicating orally regarding these procedures, an interpreter shall be provided.

To file a complaint against a district employee or other person suspected of child abuse or neglect at a school site, parents/guardians may file a report by telephone, in person or in writing with any appropriate agency identified above under "Reporting Procedures." If a parent/guardian makes a complaint to any district employee, that employee shall notify the parent/guardian of procedures for filing a complaint with the appropriate agency. The employee also is obligated pursuant to Penal Code 11166 to file a report himself/herself using the procedures described above for mandated reporters.

(cf. 1312.1 – Complaints Concerning District Employees)

In addition, if the child is enrolled in special education a separate complaint may be filed with the California Department of Education pursuant to 5 CCR 4650.

(cf. 1312.3 – Uniform Complaint Procedures)

Students

Child Abuse Reporting Procedures (continued)

Notifications

The Superintendent or designee shall provide all new employees who are mandated reporters a statement that informs them that they are mandated reporters, of their reporting obligations under Penal Code 11166, and of their confidentiality rights under Penal Code 111.67. The district shall also provide these new employees with a copy of Penal Code 11165.7, 11166, and 11167. (Penal Code 11165.7, 11166.5)

Before beginning employment, employees shall sign the statement indicating that they have knowledge of the reporting obligations under Penal Code 11166 and that they will comply with those provisions. The signed statements shall be retained by the Superintendent or designee. (Penal Code 11166.5)

Employees who work with dependent adults shall be notified of legal responsibilities and reporting procedures pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code 15630-15637.

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