

CHILD NEGLECT AND/OR ABUSE

POLICY STATEMENT

- A. The School District of New London is aware of the importance of its role in the identification and referral of cases of suspected child abuse and neglect. Because of the large amount of time school personnel spend with children, they are in a unique position to identify and refer children who may be abused, neglected, or may have been threatened with abuse or neglect, thus helping prevent further instances and providing intervention which may help break the cycle of abuse and/or neglect. The school district, in meeting its responsibilities regarding all aspects of child abuse and neglect, will offer training in prevention (Wisconsin Act 213) as well as in identification, referral, and treatment.

- B. Administrative-Legal regulations: State law requires schools to report all suspected incidents of child neglect and/or abuse and/or threatened abuse to the proper legal authority within the county. Section 48.981 provides the following immunity and penalty to school personnel:
 - 1. Immunity: "Anyone, not just mandated reporters, in good faith, participating in the making of a report pursuant to this section or participating in a judicial proceeding resulting therefrom will in so doing be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed."

 - 2. Penalty: "Anyone mandated to report suspicion of child neglect and/or abuse and/or threatened abuse knowingly and willfully violating this section by failing to file a report as required, may be fined not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned not more than six months or both." Penalties under civil law are more likely to occur and may be more severe.

POLICY PROCEDURE

- A. General indicators: The following are the major signs of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect. One of these, or even several in combination, may not indicate that abuse has occurred. They may indicate accidents or that other medical conditions, emotional illness, or problems exist. If a number of these signs occur together or if they reoccur frequently, child abuse and/or neglect may be suspected.
 - 1. Signs of physical abuse:
 - a. Bruises, welts on face, neck, chest, back.
 - b. Injuries in the shape of object (belt, cord).
 - c. Unexplained burns on palms, soles, back.
 - d. Fractures that do not fit story of injury.
 - e. Delay in seeking medical help.
 - f. Extremes in behavior: very aggressive or withdrawn and shy.

- g. Afraid to go home.
 - h. Frightened of parents.
 - i. Fearful of other adults.
 - j. Unexplained lacerations or abrasions.
2. Signs of emotional abuse or damage:
- a. Low self-esteem.
 - b. Self-denigration.
 - c. Severe depression.
 - d. Aggression.
 - e. Withdrawal
 - f. Severe anxiety.
 - g. Failure to learn.
 - h. Extremes in behavior from overly aggressive to shy or passive withdrawal.
 - i. Regressive behavior like sucking, biting, or rocking.
3. Signs of neglect:
- a. Poor hygiene, odor.
 - b. Dirty clothing.
 - c. Inappropriately dressed for weather.
 - d. Needs medical or dental care, glasses or hearing aid.
 - e. Left alone, unsupervised for long periods.
 - f. Failure to thrive, malnutrition.
 - g. Constant hunger, begs or steals food.
 - h. Extreme willingness to please.
 - i. Frequent absence from school.
 - j. Arrives early and stays late at school or play areas of other people's homes.
4. Signs of sexual abuse or sexual activity by a minor child:
- a. Pain, swelling, or itching in genital areas.

- b. Bruises, bleeding, discharge in genital or penile areas.
 - c. Difficulty walking or sitting, frequent urination, pain.
 - d. Venereal disease.
 - e. Refusal to take part in gym or other exercise.
 - f. Poor peer relationships.
 - g. Unusual interest in sex for age.
 - h. Drastic change in school achievement.
 - i. Runaway or delinquent.
 - j. Regressive or childlike behavior.
 - k. Pregnancy.
 - l. Reported sexual activity by the student or another.
5. Signs of threatened abuse:
- a. Reports of verbal threats.
 - b. Fearful of going home.
 - c. Fearful of making mistakes.
 - d. Verbal out lashes toward other children.
 - e. Severe anxiety.
- B. Referral procedures: A specific referral procedure is outlined below to insure an accurate and complete report of the abuse or neglect incident and to support the completion of the referral process:
- 1. Any staff member who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child seen in the course of professional duties has been abused or neglected or having reason to believe that a child seen in the course of professional duties has been threatened with abuse or neglect and that abuse or neglect of the child will occur will inform their building principal of their intention to make a report. If the building principal is unavailable for any reason, the individual making the report will contact the next administrator in the chain of command. It is the obligation of the staff member to make the report, and the building principal, or such other administrator that the staff person making the report contacts, will support the staff member in their action and will not attempt to delay, modify, or prevent any report of suspected child maltreatment.
 - 2. The staff member must call the county social services child protection unit of whichever county the child resides as soon as possible using the district's referral form (Exhibit 1) with the following information:

- a. The names, telephone number, and addresses of the child, his/her parents or whoever is caring for him/her.
 - b. The child's age and date of birth.
 - c. The nature and extent of injuries and/or condition.
 - d. Information given as to cause of injury.
3. Due to the confidential nature of this report, minimal information may be given to appropriate school staff of the suspected abuse problem in addition to making a report to the Department of Health and Human Services. However, this information will be kept confidential and will not be included in the student's official file or cumulative records, but must be maintained by the reporter in a confidential format.
 4. The building principal, or his/her designee, will be responsible for giving factual information—dates of trancies and absences, school performance and behavior, and general physical appearance of the child, physician's name if requested as part of a social services investigation.
 5. District staff, who are required by law to make a report, may consult with other district staff prior to making a report but will not delay the report beyond the time the student leaves the supervision of school staff on the day the suspicion of abuse or neglect or threatened abuse or neglect occurs.
 6. In cases where it is suspected that the child's health or safety is in immediate danger or immediate medical attention to the child is needed, the reporter will also contact the school nurse and the building principal immediately. The local law enforcement agency will also be contacted.
 7. On occasion it may be necessary for a staff member to testify regarding the case. A subpoena would be served which will protect the individual from civil or criminal liability. The employee would suffer no pay loss for court appearance and expenses would be paid.
 8. State law requires that the identity of the reporter not be disclosed to the parents/guardians.
 9. If the suspected abuse has occurred on school premises, the District Administrator will be notified immediately by the building principal. Parents or guardian of the referred child will also be notified unless to do so is determined to be detrimental to the child or the investigation. The perpetrator, as well as the parents or guardian of the perpetrator if under the age of 18, will also be notified.
- C. Follow-up procedures: Follow-up of any child or neglect case is very important, and the responsibility is shared by the school and the Department of Health and Human Services.
1. The Department of Health and Human Services has the responsibility "within 60 days after receiving a report, to inform the reporter what action, if any, was taken to protect the health and welfare of the child."
 2. The school may be involved in providing services in the follow-up stage as a cooperative effort with those agencies working with the child and his/her family.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Section 48.02 Wisconsin Statutes

CROSS-REFERENCE: Exhibit 1, Report of Child Abuse and Neglect
Staff Handbook
Parent/Student Handbook