

# CHILD WELFARE POLICY

## **References**

- Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act
- Children First Act
- Education Act, Sections 29, 30, 31, 32, 218
- Personal Information Protection Act
- AISCA Policy 42- Child Welfare

## **Definition of Terms**

- **Child** – means a person who is under the age of 18 years;
- **Child Abuse** – means neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse, in the context of the definitions provided in the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act
- **Child in Need of Intervention** – means a child for whom supportive services are required because a parent cannot adequately protect a child from harm, or the danger of being harmed, as defined by the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act.
- **Child Intervention Officer** – means a Child and Family Services caseworker, intervention worker, police officer or other designated individual who may be assessing or investigating a complaint of child abuse;
- **Parent** – means any individual who meets the definition as set out in the Education Act;
- **Personal Safety Programs** – means personal safety programs designed to provide children with knowledge and information about keeping safe, including safety from sexual abuse;
- **Representative of the board** - means an individual that may be identified by the board to carry out functions related to the investigation of allegations made by an individual about child abuse;
- **School Community** – means the parents, students, staff, board members and others most invested in the success and well-being of the school;

## **Background**

The board believes that all children have the right to be safe and to receive appropriate care, whether at home, in school or in the community. To this end, all staff are accountable for compliance with the requirements of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act and must respond accordingly to any instances of suspected child abuse and neglect, or when any child is otherwise deemed to be in need of intervention.

## **Requirements**

1. Principals and staff members and parents may work together to identify and provide for the in-school delivery of child-focused personal safety programs;
2. Principals shall be responsible for ensuring all school staff are aware of their legal obligations to report suspected cases of abuse and neglect to the appropriate authorities, in accordance with the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act;
  - a. The Child Abuse Hotline can be reached anytime at 1-800-387-KIDS (5347). Alternately, those making reports can call the Child and Family Services Intake Lines at the nearest Children's Services office, the local police force or, in the event the situation is considered an emergency, an individual can call 911.
  - b. The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act prescribes penalties for those who fail to report suspected cases; it also provides protection against a person reporting unless the reporting is deemed to have been done maliciously or without reasonable and probable grounds for the belief.
3. Notwithstanding a staff member's obligation to report suspected instances of child abuse or neglect, there may also be times when a child chooses to disclose information about child abuse or neglect. On these occasions, the staff member hearing the disclosure should:
  - a. Listen and allow the child to tell what happened in their own words;
  - b. Remain calm and neutral and avoid showing any reaction that might cause the child to believe the abuse or neglect was their fault;
  - c. Support and acknowledge the child's feelings; reassuring them that telling a trusted adult was the right thing for them to do and letting them know that contact will be made with someone who can help;
  - d. As soon as possible following disclosure, record what the child heard/saw in his or her own words and make a report to the nearest area Child and Family Services Office;
  - e. Record the date and time of the call, along with the name and position of the child intervention worker who accepts the report; and
  - f. Maintain the record in a confidential file, separate from the student record.
4. School staff members making reports related to suspected child abuse or neglect shall keep such reports confidential and shall provide such information only to those who need to know in order to help protect the safety and welfare of the child;
  - a. When a staff member has made or is making such a report, then the principal and Head of School are deemed a person "who needs to know."

5. An investigation for child intervention services is the responsibility of Child and Family Services, who may, if appropriate, be supported by the police. Children's Services is responsible for:
  - a. Determining whether the child is in need of intervention services;
  - b. Contacting the police if a criminal investigation is required; and
  - c. Coordinating a response with other agencies, if necessary.
6. Following an initial assessment by a child intervention officer, the case may proceed to an investigation and there may then be circumstances in which the case worker or intervention officer seeks to interview a child in the school building. Should this occur:
  - a. The principal may ask the intervention officer or case worker to present identification and to provide the reasons for conducting the interview on school property;
  - b. The case worker may advise that they wish, in the interests of confidentiality, to meet alone with the child; or
  - c. The case worker and school personnel shall determine together the appropriateness of having a school representative present during the interview; or
  - d. The child may request that a staff member be present and, if so, the principal shall comply with the request.
7. It is the responsibility of the Children's Services case worker and/or the child intervention officer to determine when to notify the parent about any steps or outcomes associated with the investigation;
  - a. School personnel shall not assume this responsibility.
8. School personnel directly involved may expect follow-up communication from Child and Family Services that provides relevant information, determined on a "need to know" basis, about the disposition of the investigation;
  - a. Following the investigation, the staff member, principal, and any other identified school personnel should, with input from the Children's Services caseworker, meet to discuss any ongoing steps that might be taken to ensure the provision of necessary supports and services for the child.
9. Notwithstanding procedures 1 – 7 above, and recognizing that the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act does not address such situations, it is nevertheless possible that allegations of child abuse may be made against teachers, principals or other school personnel;
  - a. Where an allegation of child abuse involves a teacher or other employee, and whether the report originates in the school or elsewhere, the principal must be informed and the principal shall take whatever investigative, reporting and employment actions may be necessary in the short term to ensure student safety and school security;

- b. Where an allegation of child abuse involves the principal, the Head of School, must be informed, or alternately the chair of the board, who shall identify a representative of the board for investigative purposes. The Head of School or the representative of the board, whichever is the most appropriate, shall take whatever additional investigative, reporting and employment action may be deemed necessary in the short term to ensure student safety and school security.

### **Additional References**

- Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act
- Personal Information Protection Act
- Practice Review of Teachers and Teacher Leaders Regulation - Independent Schools Regulation - Responding to Child Abuse – A Handbook (Government of Alberta, 2005)
- Child Abuse / Domestic Violence Protocol (Calgary Board of Education, Calgary Catholic Board of Education, Calgary Domestic Violence Committee)

### **Appendix**

- Child Abuse / Domestic Violence Protocol (Calgary Board of Education, Calgary Catholic Board of Education, Calgary Domestic Violence Committee)

### **Reviewed and Approved:**

April 7, 2022