

Section:	Administration
Policy:	5.07
Revised:	May 2024
Approval:	Motion #450

5.07 Responding to Child Abuse

1. Rationale

Everyone who has reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be physically harmed, sexually abused, or sexually exploited by a parent or other person, or needs protection in circumstances described in the Child, Family and Community Service Act, is legally responsible to report promptly to a child protection social worker.

2. Policy

- 2.1. The principal will ensure each staff member has a copy of the document *Supporting our Students - A Guide for Independent School Personnel Responding to Child Abuse*. This guide provides basic information and best practices in responding to child abuse.
- 2.2. The Board will select two Appointed School Officials prior to each school year.
- 2.3. The school principal is designated as the "Appointed School Official (ASO)." All staff and volunteer personnel will be informed if a person other than the principal has been named as the Appointed School Official. The school's vice principal is designated as the alternate ASO. This is in place to give personnel an alternate ASO if the previous ASO is suspected of being involved in the abuse/neglect investigation.
- 2.4. In the event personnel must respond to alleged child abuse and neglect by a parent, caregiver, friend, relative or other person, the following steps will be taken:
 - 2.4.1. Report allegation promptly to a child protection social worker.
 - 2.4.1.1. Any school personnel who suspect or have information that a child is being abused or neglected or at risk of being abused or neglected, must promptly contact the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) or the Aboriginal Child and Family Services Agency AND the Appointed School Official. If the Appointed School Official is the alleged abuser, then school personnel, after reporting to the previously mentioned agencies, will report to the chairperson of the Board of Directors governing the school. It is the legal duty of all persons who have concerns that a child is being or is likely to be abused or neglected to report to the appropriate authorities, who will assess the report and, if appropriate, conduct an investigation. (CFCSA Section 13)
 - 2.4.1.2. Anyone who has reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be physically harmed, sexually abused or exploited, or neglected by a parent or guardian, or otherwise in need of protection as set out in Section 13 of the Child, Family and Community Services Act is legally responsible under Section 14 of the Act to report promptly to a child welfare worker. "Reason to believe" simply means that, based on what was seen or information received, a person believes a child has been or is likely to be at risk. The reporter need not be certain. It is the child

welfare worker's job to determine whether abuse or neglect has occurred or is likely to occur. School personnel, who are uncertain about their duty to report, will consult with a child welfare worker who can discuss the options and appropriate course of action.

- 2.4.2. Document the information – use the Alleged Child Abuse Report Form
 - 2.4.3. Notify the Principal
 - 2.4.4. Do not contact parents or offender. School personnel will not contact the parents or guardians who may be involved in allegedly abusing the child; this is the responsibility of the child welfare worker.
 - 2.4.5. Cooperate fully with any investigations.
 - 2.4.6. Provide information requested by the child protection social worker or the police. The police must be contacted immediately if the child is in immediate danger.
 - 2.4.7. Support the student. The Appointed School Official will ensure that the school environment is safe during any investigation.
 - 2.4.8. The school will protect personal information regarding the investigation, including the reporter's identity, against improper or unauthorized disclosure or use. School personnel should not share information with outside agencies about child abuse investigations, particularly if the police are involved.
- 2.5. Procedures where allegations are made against school staff, volunteers, contract service providers or others in a school setting. According to the MCFD handbook, "The BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect – For Service Providers", "If the abuse occurs in a setting such as a school, youth custody or childcare centre, the head of the organization is responsible for responding." It is the legal responsibility of school officials and employees to provide a safe learning environment for students. If the school officials and employees believe that a child is being abused or at risk, there is a legal duty to report the concern to the local child welfare worker and the police if the child is in imminent danger. In the event personnel must respond to alleged child abuse and neglect by a school employee, contracted service provider or volunteer, the following steps will be taken:
- 2.5.1. Report allegation promptly to a child protection social worker.
 - 2.5.1.1. Staff Member: Where there are allegations of child abuse by a school staff member, the principal or ASO is responsible to investigate the allegations and report the matter to a child welfare worker if there is reason to believe that the child is in need of protection, or the police if there is reason to believe the child is in imminent danger or that a criminal offense has been committed. The principal has the authority under the Independent School Act (ISA), Section 7 (2) (b) to suspend a school staff member whose presence threatens the safety and welfare of students.
 - 2.5.1.2. Volunteer: Where there are allegations of child abuse by a volunteer, the principal or ASO is responsible to investigate the allegations and report the matter to a child welfare worker if there is reason to believe that the child is in need of protection, or the police if there is reason to believe the child is in imminent danger or that a

criminal offense has been committed. The School Authority has the authority to issue a "No Trespass Order" prohibiting attendance at school by a volunteer whose presence threatens the safety and welfare of students.

- 2.5.1.3. Contract Workers and Other Persons Where there are allegations of child abuse by a contract worker or other person at school or at an independent school activity outside of the school, the principal or ASO is responsible to investigate the allegations and report the matter to a child welfare worker if there is reason to believe that the child is in need of protection, or the police if there is reason to believe the child is in imminent danger or that a criminal offense has been committed. The School Authority has the authority to issue a "No Trespass Order" prohibiting from attending at the school a contract worker or other person whose presence threatens the safety and welfare of students.
 - 2.5.2. Notify the Appointed School Official
 - 2.5.3. Do not notify the alleged offender.
 - 2.5.4. Parents of children alleged to have been abused in the school setting must be informed by the principal or Appointed School Official of the allegations and the outcome of the school investigation, unless there are special circumstances, e.g., relating to a child protection or police investigation, or endangerment of the child.
 - 2.5.5. Document the information – use the Alleged Child Abuse Report Form
- 2.6. Staff will receive regular training sessions at the beginning of each school year on recognizing signs of child abuse, understanding reporting procedures, and maintaining confidentiality.
- 2.6.1. The Appointed School Official will ensure that annual training is provided to all school personnel, contractors and volunteers who are working with children and ensure they are aware of and understand how to carry out their legal duty when responding to concerns about child abuse and/or neglect
 - 2.6.2. Training will include recognizing child abuse and/or neglect, what actions are required, prevention measures, reporting child abuse and/or neglect protocols, and everyone's legal responsibility if they suspect abuse and/or neglect of a child
 - 2.6.3. The authority/school will train school personnel on how to respond when concerns about child abuse and/or neglect arise. This information is available in The BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect.
- 2.7. The principal will establish protocols for providing emotional support to staff members involved in reporting and investigating incidents of child abuse, including access to counseling services if needed.
- 2.8. Each year the principal will ensure there is an updated, comprehensive list of community resources and support services for victims of child abuse, including counseling centers, crisis hotlines, and legal advocacy groups, to facilitate timely access to assistance and support.
- 2.9. Where there are allegations of child abuse by a staff member, volunteer, contract service provider or other persons, the School Authority has the authority to issue a "No Trespass Order" prohibiting the volunteer's attendance at school.

The order, provided orally or in writing, to the volunteer, contracted service provider or other person, and copied to the police, must specify the date of issue, the reason for 89 the order and the termination date of the order (Such orders may be re-issued on an annual basis if required). This authority is provided under the Trespass Act, s. 4 (1), (b)(c).

3. More Information

[Appendix 2](#): *link for FISA Child Abuse and Neglect*