

REPORTING CASES OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

It is a legal obligation of all school employees to report situations of suspected child abuse and neglect. Because school personnel are in daily contact with school-age students, we are in an excellent position to identify abused and neglected children and refer them to the proper legal authorities for protection.

Definition

ORC Section 2151.421, deals with this issue and requires:

1. All school employees having reason to believe that a child under eighteen (18) years of age has suffered any wound or injury or condition which reasonably may indicate abuse or neglect shall immediately report such information.
2. A written report should follow as soon as possible.
3. Any school employee making such a report shall be immune from civil or criminal liability.

Abuse means the infliction, by other than accidental means, of physical harm upon the body of a child, as evidenced by:

1. Repeated injuries, unexplained cuts, burns, bruises;
2. Sexual abuse or exploitation;
3. Severe and harsh punishment;
4. Mental or emotional harm.

Neglect means the failure to provide necessary food, clothing, shelter, medical care, schooling, and attention.

Procedures:

1. Any school employee who has knowledge of or reasonable cause to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected shall immediately make an oral report to Children's Services and the building principal.
2. With situations involving physical injuries (bruises, scars, burns, etc.), the school nurse may be contacted to make a physical inspection of the child. A written report should be made concerning this inspection.

3. It is not the responsibility of the school to prove that a child is abused and/or neglected, nor to decide whether a child is in need of protection. Thus, school personnel should not pressure the child to divulge information regarding injury or other circumstances surrounding the abuse or neglect.

Nor should school personnel contact the child's family or conduct any investigation to determine the cause of the suspected abuse or neglect.

4. After receiving notification of the suspected case, the principal shall contact Children's Services of Hancock County and write a report which shall include:
 - a. A summary of the nature of suspected abuse and/or neglect.
 - b. Other pertinent school data.
 - c. The status of the referral concerning involvement with other agencies.
5. A child shall not be removed from school premises without parent permission, unless an agency presents an Emergency Custody Order issued by a court or the child is taken into Protective Custody by a law enforcement officer having jurisdiction.
6. If an immediate examination by a Children's Services worker is warranted, it is to be attended by appropriate school personnel, the building principal or designee.

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