ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN

Teachers come into contact with troubled children and families at every social and economic level in the community. Because educators are concerned for the whole child, seeking help for a child victim of abuse or neglect is a natural, ethical, moral and legal response by the school. Serious abuse or neglect often sets up blocks which inhibit growth and create learning disabilities for the child. Attending to the sources of these learning problems, then, makes child advocacy an element in achieving educational objectives.

Teachers in all states are mandated to report suspected child abuse to the proper authority. In New Hampshire, that authority is the New Hampshire Division of Children and Youth Services.

**KEY ELEMENTS OF THE CHILD PROTECTION ACT, RSA 169-C**

1. All citizens of New Hampshire are mandated to make an oral report of any suspected child abuse immediately to the New Hampshire Division for Children and Youth Services (DCYS), a branch of the Department of Health and Human Services. School personnel are specifically identified as mandated reporters.

   Such an oral report is to be followed within 48 hours by a written report, if requested, to DCYS.

2. Failure to report suspected child abuse is a misdemeanor punishable by a $1,000 fine and up to a year imprisonment.

3. Anyone making a report of suspected child abuse in good faith is immune from any form of civil or criminal liability.

4. The Division for Children and Youth Services is the state agency mandated to receive and assess reports of suspected child abuse to determine whether abuse is occurring. This responsibility does not lie with the school.

5. Schools must allow trained DCYS child protection social workers (CPSW) and law enforcement personnel to enter school facilities, interview students, and audio- or videotape the interview without the consent or notification of the parent or parents of a child if there is suspicion that the child has been abused or neglected.

6. Schools must allow the CPSW doing the assessment to take, or cause to be taken, photographs and/or x-rays of injured children who are subjects of a child abuse report. Such photographs or x-rays may be taken without the consent of the child's parents or guardians.

7. DCYS may request and shall receive any assistance and information from schools that will enable it to fulfill its obligations to complete an assessment of alleged child abuse.

It is the policy of SAU 57, Salem School District to comply with the requirements of RSA 169-C in reporting suspected child abuse and neglect.

Further, it is our policy to cooperate with the New Hampshire Division for Children and Youth Services child protection social workers and law enforcement agencies in the course of investigations into alleged child abuse or neglect as outlined in RSA 169-C.
PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

Any school employee who suspects that a student may be abused or neglected must, in consultation with the school principal or designee, report such suspicion immediately by phone to the regional intake unit of the Division for Children and Youth Services (DCYS). If requested, a written report must be sent to the district office of the Division for Children and Youth Services within 48 hours. (A state telephone directory with numbers for all the regional and district offices is available in the superintendent's office.)

A school employee who suspects another school employee of abusing a student must report that suspicion directly to the Division for Children and Youth Services and the Salem Police Department. Once the report is made, the school principal should be informed. The principal must then inform the superintendent of schools. If the principal is the suspected abuser, the school employee who made the report to DCYS should inform only the superintendent of schools.

The oral and written reports should contain the following information if known:

1. name and address of the child suspected of being abused or neglected;
2. name, address and telephone number of the parents of, or persons caring for, the child;
3. the specific information and observations indicating neglect or the nature and extent of the child's injuries (including any information of previous injuries);
4. the identity of the person or persons suspected of being responsible for such neglect or abuse;
5. the names of siblings and the schools they attend;
6. any history of concern about the child;
7. any indication that the child may be in imminent danger; and
8. any other information that may be required by DCYS in completing a thorough assessment regarding the family.

A copy of the written report must be kept in a confidential file in the principal's office, apart from the student's academic or counseling files. In the case of a school employee suspected of abusing a student, a copy of the written report must be sent to the superintendent of schools.
ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN

School employees of the opinion they have observed an abused or neglected child as described in JHFE-R should report the matter to (1) the Division for Children and Youth Services (DCYS) at 1-800-894-5533; (2) the Salem Police Department at 603-893-1911.

School personnel will use the indicators of possible child abuse or neglect as outlined in this regulation to assess the situation. Incidents not reported by the building administrator must be explained to the building administrator and the Superintendent of Schools immediately following the referral to DCYS and the Salem Police Department.

The following protocols will be adhered to regarding incidents not involving a school employee:

1. All reports will be made immediately upon determining a student may be abused.
2. School officials will work in cooperation with DCYS and the Salem Police Department.
3. DCYS staff or the Salem Police Department will conduct all student interviews after the initial report has been made by school officials.

The following protocols will be adhered to regarding incidents where the suspected abuser is a school employee:

1. Immediately after reporting to DCYS, the Salem Police Department, and the Superintendent of Schools, parent(s) or guardian(s) involved will be advised of the situation. These activities are to be completed within 24 hours of the initial report.
2. DCYS staff or the Salem Police Department will conduct all student interviews after the initial report has been made by school officials.
3. All student interviews conducted by DCYS, Salem Police Department, of school officials will be done with the parent(s) or guardian(s) present or with their permission.
4. The needs of the victim(s) will be addressed by refraining from any interviewing techniques or isolation from peers which calls undue attention to them.
5. The Superintendent of Schools will make a report of the situation to the board within forty-eight (48) hours of the initial report.
6. After notifying appropriate authorities and parents, the principal will institute the following procedures:
   a. Activate the school crisis team (CHIC).
   b. Establish an in-school response and referral plan.
   c. Establish a counseling support service. As needed, the service should include: district personnel; contracted private service providers; Nashua Rape and Assault Services (1-603-889-0858); Center for Life management (434-1577); Portsmouth Sexual Assault Service Agency (1-603-437-4107).
7. Notify impacted parents and students of the response plan and how to access the referral service.
8. Conduct debriefing sessions in conjunction with central office administration for all parents, students, and staff.

9. When appropriate, make arrangements for parents, students, and staff seeking assessments and evaluations.

CENTRAL REPORTING TELEPHONE NUMBER

The central reporting number for all DCYS district offices is:

1-800-894-5533

INDICATORS OF POSSIBLE CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

The following physical and behavioral signs could indicate a child or family is having difficulties. Some of these indicators should clearly lead one to suspect abuse or neglect. Many times, some combination of these indicators will evoke strong concern for a child but uncertainty as to whether abuse is occurring.

Anyone who suspects that a child is being abused should call DCYS and ask for guidance on how to proceed in further assessing these concerns or how to make a report. In some cases, such as absenteeism or poor hygiene, the child or parents should be spoken to before a formal report is filed. In other cases, it would be extremely important not to contact the parents or siblings about the observations without first involving DCYS. The Division's approach to each case depends on the nature of the observations and the potential risk of danger to the child.

Physical Abuse:

Physical abuse refers to non-accidental physical injury to a child.

Indicators:

- Extensive bruises, especially bruises of different colors indicating various stages of healing and a number of injuries over time (Strange bruises can occur in the course of normal activities; it is their frequency and location that arouse suspicions of abuse)

Ages of bruises can be approximately detected by the following colors:

  immediate-a few hours = red
  6-12 hours = blue
  12-24 hours = black-purple
  4-6 days = dark green
  5-10 days = pale green to yellow

- Burns of all types (although burns may also be accidental), but especially glove-like burns on hands, which could be caused by intentional immersion in hot liquid; burns that are more intense in the middle and radiate from there, which could indicate that hot liquid was poured onto the skin; cigarette burns; burns in the shape of an object

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1 Source: How Schools Can Combat Child Abuse and Neglect, 2nd Ed., Cynthia Corssen Tower, National Education Association of the United States, 1987
- Bruises in the shape of an object, such as a belt and buckle, hanger or hand
- Frequent complaints of soreness or awkward movement as if caused by pain
- Marks that indicate hard blows from an object, such as a hairbrush or electrical cord or rope used as a whip
- Bruises on multiple body parts, indicating blows from different directions.
- Unexplained abdominal swelling (could indicate internal bleeding)
- Extreme pain sensitivity
- Bruises on parts of the body not normally injured in play (backs of legs, abdomen, back of shoulders rather than knees or elbows)
- Frequent bruises around the head or face
- Bald spots indicative of severe hair pulling
- Injuries of any kind for which the explanation given does not fit the observed injuries or about which the child seems extremely reluctant to speak
- Behavioral extremes and/or changes (extreme withdrawal or disruptiveness and aggressiveness toward other children, radical personality changes)
- Extreme compliance or extreme anxiety about making mistakes
- Low self-esteem, possible self-destructiveness
- Fatigue, falling asleep in class, poor concentration
- Coming to school early, leaving late (may be an indicator of fear of going home)
- Fearfulness of adults or of physical contact
- Wearing clothing that covers the body and may be inappropriate for warmer weather
- Inability to form good peer relationships
- Regressive behaviors

Neglect:

Neglect refers to the failure on the part of the caretaker to meet the child's basic needs.

Indicators:

- Soiled, poorly fitting, inadequate clothing for the weather
- Always seeming to be hungry and hoarding or stealing food from others, bringing little of own food to school
- Fatigue and listlessness
- Distended abdomen, emaciation or other signs of malnutrition
- Reports caring for younger children when the child caretaker is only 5-8 or 9 years old
- Chronically poor hygiene
- Unattended medical or dental problems
- Young child (under the age of 10-12) left alone without supervision or supervision arrangements
- Frequent school absences or tardiness
- Guiltless attitude about acts of cruelty or vandalism
- Vandalism, stealing or other delinquent activity

Emotional Abuse:

Emotional abuse refers to belittling, rejecting, terrorizing or otherwise not providing an emotional atmosphere in which children can psychologically and socially develop normally.

Indicators:
- Inappropriate emotion, such as laughter in the face of pain or cruelty
- Extremes in behavior and emotion (depression, anxiety)
- Extreme withdrawal for others and from activities
- Bizarre or self-destructive acts
- Cruelty toward other children or animals
- Extreme need for perfection in school performance
- Rocking, thumb sucking, enuresis or other habitual problems
- Substance abuse
- Anorexia nervosa
- Physical manifestations of emotional distress (may contribute to asthma, ulcers or severe allergies)

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse refers to sexual involvement imposed on a child by an adult or older child with greater power, knowledge or resources.

Indicators:
- Disclosure of sexual abuse by victim or by a friend or sibling
- Inordinate number or kind of gifts or money from a questionable source
- Exceptional secretiveness
- More sexual knowledge than is appropriate for child's age
- In-depth sexual play with peers (different from the normal "playing doctor" form of exploration common in young children)
- Sexual acting out, including sexualized play with toys or explicit sexualized drawings
- Inordinate fear of males or seductiveness toward males
- Drop in school performance or withdrawal from school activities
- Sleep problems, such as insomnia or nightmares
- Crying without provocation
- Over-compliance or extreme passivity
- Overly aggressive behavior toward others
- Rashes or itching in the genital area
- Symptoms of venereal disease or frequent urinary infections, such as vaginal or penile discharge, genital or oral sores or warts, frequent sore throats with symptoms of herpes or gonococcal infection
- Sudden phobic behavior
- Sudden onset of enuresis
- Feelings of little self-worth
- Excessive bathing
- Frequent vomiting
- Excessive masturbation
- Appearing much older and more worldly than peers
- Great anxiety
- Suicide attempts (especially adolescents)
- Runaway from home (especially adolescents)
- Early pregnancies