

Policy: Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect
File Code: JHG

The purpose of this policy is to protect children whose health and welfare may be jeopardized by abuse or neglect and to ensure that school district employees meet their legal reporting obligations under Title 33, V.S.A. Section 4913, and to expand through this policy the requirements for reporting by all personnel employed by the Chittenden Central Supervisory Union (CCSU) and its member school districts. It is further the purpose of this policy to make clear to all employees that it is not their role to be investigator, judge, and jury in cases of suspected abuse or neglect. Rather, ***it is the role of school district employees to be faithful and timely reporters of suspected abuse or neglect*** so that allegations can be brought to the attention of objective, trained, and experienced investigators.

GENERAL POLICY

Any employee shall immediately:

1. Report suspected child abuse or neglect to the building principal or his/her designee (or the superintendent if the person suspected of abuse or neglect is the principal or designee).
2. Report or cause to be reported suspected abuse or neglect to the Vermont Department for Children and Families at 863-7370.
3. A written follow up report as described herein must also follow, mailed to 1193 North Avenue, Burlington, VT 05401 (or send by facsimile transmission to 951-0088). ***It remains the employee's responsibility that both oral and written reports be made.***

DEFINITIONS

"CCSU Employee" refers to all persons employed by the CCSU or its member school districts. For purposes of this policy, all CCSU employees also share in the reporting responsibilities as noted above.

"Immediately" means as soon as the abuse or neglect is suspected but in no case later than 24 hours after such abuse or neglect is suspect.

"Suspected" means the school district employee has reasonable cause to believe such abuse or neglect occurred. This does not mean that the employee must be

convinced the abuse or neglect occurred; only that it might have occurred. Any doubts the employee may have shall be resolved in favor of reporting the suspicion. Further, the employee shall not refrain from making a report under this policy for the reason that there may be retaliation against the child, the employee has a confidential relationship with the child, or for any other reason no matter how well intentioned.

"Report" means an oral and written description of the suspected abuse or neglect. When the report is made orally, the reporter should make a written notation to whom the report was made and when the report was made, A written report must follow the oral report. All oral and written reports made to DCF shall minimally contain the following:

1. The name and address of the reporter
2. The name and address (if known) of the child and the child's parents or other persons responsible for the child's care
3. The age of the child
4. The nature and extent of the child's injuries together with any evidence of previous abuse or neglect of the child or the child's siblings
5. Any other information the reporter believes might be helpful

"Abused or neglected child" means a child under the age of 18 whose physical or mental health or welfare is harmed or threatened with harm by, the acts or omissions the child's parent or other individual who may be responsible for the child's welfare (e.g., guardian, foster parent, stepparent teacher, etc.), or in the case of sexual abuse, any individual. Harm can be caused by the actual infliction of harm, by allowing such harm to occur, by failing to provide the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter or health care, or by abandonment of the child.

"Sexual abuse" means any act by a person involving sexual molestation or exploitation of a child including but not limited to incest, prostitution, rape, sodomy, or any lewd and lascivious conduct involving a child. Sexual abuse also includes the aiding, abetting, counseling, hiring, or procuring of a child to perform or participate in any photograph, motion picture, exhibition, show, representation, or other presentation which, in whole or in part, depicts sexual conduct, sexual excitement or sadomasochistic abuse involving a child.

Note: Sexual abuse may also be sexual harassment. However, following the CCSU policy on sexual harassment does not fulfill a mandatory reporter's legal responsibilities under the DCF reporting law. *Suspected abuse must be reported to DCF.*

TRAINING

All staff shall receive training once each school year in reporting suspected child abuse and neglect. Such training shall include assistance in recognizing the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect. It is the intention of this policy to support the activities of school based child support teams.

AVAILABILITY OF POLICY

This policy shall be provided each year to the parents of students in attendance and to each employee of the school district including substitute teachers. Further, this policy shall be posted in at least three prominent places within the school building. This policy will be reviewed as necessary.

First Reading: May 27, 1998
Date Approved: September 10, 1998
Chittenden Central Supervisory Union