

CLAIBORNE COUNTY SCHOOLS

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Procedures

All school system employees have a duty to report suspected child abuse immediately to the appropriate authorities. Given the number of agencies that have the authority to investigate abuse, however, and further considering the lack of resources that many of these agencies face, the Claiborne County Board of Education and the Claiborne County Director of Schools have developed a policy and procedures to give employees guidance to ensure that suspected child abuse is promptly investigated and that children are adequately protected.

DUTY TO REPORT

A person has the duty to report suspected child abuse when the following occur:

- The person has knowledge of (or is called upon to render aid to) any child who is suffering from (or has suffered from) any wound, injury, disability, or other physical or mental condition; and the physical or mental condition is of such a nature that it reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect caused by a caregiver of the child; or
- The person has reason to suspect that the child is a victim of sexual abuse regardless of whether the child has suffered a physical injury from the suspected sexual abuse and regardless of whom the perpetrator of the abuse may have been.

HOW TO REPORT

Anyone having the knowledge of suspected child abuse, as described above, **must report** his or her belief to at least one of the following offices:

- The Department of Children's Services by way of the statewide hotline (1-877-542-2873), the local DCS office, or the DCS website, bearing in mind that circumstances may dictate the need to speak to a DCS agent as quickly as possible
- The Claiborne County Sheriff's Office or the local police department for the municipality in which the child lives
- The Claiborne County Juvenile Court

Any report of child abuse shall include, if known, the name, age, address and telephone number of the child; the name, address and telephone number of the child's caregiver; and any facts pertinent to the report.

Additionally, if the suspected child abuse occurs outside of Claiborne County, it may be necessary to notify the local law enforcement agency so that the child is protected and the matter is investigated promptly.

The director of schools strongly advises any school based employee who reports suspected child abuse to notify his or her principal or supervisor and to have the principal or supervisor join in placing the phone call to the appropriate authorities. If, however, the principal or supervisor is not available to participate in the phone call, the employee must nevertheless report any suspected child abuse to the appropriate authorities without delay.

The director of schools strongly encourages any employee notifying any of these offices of any suspected child abuse to make a written record of the report to include the following: agency contacted; agency phone number; the person to whom the employee spoke; date and time of the

conversation; name of the child in question; the precise information conveyed to the agency; and the DCS case number assigned, if the report is made to DCS.

ACTION BY ADMINISTRATORS

The director of schools does not expect administrators to screen or approve the decision of subordinate employees to report suspected child abuse. Each employee has an independent duty under state law and this policy to report child abuse whenever he or she believes it has occurred. Nevertheless, the board of education expects administrators to support their employees and to provide guidance as necessary.

Accordingly, director of schools advises administrators that it may be necessary and appropriate for them to direct their employees to contact several agencies in order to ensure that the allegations of abuse will be investigated promptly and that the child in question will be protected. If an administrator has any question or concern about the effectiveness of any response he or she is receiving regarding reports of child abuse, the administrator should contact the Director of DCS' Special Investigations Unit, and report the suspected child abuse and what efforts the board of education employees have taken to report this matter.

The director of schools expects administrators to make a written record of any conversation they have with their employees and any agency officials regarding allegations of suspected child abuse and efforts made to report this abuse to the appropriate authorities. These records should be maintained in confidential files kept separate and apart from other student or employee records.

NOTICE TO PARENTS OR LEGAL GUARDIANS

In the event that suspected child abuse occurred either on school property or off campus while the child was under the care or supervision of a school system employee, then the school principal or the principal's designee shall verbally notify the child's parent or legal guardian, in coordination with the Department of Children's Services, no later than 24 hours after the initial report to the appropriate authorities unless there is reasonable cause to suspect that the parent or legal guardian is in any way responsible for the abuse.

The administrator will share with the parent or legal guardian whatever information is necessary to provide for the future wellbeing of the child and, upon request, may provide additional information pertaining to the suspected child abuse; provided, however, that the administrator will protect otherwise confidential information including the name of the reporting employee, the name of anyone whose safety would otherwise be jeopardized, and any information protected by federal law.

WRONGDOING BY A SCHOOL EMPLOYEE

In the event any school system employee becomes aware that another employee may have been responsible for the suspected child abuse, or if the employee becomes aware that another employee has failed to report suspected child abuse, then he or she shall immediately contact both the Department of Children's Services and the director of schools and report the other employee's suspected wrongdoing.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Once a school system employee becomes aware of suspected abuse, he or she is to report the matter to the appropriate agencies and to the appropriate officials within the school system. Aside from his or her duty to report to agency officials or school system administrators, however, no employee is to discuss the suspected abuse of a child with anyone. Under no circumstances shall the employee

discuss the matter with the media or any other member of the public, including the child's parents or legal guardian unless the employee is given express permission by the director of schools or the director of school's designee to do so. Violation of this instruction will be treated as insubordination and will be punished accordingly.

FURTHER DIRECTIONS TO PRINCIPALS AND SUPERVISORS

Administrators are to circulate these guidelines to their employees at faculty meetings, staff meetings, and otherwise as may be appropriate. Written copies of the guidelines shall be disseminate to school system employees.

Additionally, administrators are to require that their employees receive appropriate training regarding the application of Claiborne County Board of Education Policy 6.409 and Tennessee law. This training shall include signs of abuse, brutality or neglect and appropriate reporting procedures.

SAMPLE INDICATORS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

This list is provided as a set of guidelines only and is not intended to be a comprehensive or exhaustive source.

Potential Sexual Abuse Indicators of Child Abuse

Physical symptoms

- Soreness or bruising, pain or itching in genital or anal areas
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Bedwetting
- Unexplained loss of appetite
- Verbal descriptions of sexual abuse

Behavioral symptoms

- Having knowledge of or asking an unusual amount of questions about human sexuality
- Excessive masturbation
- Anger, rage, depression, anxiety
- Frequent nightmares
- Compulsive drawing or viewing sexually explicit pictures
- Obsession with pornography
- Becoming isolated or withdrawn
- Repeated runaway or suicide attempts
- Promiscuous behavior
- Self-destructive behavior/self-injury, risky or delinquent behavior
- Substance abuse

Potential Emotional Abuse Indicators

- Anxiety, depression, or hostility
- Low self esteem
- Developmental delays
- Ongoing self-depreciation
- Failure to thrive

Potential Physical Abuse Indicators of Child Abuse

Physical symptoms

- Unexplained fractures or injuries
- Multiple injuries in various body locations
- Previous injuries in various healing stages
- Patterned injuries consistent with objects of abuse (cigar/cigarettes, hands, ropes)
- Burns on extremities, buttocks or genitals
- Frightened of or shrinks at approach of adult caretaker
- Verbal descriptions of physical abuse

Behavioral symptoms

- Sudden changes in behavior
- Emotional turmoil (depressed, suicidal)
- Self-isolation, undue aggression or constant anger
- Developmental delays
- Fear of going home or repeated runaway attempts
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Cruel behaviors
- Depression, anxiety

Potential Neglect Indicators

- Constant hunger or tiredness
- Neglected personal hygiene/poor state of dress
- Untreated medical issues
- Signs of malnutrition, emaciation
- Consistent lack of supervision
- Antisocial behavior
- Abandonment