

## Child Abuse Reporting Obligations

**Matters that Must be Reported.** Florida law requires that all school personnel immediately report to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) any knowledge or reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused, neglected, or abandoned. Abuse includes sexual abuse by another child.

**Abuse:** any willful act or threatened act that results in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm that causes or is likely to cause the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired.

**Neglect:** when a child is deprived of necessary food, clothing, shelter, or medical treatment or a child is permitted to live in an environment when such deprivation or environment causes the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired or to be in danger of being significantly impaired.

**Abandonment:** a situation in which the parent or caregiver responsible for the child's welfare makes no significant contribution to the child's care and maintenance. This includes leaving a child without adult supervision or an arrangement appropriate for the child's age or mental or physical condition, so that the child is unable to care for the child's own needs or another's basic needs or is unable to exercise good judgment in responding to any kind of physical or emotional crisis.

**Juvenile (or child-on-child) sexual abuse:** any sexual behavior by a child toward another child which occurs without consent, without equality (lacking the same level of power in the relationship), or as a result of coercion, including making obscene phone calls, the showing or taking of lewd photographs, or varying degrees of direct sexual contact, such as fondling, digital penetration, rape, and various other sexually aggressive acts.

**“Harm”:** to a child's health or welfare can occur when any person:

- Inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon the child physical, mental, or emotional injury, including willful acts causing injuries such as:
  - a. Sprains, dislocations, or cartilage damage.
  - b. Bone or skull fractures.
  - c. Brain or spinal cord damage.
  - d. Intracranial hemorrhage or injury to other internal organs.
  - e. Asphyxiation, suffocation, or drowning.
  - f. Injury resulting from the use of a deadly weapon.
  - g. Burns or scalding.
  - h. Cuts, lacerations, punctures, or bites.
  - i. Permanent or temporary disfigurement.
  - j. Permanent or temporary loss or impairment of a body part or function.

- Purposely gives a child poison, alcohol, drugs, or other substances that substantially affect the child's behavior, motor coordination, or judgment or that results in sickness or internal injury.
- Inflicts inappropriately or excessively harsh disciplinary action that is likely to result in physical injury, mental injury, or emotional injury. Corporal discipline may be considered excessive or abusive when it results in any of the following or other similar injuries those injuries set forth in a. through j. above.
- Commits, or allows to be committed, sexual battery, or lewd or lascivious acts, against the child.

**Reporting Process:** Reports of abuse must be made to the state by calling the toll-free Abuse Hotline at (800) 962-2873 or online at the [Florida Department of Children and Families website](#). If you would like assistance in making the report, you may contact the Head of School. Seeking assistance from the School's administration does not satisfy your obligation to report child abuse directly to DCF. After you have made a report, please notify the Head of School so the School can assist with investigations and/or ensure that appropriate personnel are watchful for signs of future potential abuse of the child(ren) in question. Employees who report concerns of suspected abuse, abandonment, or neglect are expected to cooperate in any investigation by child protective services.

**Criminal Penalties for Failure to Report:** It is a third degree felony to fail to report suspected abuse, abandonment, or neglect. In addition, an educator's teaching certificate may be suspended from any person who knowingly failed to report child abuse, abandonment or neglect.

**Immunity for Reporting in Good Faith.** Under the provisions of Florida Stat. § 39.203, employees who, in good faith, report suspected child abuse, neglect, or abandonment are immune from civil or criminal liability for reporting such information and participating in any investigation. Other than the report itself and communication with Head of School, the information about the suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect should remain confidential for the protection of the child. You will not be penalized by the School for reporting abuse in good faith.

**Reporting Other Concerning Information.** If you have received information reflecting that any person who may visit the school's campus (student, employee, parent, spouse of an employee, family member, volunteer, or contractor) has been accused, arrested, or convicted of any type of potential abuse or sexual misconduct toward any other person, you must immediately report such information to the Head of School.

In addition, employees are reminded of their obligations to report employee misconduct that affects the health, safety, or welfare of children, in accordance with our Conduct, Interaction, and Ethics Standards Required of All Employees, which is contained in a

separate reporting policy. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action and could result in the suspension of an educator's teaching certificate.