

<b>FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS</b>	<b>Reg. No. 400-47</b>
<b>Subject:</b> <b>CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT</b>	<b>Date of Issue:</b> <b>5/1/86</b>
<b>Preparing Office:</b> <b>Office of the Superintendent</b>	<b>Amended:</b> <b>3/23/06</b>

I. Policy 418

II. Procedures

A. The legal responsibility to make determination of abuse or neglect is vested in the agency authorities to whom the report is made. Any person who makes or participates in the making of a good faith report of abuse or neglect or participates in the investigation or in a judicial proceeding resulting from the report is immune from any civil liability or criminal penalty.

B. Definitions

1. *Abuse* - The physical or mental injury of a child by any parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of a child, or by any household or family member, under circumstances that indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or at substantial risk of being harmed; or sexual abuse of a child, whether physical injuries are sustained or not.
2. *Child* - An individual under the age of 18 years.
3. *Indicated* - "Indicated" means a finding that there is credible evidence, which has not been satisfactorily refuted, that abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse did occur.
4. *Mental Injury* - The observable, identifiable, and substantial impairment of a child's mental or psychological ability to function.
5. *Neglect* - The leaving of a child unattended or other failure to give proper care and attention to a child by any parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of the child under circumstances that indicate 1) that the child's health or welfare is harmed or placed at substantial risk of harm; or 2) mental injury to the child or a substantial risk of mental injury.
6. *Ruled out* - A finding that abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse did not occur.
7. *Unsubstantiated* - A finding that there is an insufficient amount of evidence to support a finding of indicated or ruled out.

C. Reporting suspected child abuse, neglect, or mental injury

1. Maryland law requires that every employee and volunteer of the local school system, health practitioner, human services worker, or law enforcement officer who has reason to believe that a child has been subjected to physical abuse, sexual abuse, mental injury or neglect shall immediately report to the local department of social services or appropriate law enforcement agency. The oral report must be made as soon as reasonably possible. At the same time, the employee shall also notify the school principal/designee or immediate supervisor, if the person is not school based.
2. Validation of suspected child abuse is the responsibility of the department of social services assisted by the police. School personnel shall not attempt to conduct any internal investigation or an independent review of the facts. However, a school employee may briefly question a child to determine if there is reason to believe that the child's injuries or alleged sexual abuse was inflicted by the child's caretaker. (e. g., What happened to you? How did this happen?). However, in no case should this child be subjected to undue pressure in order to validate the suspicion of abuse and/or neglect. The information should be immediately conveyed to the principal.
3. Any doubt about reporting suspected child abuse is to be resolved in favor of the child.

D. Records and reports of child abuse and/or neglect

1. Verbal report of suspected child abuse/neglect shall be made as soon as possible to Department of Social Services.
2. The written report for abuse/neglect should be made, utilizing the form provided, and filed within 48 hours of the suspicion.
2. Reports of abuse and information related to the reporting will be maintained in a confidential manner and will be kept separately from a student's educational records.
3. All records and reports concerning protective services investigations of child abuse and/or neglect and their outcomes are protected by the confidentiality statute, Article 88A, Section 6(b). Unauthorized disclosure of such records is a criminal offense subject to a fine of up to \$500.00 or imprisonment for up to 90 days, or both. Under this statute, information contained in reports or records concerning child abuse and/or neglect may be disclosed only in the following ways:
  - a. Under a court order.
  - b. To personnel of local or state departments of social services, law enforcement personnel, and members of multidisciplinary case consultation teams who are investigating a report of known or suspected child abuse or neglect or who are providing services for a child or family that is the subject of the report.

- c. To local or state officials responsible for the administration of the child protective services as necessary to carry out their official functions.
  - d. To a person who is the alleged child abuser, or to the person who is suspected of child neglect if that person is responsible for the child's welfare and provisions are made for the protection of the identity of the reporter or any other person whose life or safety is likely to be endangered by disclosing the information.
  - e. To a licensed practitioner or an agency, institution, or program providing treatment or care to a child who is the subject of a report of child abuse or neglect.
  - f. To a parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care and custody of a child, if provisions are made for the protection of the identity of the reporter or any other person whose life or safety is likely to be endangered by disclosing the information.
4. The school principal shall keep a log of all reported cases which will include (a) the name of the child, (b) the date and hour of the oral report, (c) the name of the agency reported to, and (d) the date the report was mailed.

E. Failure to report child abuse

1. Upon the recommendation of the superintendent of schools, the board of education may suspend or dismiss an employee for misconduct in office for knowingly failing to report suspected child abuse.
2. Upon the recommendation of a local board of education, any certificate, issued under the state board of education's regulations may be suspended or revoked by the state superintendent if the certificate holder is convicted of a crime involving child abuse or neglect or is dismissed by a local board of education for knowingly failing to report suspected child abuse in violation of the Family Law Article.

F. Immunity of person making report

Any person who makes or participates in making a report of abuse or neglect under §5-704 or §5-705 of the Family Law Article, or participates in an investigation or a resulting judicial proceeding shall have the immunity described under §5-620 of the Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article from civil liability or criminal penalty.

G. Interviewing the child on school premises

In accordance with Maryland law, a school system shall permit personnel from the local department of social services or a police officer to question a student on school premises during the school day in an investigation involving suspected child neglect or suspected child abuse. The law further provides that the superintendent or designee (i. e. school administrator) shall determine, after consultation with the

individual from social services or law enforcement, whether a school official shall be present during the questioning of the student.

If there is a dispute regarding a school official's presence during the interview or a principal is unsure about the decision, the principal should contact the executive director of legal services for resolution.

In order to implement these provisions, in accordance with the law and in a cooperative effort with social services, the following procedures shall be followed:

A school administrator shall designate a school official to do the following:

1. Inspect the identification of the investigator(s) to ensure the person is a valid employee of the agency.
2. Assist the investigator by providing a private area for the interview.
3. Use routine school procedure to retrieve the child from class with sensitivity to the confidentiality of the reason.
4. Determine, after consultation with the individual from the local department of social services or the police officer, whether a school official shall be present during the questioning of a student. In making the determination whether to be present a school administrator may:
  - a. Ask the student if he or she is comfortable talking with the caseworker.
  - b. If the student indicates he/she is not comfortable meeting with the case worker alone, then ask whether the student would like the school administrator or another school official to be present.

NOTE: In general, the Department of Social Services prefers that a school official not be present during the interview as it could negatively impact the interview. We recognize that in interviewing a child, it is difficult to establish rapport between the interviewer and interviewee when several individuals are present. Therefore, if the determination is that a school official should be present for the interview, we will limit the school's involvement to one staff member whose role is to be present to provide assistance and a sense of comfort to the child.

During the meeting, the school official is not to participate in questioning or guiding the child as that participation could serve to compromise the integrity of the investigation and unintentionally impact the success of prosecution.

#### H. Contacting Parents

The school principal/designee is not required to notify parents or guardians of investigations on school premises involving suspected child abuse or neglect. If a parent calls to inquire about an investigation, indicate you cannot confirm or deny the information and refer the parent to the Department of Social Services.

#### I. Removal of child from school premises

The child may be removed from the school premises by a protective services worker or police officer only if:

- a. The local department of social services has guardianship of the child.
- b. The local department of social services has a shelter order or a court order to remove the child. (Verification of shelter care order by school personnel can be made by calling the local department of social services intake officer). The protective services worker is responsible for notifying the parents of the action to remove the child from school. Usually this notification will occur as part of the social worker's initial family visit, or as part of the contact made to arrange the initial family interview.

#### J. Procedures in cases involving allegations of child abuse or neglect against a school system employee:

1. If there is a reason to believe that abuse or neglect has occurred against a student by a school system employee, a report shall be made immediately to the department of social services, the principal/immediate supervisor, and the superintendent.
2. The superintendent or designee shall promptly review the charges against the employee. There will be no internal investigation of the allegations until it is clear that such investigation will not interfere with the efforts of the police department or the department of social services. To the extent that some preliminary investigation must be made to determine what action should be taken by the school system on an interim basis, it may be pursued only with the permission of law enforcement authorities and the department of social services.
3. The superintendent or designee will determine by a preponderance of evidence that the employee has committed an act of misconduct. If determined that an act of misconduct has occurred, the superintendent shall impose appropriate discipline up to and including dismissal. The superintendent will take appropriate steps to insure due process rights of the employee and initiate disciplinary action where appropriate.

K. Contacts for reporting

1. Frederick County Department of Social Services  
100 East All Saints Street  
Frederick, MD 21705

Contact person: Supervisor of Protective Services

Phone number for oral reports; 301-694-2464

(Holidays/after hours, contact the Frederick City Police Department, 301-694-2102,  
and request that the protective services worker be paged.)

2. Police Departments
  - Maryland State Police – 301-663-3101
  - Frederick County Sheriff's Office – 301-694-1046
  - Frederick City Police – 301-694-2100
3. Office of the State's Attorney for Frederick County  
100 West Patrick Street  
Frederick, MD 21701  
301-694-1523

*NOTE: The Suspected Child Abuse/Suspected Neglect report form may be obtained from the Supervisor of Counseling and Student Support in the Office of Student Services.*

Approved:

*Original signed by*

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Linda D. Burgee  
Superintendent