

# Protocol for Reporting and Management of Child Abuse

Elizabeth Buckley School

30 May 2008

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1. Determine whether or not the child is in need of protection. Consult with the Principal, and, where the offender is anyone other than a parent or guardian, the parents or guardians of the child. Common sense and good judgment should be exercised. All relevant information should be carefully documented.
2. If a person has reasonable grounds to believe a child is in need of protection, he/she should immediately report the matter to the principal. The duty to report is not discharged by reporting the matter to this person. Where the alleged offender is a person other than a parent or guardian, the school should contact the parents or guardians to inform them for the purpose of the child's safety. Again, this does not discharge the duty to report.
3. The school should not investigate the matter.
4. The complainant or person to whom the disclosure was made directly or indirectly is responsible to report the matter to a Child and Family Development contact (i.e. Helpline for Children 310-1234). In the case of the need for immediate physical protection, a report to the police is also necessary.
5. Except as noted above, the school should not contact the parents or guardians of the child or the alleged offender until after the investigating police officer or social worker has completed the investigation of the matter. Once this is completed, the school may contact these persons to provide support and assistance.
6. The school should cooperate with the authorities in any investigation of child abuse. Proper identification should however be required of the authorities. School personnel should be available to assist the authorities during any interviews of the child.
7. The school should also cooperate with the authorities in any intervention. The school should make itself available to provide support and assistance to the child, parents or guardians or the alleged offender and to direct these persons to counseling or other services in the community.
8. Where the alleged offender is a school employee, the school should advise the H.O.S.C.S. Board of Directors, of the circumstances. The Board shall then determine if suspension, discipline, or dismissal of the employee is warranted. The alleged offender may immediately be suspended with pay, whether or not criminal charges are laid. The suspension will be in effect until the legal process is completed, at which time the alleged offender will either be reinstated or terminated.

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It is expected that teachers, principals and other school personnel will provide all relevant information to the Ministry of Child and Family Development representatives and, or police when reporting the matter. Aside from this, all information obtained by educators (or other school personnel) about child abuse and neglect cases, oral and written, is confidential and should be disclosed only to those persons with a legal mandate to investigate the abuse, or the parents or guardians, where they are not the alleged offender.

Helpline for Children (310-1234) is there to assist adults in cases of reporting and when needed, understanding of when and how to report.

It is a criminal offense not to report abuse and to report incorrectly.

This protocol may be modified or changed as required in response to governing bodies' requirements.

**To better understand abuse, WHEN and HOW TO REPORT the following information has been gleaned from the Provincial Government's website: [www.safekidsbc.ca](http://www.safekidsbc.ca)**

## ***What is child abuse?***

Abused children suffer and, all too often, the damage lasts a lifetime. Abuse can extend to future generations as patterns of abuse and neglect repeat themselves.

- Child abuse can be physical, emotional or sexual,
- Child abuse can include abandonment, desertion, neglect, ill-treatment, and failure to meet the needs of a child.

Familiarize yourself with the signs of abuse and neglect so you can take the right action when you see them.

You do not have to be sure if something is abuse or neglect. Call the Helpline (310-1234) and talk with a child protection worker who can help make it clear.

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## ***Duty to report***

Everyone who has a reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be physically harmed, sexually abused or sexually exploited, or needs protection is legally responsible to report the matter to a child protection worker.

The duty to report applies to **anyone** who has reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be abused or neglected, or may need protection, to promptly report the matter to a child protection worker.

- It doesn't matter if you believe someone else is reporting the situation, you still have to report.
- It doesn't matter if you're aware that a child protection worker is already involved with the child, you still have to report the matter. All new incidents must be reported as well.
- The legal duty to report overrides any duty of confidentiality, except a solicitor-client relationship.
- Time is of the essence in ensuring the safety and well-being of children. Report immediately.
- If you have reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be abused or neglected, then the responsibility for making a report to a child protection worker legally rests with you.
- Do not contact the alleged perpetrator. This is the responsibility of the police, or the child protection worker.

If you need to contact the alleged perpetrator in order to protect children under their authority, this should be coordinated with the police and child protection worker.

## ***How to report***

Report to a child protection worker in either a Ministry for Children and Families office, or a First Nations child welfare agency that provides child protection services.

- Anytime, call the Helpline for Children. **Dial 310-1234** (no area code needed).
- Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., call your local district office (listed in the blue pages of your phone book).

The child protection worker will:

- determine if the child needs protection
- contact the police if a criminal investigation is required
- coordinate a response with other agencies, if necessary

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If a child is in immediate danger, police should be called to intervene and a child protection worker should be contacted to determine whether the child is in need of protection.

## ***What to report***

Don't wait until you have all this information before calling. Just tell the child protection worker as much as you know. They'll also ask for your name, address and phone number and how you know the child. Your name will be kept confidential.

The report should include the following:

- your name
- your number
- the child's name
- the child's age
- the location of the child
- your relationship to the child
- any immediate concerns about the child's safety
- information on the situation including all physical and behavioural indicators observed
- information about the family, parents and alleged offenders
- the nature of the child's disabilities, if any
- the name of a key support person
- other child(ren) who may be affected
- information about other persons or agencies closely involved with the child and/or family
- any other relevant information concerning the child and/or family such as language and culture

## ***After you make a report***

- If it appears the child may, indeed, need protection, a child protection worker will start an investigation.
- Depending on the kind of abuse or neglect involved, the child protection worker may contact other agencies such as the police, the Superintendent of Schools, or the local Medical Health Officer.
- Investigations may involve interviews with the child and people who know the child, such as their parents, extended family, teacher, family doctor or child care worker.
- If the child is Aboriginal, their band or community will also be involved. Or, the information may be turned over to an aboriginal child welfare agency.

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## ***Additional Information***

Further information may be found at [www.safekidsbc.ca](http://www.safekidsbc.ca)