Mental Health and Crisis Management Services Presents…

"Reference Guide for Educators on Child Abuse Reporting"

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is defined to include harm or threatened harm to a child's physical or mental health or welfare by the acts or omissions of a parent, adult household member, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, or, for purposes of reporting requirements, by any person. Harm to a child's health or welfare can occur when the parent or other person responsible for the child's welfare inflicts, or allows to be inflicted, upon the child physical, sexual or mental injury that causes or is likely to cause the child's physical, mental or emotional health to be significantly impaired.

Who is required to report?

Every M-DCPS employee is mandated to report **KNOWN** or **SUSPECTED** abuse immediately. As defined by Florida Statute 39, "Any person who knows, or has **reasonable cause to suspect**, that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, as defined in this chapter, or that a child is in need of supervision and care and has no parent, legal custodian, or responsible adult relative immediately known and available to provide supervision and care shall report such knowledge or suspicion to the department in the manner prescribed in subsection (2). "

Child Abuse Reporting Steps

1. Suspected or confirmed child abuse must be immediately reported to the Department of Children and Families Central Abuse Hotline. **IT IS NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION**. The threshold for reporting abuse is having, *"reasonable cause to suspect"*.
2. Immediately call 1-800-96-ABUSE.
3. In order to provide the operator with all the necessary information, you should print out a copy of the F8 screen from ISIS and confirm with the emergency contact card the address information. As a mandated reporter, the operator will request your identity and pertinent information:
   - Name, date of birth or approximate age, race, gender, for all adults and children involved.
   - Addresses for all subjects, including current location.
   - Information regarding disabilities or limitations for vulnerable adult victims.
   - Relationship of the alleged perpetrator to the child or adult victims.
   - Specific descriptions of the incident (s) (who, what when, where, why, the extent of any injuries, victim statements about what happened, and any potential risks).
4. Report the abuse to a school-site administrator.
5. Report the abuse to the Miami-Dade Schools Police Department (305-995-COPS).
6. **NO SCHOOL-SITE EMPLOYEE SHOULD CONTACT THE CHILD'S PARENT OR GUARDIAN.** The representative from the Department of Children and Families or law enforcement agency will contact the parent/guardian.

Frequently Asked Questions

- I became aware of an abuse situation after regular school hours. What do I do?
  Make your report immediately as delineated in Guideline #4 with the information you have available and contact your administrator should you have a phone number. If the suspected incident occurred on campus, contact Schools Police. If the incident occurred off campus, contact 911.

- What if I hear about a suspected case of abuse third hand, what is my obligation?
  You are obligated to report the incident.

- What if someone else tells me not to worry that they will make the report, am I still obligated to report?
  Yes. You are obligated to report.

- Do I need to get permission from my administrator to report the abuse?
  No. The appropriate steps are to make the report to the hotline and then inform your administrator.

- What if a parent accuses me of reporting abuse, what am I supposed to say?
  Every school board employee is mandated to report known or suspected abuse, and it is against school board policy for me to confirm or deny such information.

Resources:
- Promoting and Maintaining a Safe Learning Environment http://ehandbooks.dadeschools.net/policies/68.pdf
- Florida Chapter 39:
  http://www.flsenate.gov/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=Ch0039/titl0039.htm&StatuteYear=2009&Title=%2D%3E2009%2D%3EChapter%2039

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