

CHILD ABUSE IN AN EDUCATIONAL SETTING

The Board of Education recognizes that children have the right to an educational setting that does not threaten their physical and emotional health and development. Child abuse by school personnel and school volunteers violates this right and therefore is strictly prohibited.

Allegations of child abuse by school personnel and school volunteers shall be reported in accordance with the requirements of Article 23-B of the Education Law.

Required Reporters

Any person holding any of the following positions shall be required to promptly report written and oral allegations of child abuse in an educational setting:

- school administrator
- teacher
- school nurse
- school guidance counselor
- school psychologist
- school social worker
- other school personnel required to hold a teaching or administrative license or certificate
- school board member

For purposes of this policy, persons holding these positions shall be referred to as “required reporters.”

Definitions

“Educational setting” means the buildings and grounds of the district, the vehicles provided by the district to transport students to and from school buildings, field trips, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities both on and off school district grounds, all co-curricular and extra-curricular activity sites, and any other location where direct contact between an employee and volunteer and a child has allegedly occurred.

“Child” means a person under the age of 21 enrolled in a New York State school district, other than New York City.

“Child abuse” means any one of the following acts committed in an educational setting by an employee or volunteer against a child:

- intentionally or recklessly inflicting physical injury, serious physical injury or death; or
- intentionally or recklessly engaging in conduct that creates a substantial risk of physical injury, serious physical injury or death; or
- any child sexual abuse as prohibited by sections 130 or 235 of the Penal Law; or
- the commission or attempted commission against a child of the crime of disseminating indecent materials to minors pursuant to Article 235 of the Penal Law.

Reporting Requirements

In any case where a written or oral allegation of child abuse by an employee or volunteer in an educational setting is made to a required reporter, the required reporter shall:

1. promptly complete the required State Education Department report form; and
2. personally deliver it to the Principal of the school in which the child abuse allegedly occurred.

If the allegation involves a child who was allegedly abused by an employee or a volunteer of a school in another school district, the required reporter must promptly forward the report form to the Superintendent of the district of attendance and the Superintendent of the school district where the abuse allegedly occurred (if different).

Upon receiving a written report, the Principal shall determine whether there is reasonable suspicion to believe that an act of child abuse has occurred. In those circumstances where the Superintendent receives the written report directly, he or she will be responsible for making the reasonable suspicion determination.

If the Principal/Superintendent determines there is reasonable suspicion to believe that an act of child abuse has occurred, he or she shall promptly notify the parent of the alleged child victim (assuming that the parent is not the person who originally reported the alleged abuse) that an allegation of child abuse in an educational setting has been made and promptly provide the parent with the written statement setting forth parental rights, responsibilities and procedures prepared in accordance with the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education.

If the person making the allegation of abuse is someone other than the child or the child's parent, the Principal/Superintendent shall contact the person making the report to learn the source and basis for the allegation.

The Principal shall also promptly provide a copy of the written report to the Superintendent and send a copy to the appropriate law enforcement authorities. In no event shall the Principal delay in sending the report to law enforcement because of an inability to contact the Superintendent.

The Superintendent shall send to the Commissioner of Education any written report forwarded to the local law enforcement authorities where the employee or volunteer alleged to have committed an act of child abuse holds a certification or license issued by the department.

Rights of Employees and Volunteers

Any employee or volunteer against whom an allegation of child abuse has been made and against whom the district intends to take adverse action shall be entitled to receive a copy of the report and to respond to the allegations. In addition, such persons are entitled to seek disclosure of reports involving them under the Freedom of Information Law.

Confidentiality

All reports, photographs, and other written material submitted pursuant to this policy and Article 23-B of the Education Law shall be confidential and may not be redisclosed except to law enforcement authorities involved in investigating the alleged abuse or except as expressly authorized by law or pursuant to a court-ordered subpoena. The Principal and Superintendent shall exercise reasonable care to prevent unauthorized disclosure.

Willful disclosure of a written record required to be kept confidential to a person not authorized to receive or review such record is a class A misdemeanor.

Penalties

Willful failure of an employee to prepare and submit a written report of alleged child abuse required by Article 23-B of the Education Law shall be a class A misdemeanor.

Willful failure of any Principal or Superintendent to submit a written report of alleged child abuse to an appropriate law enforcement authority, as required by Article 23-B of the Education Law, shall be a class A misdemeanor. In addition, the Commissioner of Education may, following an administrative determination, impose a civil penalty of up to five thousand dollars on any administrator who fails to submit a report of child abuse to an appropriate law enforcement authority.

The law further prohibits any Principal or Superintendent from agreeing to withhold from the appropriate law enforcement authorities, a superintendent or the Commissioner of Education, where appropriate, an allegation of child abuse in an educational setting on the part of any employee or volunteer as required by law, in return for the resignation or voluntary suspension of the alleged perpetrator. Violation of this prohibition can result in a class E felony charge and a civil penalty of up to \$20,000.

Record Retention

Any report of child abuse by an employee or volunteer that does not result in a criminal conviction shall be expunged from the records kept by the district with respect to the subject of the report after five years from the date the report was made.

Training

The Superintendent shall be responsible for establishing and implementing on an ongoing basis a training program for all current and new required reporters on the procedures required under Article 23-B. The program shall include at a minimum all the elements specified in Commissioner's regulations.

Ref: Education Law §§1125-1133
Penal Law §§130, 235, 263
8 NYCRR §100.2 (hh) (Reporting of Child Abuse in an Educational Setting)
Appeal of S.S., 42 EDR 273 (2003)

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