

REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Policy

It is the policy of the Canaan School District to ensure that all School District employees report suspected child abuse and/or neglect as outlined in 33 V.S.A. §4911 et seq.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect children whose health and welfare may be jeopardized by abuse or neglect. It is further the purpose of this policy to make clear to all School District employees and school officials that it is not their role to be investigator, judge and jury in cases of suspected abuse or neglect. Rather, it is the role of School District employees to be faithful and timely reporters of suspected abuse or neglect so that allegations can be brought to the attention of objective, trained and experienced investigators.

Definitions

1. **Immediately** means as soon as the abuse or neglect is suspected but in no case later than 24 hours after such abuse or neglect is suspected.
2. **Suspected** means the School District employee has reasonable cause to believe such abuse or neglect occurred. This does not mean that the employee must *be convinced* the abuse or neglect occurred. Doubts the employee may have shall be resolved in favor of reporting the suspicion. Further, the employee shall not refrain from making a report under this policy for the reason that there may be retaliation against the child because the employee has a confidential relationship with the child, or for any other reason no matter how well-intentioned.
3. **Report** means an oral or written description of the suspected abuse or neglect. If the report is made orally, the reporter should note in writing the person to whom the report was made and when the report was made. A report made to SRS shall contain the following:
 - A. the name and address of the reporter
 - B. the name and address, if known, of the child and the child's parents or other persons responsible for the child's care
 - C. the age of the child
 - D. the nature and extent of the child's injuries together with any evidence of previous abuse or neglect of the child or the child's siblings
 - E. any other information the reporter believes might be helpful
4. **Abused or neglected child** means a child under the age of eighteen whose physical health, psychological growth and development or welfare is harmed or at substantial risk of harm by the acts or omissions of the child's parent or other individual who may be responsible for the child's welfare (e.g. guardian, foster parent, stepparent, teacher, etc.), or in the case of sexual abuse, of any individual.

Harm can be caused by the actual infliction of harm, including physical injury or emotional maltreatment, by allowing such harm to occur, by failing to provide the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter or health care, or by abandonment of the child.

5. ***Sexual abuse*** means any act by a person involving sexual molestation or exploitation of a child including but not limited to incest, prostitution, rape, sodomy, or any lewd and lascivious conduct involving a child. Sexual abuse also includes the aiding, abetting, counseling, hiring, or procuring of a child to perform or participate in any photograph, motion picture, exhibition, show, representation, or other presentation which, in whole or in part, depicts sexual conduct, sexual excitement or sadomasochistic abuse involving a child. *NOTE: THE LAW PROVIDES THAT SEXUAL ABUSE MAY ALSO BE SEXUAL HARASSMENT. HOWEVER, FOLLOWING THIS SCHOOL DISTRICT'S POLICY ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT DOES NOT FULFILL A MANDATORY REPORTER'S LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE SRS REPORTING LAW. SUSPECTED SEXUAL ABUSE MUST BE REPORTED TO SRS.*

Implementation

Any School District employee or school official, regardless of whether he or she is a "mandated reporter," under Vermont law (33 V.S.A. §4913), shall report suspected child abuse or neglect to the building Principal or his or her designee. If the building Principal or designee is the person suspected of child abuse or the person who suspects the abuse or neglect, the report shall be made to the Superintendent of schools.

Upon receiving a report, the Principal, Principal's designee or the Superintendent, as the case may be, shall report the incident immediately to the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS).

Training

All staff shall receive training once each school year in reporting suspected child abuse and neglect. Such training shall include assistance in recognizing the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect.

Availability of Policy

This policy shall be provided each year to the parents of students in attendance and to each employee of the School District including substitute teachers. Further, this policy shall be posted in at least three prominent places within the school building.

Date Warned: 12 August 2002
Date Adopted: 26 August 2002
Legal Reference(s): 33 V.S.A. §§4911 et seq. (Reporting abuse of children)
Cross Reference: Harassment of Students (F20)