



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE 325 CHILD NEGLECT AND ABUSE

Background

All children have the right to live in a safe and secure environment. The Division, therefore, expects that all its staff members will follow the requirements of the Child Welfare Act diligently, in reporting suspected cases of child neglect or abuse to appropriate authorities and in cooperating as necessary with those authorities in the ensuing investigation.

Procedures

1. Staff members are to be knowledgeable regarding the signs and symptoms of child neglect or abuse.
 - 1.1 Principals shall ensure that copies of the Protocol and Guidelines for Child Welfare Workers and School Personnel are available to school staff and that staff members are aware of their responsibility for increasing their awareness and knowledge of identification of child abuse or neglect.
2. Staff members must be knowledgeable regarding suspected child neglect or abuse reporting requirements and procedures.
 - 2.1 Principals shall ensure that all school staff members are aware of their responsibility to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect under section 3 of the Child Welfare Act.
 - 2.2 All school personnel who have reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a child is in need of protective services shall promptly report the situation to the Principal or to a child welfare worker employed by Alberta Children's Services.
 - 2.3 If the school staff member reports a case of suspected child neglect or abuse to the Principal and it appears that the Principal is not prepared to immediately report the matter to child welfare authorities, the staff member shall then assume the responsibility for directly contacting Alberta Children's Services and thereby fulfill his/her responsibility under the Child Welfare Act.
 - 2.4 When an allegation of child abuse is made against any school staff member, the Principal shall inform the Superintendent immediately.
 - 2.5 Any statement made by a child to a staff member shall be recorded in the child's own words but such a recording is generally not to be made in the presence of the child. Staff members, while offering support, shall refrain from initiating further interviews with the child after receiving the child's first disclosure.

- 2.6 Knowledge of a suspected case of child neglect or abuse is confidential and shall be restricted to the staff member initiating the report, the Principal, and if appropriate, the school counselor, the school nurse, and the Superintendent or designate.
 - 2.7 Investigators may wish to interview school personnel who have regular contact with the child, or who may have other specific information relevant to the investigation. The Principal shall assist the investigator(s) by facilitating these contacts.
 - 2.8 School personnel shall provide all pertinent information to the investigator(s).
 - 2.9 Since school personnel may be subsequently required to provide evidence under oath at a Court proceeding under section 74(1) of the Child Welfare Act, school personnel shall summarize in writing any information provided to the investigator(s) immediately following the interview. This documentation shall be retained by the person in a confidential manner for future reference.
3. Staff members must be aware of the requirements and procedures in the investigation of suspected cases of child neglect or abuse and any resulting follow up.
 - 3.1 The Principal shall facilitate access to students at school by child welfare workers and/or the police for the purpose of investigating allegations of neglect or abuse at a time convenient to the school and the investigator.
 - 3.2 The Principal shall arrange an interview with the student suspected of being a victim of neglect or abuse in a manner that will minimize any possible stigmatization of the student as a result of the interview and will recognize and preserve the family's reputation and right to privacy.
 - 3.3 The Principal shall ask the child welfare worker or police officer to present identification cards, to explain the nature of the investigation being conducted, and to state their reasons for conducting the interview at school.
 - 3.4 In the interests of confidentiality and full undistorted disclosure, it is generally most appropriate for the investigators to interview the child alone.
 - 3.5 Where a student requests or requires the supportive but non-participating presence of a familiar school staff member, the Principal and the investigators will determine the appropriateness of having a school representative present during the interview.
 - 3.6 The Principal's responsibility for the safety and well-being of a student in regard to matters under the Child Welfare Act is discharged by cooperating and assisting with child welfare investigations.
 - 3.7 Child Welfare Staff will follow their policies and procedures in keeping the Principal and other appropriate school personnel apprised of significant developments regarding students with whom they are involved on a protection basis. This information sharing will be governed by Section 91 of the Child

Welfare Act, and will be on a “need to know” basis for the purposes of school personnel carrying out their responsibilities with respect to the student.

4. Appropriate procedures will be followed in any contact with the parents regarding matters relating to any suspected child neglect or abuse.
 - 4.1 The responsibility for notifying parents about an investigation rests with the external investigator (child welfare worker or police officer). Dependent on the nature of the alleged neglect or abuse, the investigator will normally notify the parent following the initial contact with the child to prevent any opportunity for further abuse to the child or for pressuring the child into changing her/his story.
 - 4.2 The Principal shall clarify with the child welfare investigator as to when contact with the parents will be made.
 - 4.3 If the child is apprehended from school, or her/his return to the parent’s home is delayed because of the investigation, and the Principal is subsequently contacted by the parents because the child has not yet returned home, the Principal shall provide the investigator’s name and telephone number. The Principal may deem it necessary to advise the parents that a child welfare investigation has been initiated, but the parents shall be referred to the investigator for further details.
 - 4.4 In the event that threats are made against school personnel or the child, the Principal shall call the police.
5. Any ongoing access to the child in a suspected case of child neglect and abuse will be on a mutually agreeable basis between the school and the investigating authority.
 - 5.1 As a general rule, child welfare workers will not utilize school premises for ongoing interviews with the child in accordance with their policies and guidelines.
 - 5.2 If the child welfare worker believes there is justifiable reason for requesting ongoing access to a student during school hours, the worker shall discuss the circumstances with the Principal and they shall negotiate a mutually satisfactory arrangement.
6. Any conflict between the school and Child Welfare personnel will be resolved by means of procedures acceptable to the Superintendent.
 - 6.1 Should the principal and a child welfare worker be unable to achieve a resolution regarding matters arising from the requested access by the worker to a student during school hours, the concerns shall be immediately referred to the Superintendent and the District Office Manager of Alberta Children’s Services.

Reference: Section 18, 20, 45, 60, 61, 113 School Act
Child Welfare Act
Protocol and Guidelines for Child Welfare Workers and School Personnel

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