

Mississinewa Community Schools Policy On Reporting Child Abuse, Neglect and Related Warning Signs

Policy Statement

It is the responsibility of the Mississinewa School Corporation to provide a safe, supportive, and responsive school environment for all students. The Mississinewa School Board believes that all students have the right to be protected from abuse and neglect. The Board acknowledges the necessity of this policy to ensure school personnel are able to recognize and report suspected cases of abuse and neglect.

Purpose

- a. To protect students from child abuse and neglect.
- b. To educate all school personnel on the requirement to immediately report suspected child abuse (neglect, physical, sexual); their right to confidentiality and of immunity from civil liability or criminal penalty for reporting.
- c. To establish procedures to be used by all school personnel when reporting suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities.

Child abuse is when a parent or caregiver, whether through action or failing to act, causes injury, death, emotional harm or risk of serious harm to a child. There are many forms of child maltreatment, including neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation and emotional abuse.

Warning Signs of Child Abuse

Physical:

- * Visible and severe injuries that are unexplained or explained in a way that doesn't make sense.
- * Frequency, timing and history of injuries (frequent, after weekends, vacations, school absences)
- * Wetting clothes
- * Speech disorders
- * Health problems like ulcers, skin disorders, weight fluctuation
- * Difficulty making friends
- * Engages in regressive acts such as rocking and/or thumb-sucking

Behavioral:

- * Aggression toward peers
- * Seems afraid of parents or other adults
- * Fear, withdrawal, depression, anxiety
- * Wears long sleeves out of season
- * Violent themes in fantasy, art, etc.
- * Nightmares, insomnia
- * Reports injury, severe discipline
- * Immaturity, acting out, emotional and behavior extremes
- * Self-destructive behavior or attitudes
- * Apathy, withdrawal, and lack of response to human interaction
- * Negative self-image
- * Antisocial behavior (i.e. physical aggression delinquency, and interpersonal problems)

Child neglect is when a parent or caregiver does not give the care, supervision, affection and support needed for a child's health, safety and well-being. Child neglect includes physical, emotional, medical and educational neglect.

Warning Signs of Child Neglect

- * Comes to school hungry
- * Not dressed for the weather
- * Poor appearance and hygiene
- * Poor weight gain and growth
- * Has chronic untreated illnesses

Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse

- * Frequent yeast infections, UTIs or pain during urination
- * Has difficulty walking or sitting
- * Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- * Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- * Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- * Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- * Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14
- * Runs away
- * Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver
- * Attaches very quickly to strangers or new adults in their environment

Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse by a Parent or Other Adult Caregiver

- * Unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
- * Secretive and isolated
- * Jealous or controlling with family

Mandatory Reporting Requirements Indiana Code § 31-33-5-1

Any person who has a reason to believe a child (student) is a victim of abuse or neglect has a duty to make a report to the Department of Child Services (DCS) or the police. If you hear about or see child abuse/neglect, you **must** report it **immediately**.

If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, call Indiana's Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-800-5556 or local law enforcement. The police and/or DCS are the appropriate authorities to investigate these matters. Do not ask the child questions that may interfere with the formal investigation.

Document what you have seen and/or heard (if the information was told to you—document the story). It is possible that you may be contacted in the future.

If there is any reason to believe that a student is a victim of child abuse (of any kind), human trafficking or neglect, it is your duty to report immediately.

Oral reports shall be made to the Department of Child Services, which hosts a toll-free child abuse hotline (1-800-800-5556) or the local law enforcement agency.

When reporting, an Intake Specialist will ask you for information about the circumstances creating a risk of harm to the child including **who** was involved, **what** occurred, **when** and **where** it occurred, the extent of any **injuries sustained**, and any other relevant information.

When you contact the Hotline, you will be asked for information about the parties involved (victim, parent(s)/guardian(s), perpetrator) and the specific allegations giving rise to the call. Information you will be asked to provide may include:

1. Child Information: name, age, address, current location, person caring for the child, and need/receiving medical treatment
2. Parent/Guardian Information: name, address, phone number as well as any domestic violence, substance abuse, criminal history, mental health issues, or past CPS (Child Protection Services) history
3. Alleged Perpetrator Information: name, address, phone number, relation to the child, behavioral issues, and other children who may be at risk
4. Physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect allegations: what happened, when, where, timeframe, and specific conditions
5. Notify your school administrator or designee that a report was made and request signature on the [preliminary report of alleged child abuse or neglect](#).
6. Maintain a copy of the preliminary report of alleged child abuse or neglect for your records and provide a copy to the administrator or designee.
7. Failure to report suspected abuse or neglect is a Class B misdemeanor.

If it is determined that a student should not be sent home after dismissal, or if a student expresses concern for his/her safety or well-being by returning home or being released to the parent/guardian, DCS and/or local law enforcement should be consulted immediately. School staff should follow instructions from law enforcement and/or DCS.

It is okay if you cannot provide all of the information above. Any details you can provide will be helpful to the case. DO NOT wait for someone else to make the call – your call may be the critical first step in protecting a child.

Following the call, it is important to document the report. If there is an investigation, it is possible that you may be asked to be interviewed. It is best if you have written notes of the report you have given.

Support for Students

- a. School employees will collaborate with the department of child services and local law enforcement to provide support to the alleged victims of abuse and neglect as well as students who make such reports.
- b. School Counselors, School Social Workers, School Psychologists, Nurses, and other appropriate school personnel are available to provide support and counseling to students who are victims or alleged victims of abuse.
- c. Multidisciplinary/Student support/intervention team meetings may occur for the purpose of providing services and supports to students in need. To the extent permitted by confidentiality laws, information may be shared and concerns discussed to coordinate planning services for the student. Appropriate

school personnel may also request information outside of the team meeting to coordinate services that may be provided in the community.

- d. List of possible community resources available for the student and family.
- e. Intervention options
- f. Counseling options
- g. Education support available for a child to continue to be successful in school

School Employee Training

Per IC 20-28-3-4.5, each school corporation, charter school, and accredited nonpublic school shall require each school employee likely to have direct, ongoing contact with children within the scope of the employee's employment to attend or participate in training on child abuse and neglect, including reporting suspected abuse or neglect and recognizing possible signs, at least once every two years. Training must count toward professional development required by the governing body and must be during the employee's contracted day or at a time chosen by the employee.