

**REPORTING CHILD ABUSE/CHILD PROTECTION**

Child abuse and neglect, as defined by Maine statute, means "the physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child under the age of 18 years of age by a person who is responsible for the child's welfare under circumstances which indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or threatened thereby."

When any school administrator, teacher, guidance counselor, nurse, social worker, or teacher aide in this school unit has reason to suspect that any child enrolled in school may be a victim of child abuse or neglect, he/she will immediately notify the school principal who will notify the director. A verbal report to the principal shall be followed by a written report prepared by the principal on the next working day. Any report shall include the following information if within the knowledge of the person reporting:

- A. The names and addresses of the child and his/her parents or other person responsible for his/her care or custody if known;
- B. The child's age and sex;
- C. The nature and extent of the child's physical injuries, if any;
- D. A description of any sexual abuse or neglect;
- E. Family composition;
- F. Any other information that the person making the report believes may be helpful in the furtherance of the safety and welfare of the child.

Upon receipt of a verbal report, the school principal will immediately report by telephone to the Department of Human Services.

The principal shall notify the initiator of the report when an investigation is being conducted or when the case is closed as an invalid referral. The principal shall attempt to keep the initiator informed as to the progress of the case. School personnel will cooperate with the Department of Human Services investigation by providing pertinent information and personal observation which is necessary for an appropriate assessment of the child's welfare. The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act establishes rules governing the release of information from education records. The act does not restrict a teacher or school official from making a report based on his/her personal knowledge or observation.

The Department of Human Services Child Protective Worker may be allowed to interview the child named in the report at the school with or without parental permission when, in the judgment of the principal, such an interview shall be structured by the principal with due regard for the needs of the child.

Under Maine statute, all records and reports concerning child abuse and neglect are confidential and subject to release only under the specific guidelines of the Boards' records management policy. Persons who permit unauthorized dissemination of such records are deemed guilty of a Class E crime.

School personnel who are directly involved with the education or supervision of a child who is the subject of a report are authorized to give and receive information necessary for the planning and treatment of the child. Teachers who are in daily contact with the child are important parts of the treatment team and should cooperate with the Department of Human Services Child Protective Worker in the conduct of the treatment plan.

Each case of child abuse in this school system is to be treated in a highly confidential manner by all school employees concerned.

Legal Reference:     TITLE 22 MRSA SEC. 4001-4010-A ("CHILD AND FAMILY  
                                  SERVICES AND CHILD PROTECTION ACT")  
                                  TITLE 22 MRSA SEC. 4011, 4012

Adopted: 11/13/96