

SD 42 POLICY: 9611

CHILD PROTECTION

PURPOSE OF POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to support a comprehensive, coordinated and collaborative approach for responding to child abuse and neglect by:

- Providing child abuse prevention programs to students;
- Providing school officials, employees, volunteers and contract service providers with training in recognizing signs of child abuse and neglect;
- Providing school officials, employees, volunteers and contract service providers with direction and training on their legal obligation to report child abuse and neglect to a Child Welfare Worker under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*, to the police where the child is in immediate danger, and to school officials;
- Requiring school officials to investigate and/or report to the police allegations of child abuse involving current and former school district employees, volunteers or contract service providers;
- Establishing a child abuse/neglect reporting and investigation protocol with other responsible agencies, to identify the roles and responsibilities of school officials and personnel from other agencies, in responding to allegations of child abuse or neglect; and
- Providing assistance to victims of child abuse and neglect through referrals to other agencies, as appropriate.

AUTHORITY

The Board assigns the responsibility for the implementation of the Child Protection policy to the Superintendent of Schools and authorizes the Superintendent of Schools to establish procedures that will guide the implementation of this policy.

RECOGNIZING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Child abuse can take physical, sexual, or emotional forms, or may take the form of parental neglect or instances where there is domestic violence by or towards a person with whom a child resides. The descriptions of physical abuse, emotional abuse, emotional harm (including severe anxiety and depression), sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and neglect contained in the *BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect for Service Providers (2017)* (pages 23-25) (or later editions) should be applied for purposes of this policy.

REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION

The Board acknowledges that responses to reports of child abuse and neglect may involve Board of Education personnel, child welfare and law enforcement agencies.

The Board supports a coordinated and collaborative response to reports of child abuse and neglect between the School District, the Maple Ridge RCMP, the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Ministry of Children and Family Development Aboriginal Services Circle 3. The Board supports the development of an interagency child abuse/neglect protocol agreement that sets out roles and responsibilities for reporting and investigating child abuse/neglect issues.

All school officials, employees, volunteers and contract service providers must understand and respect their legal obligation to report child abuse and neglect to a child welfare worker in a timely manner where they have reason to believe that a child is in need of protection within the meaning of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*. They also need to comply with their reporting obligations as identified in this policy and associated procedures.

School officials must also understand their role in coordinating with responsible agencies and in investigating allegations of child abuse against school employees, in accordance with this policy and associated procedures and the interagency child abuse/neglect protocol agreement.

RESPECTING THE RIGHTS OF ACCUSED INDIVIDUALS

The Board acknowledges that individuals under investigation regarding allegations of child abuse or neglect may have contractual or other legal rights during the investigative process. School District investigations will be conducted in a manner that is respectful of these rights.

TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The Board requires that school officials, employees, volunteers and contract service providers receive training on how to recognize signs of child abuse or neglect, how to respond to reports of child abuse or neglect, and standards of conduct for employees, volunteers and service providers governing their interactions with students.

The Superintendent or designate will ensure that appropriate opportunities to receive and/or review training are made available to school officials, employees, volunteers and contract service providers.

The Superintendent or designate will ensure that child abuse prevention programs are provided to students in accordance with the Ministry of Education's prescribed learning outcomes.

APPROVED: April 27, 2022