

REPORTS ON INJURED CHILDREN

(CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT)

School Committee Policy J 710

The School Committees recognize and accept the school districts' responsibility to identify, report, investigate and intervene with families where there is suspected neglect or abuse in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 119, Section 51A.

Under state statute, any school employee who in his or her professional capacity has reason to suspect that a child under the age of eighteen years is suffering serious physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse by either a caretaker or a non-caretaker or from neglect must immediately notify the School Principal who then becomes responsible to make the report in the manner required by this section.

Massachusetts law requires an individual who is a mandated reporter (teachers, educational administrators, nurses, guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, daycare workers, foster parents, police officers, medical practitioners and technicians, and others) to immediately report any allegation of serious physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse or neglect. Any school employee who fails to meet these mandated requirements can be fined up to \$1000. No civil or criminal actions can be taken against mandated reporters if they have acted in good faith, which means that to their knowledge the report is truthful and accurate.

Date approved by the School Committees: May 1, 1997; June 5, 1997

School Committee Procedures J-710

If a child or third party discloses abuse:

First Procedure

- The reporter informs the principal, who convenes the building Child Protection Team (CPT). The CPT may consist of the following members: reporter, counselor, nurse, administrator, psychologist, teacher. If principal or CPT are not available during the day or after hours, follow one of the alternative procedures (see below).

Reports on Injured Children (Child Abuse & Neglect) Procedures

- If Child Protection Team members decide it is appropriate to file a 51-A report, the principal or his/her designee immediately calls DSS to file an oral 51-A report, informs the family unless notification to the family jeopardizes the child's welfare, notifies the Director of Pupil Services and notifies any siblings' school about the report. Other agencies shall be contacted as appropriate (Police, Board of Health, District Attorney, etc.). The CPT summary form is completed and kept confidentially filed with the Director of Pupil Services.
 - The original reporter fills out the 51-A report that goes to DSS within 48 hours of the reported abuse. A copy of the report is kept confidentially filed with the Director of Pupil Services.
 - The CPT makes recommendations about follow-up services in the school and monitors those services.
 - The CPT continues to monitor the outcome of the 51-A report.
- If all CPT members agree it is not appropriate to file a 51-A report, a CPT summary form is completed and kept confidentially filed with the Director of Pupil Services. If the original reporter disagrees with the CPT's decision not to file a 51-A report, the reporter should file a report unilaterally.

Alternative Procedures

- If the principal or building Child Protection Team (CPT) are not available, the reporter consults with the Director of Pupil Services, who decides whether or not to file a 51-A and proceeds with the appropriate protocol. The reporter follows up with the principal on the next working day.
- If the Director of Pupil Services is not available and the reporter believes the situation to be an emergency, the reporter files an oral 51-A report immediately with DSS. The reporter follows up with the principal and the Director of Pupil Services on the next working day and follows the appropriate procedures.

It is the responsibility of the building Child Protection Teams to provide yearly inservice training to all school staff regarding Injured Children (Child Abuse and Neglect) mandated reporting procedures.

Date approved by School Committees: May 1, 1997; June 5, 1997; December 12, 2001