



CHILD ABUSE REPORTING POLICY, **PROTOCOL AND PROCEDURES**

POLICY:

This policy is to provide specific guidance to the employees of Maria Montessori Academy in fulfilling the commitment to assist in child abuse prevention and in providing reporting protocols if child abuse is suspected or known to have occurred.

THE Maria Montessori Academy Board of Directors underscores the Legal Duty to Report.

Section 14 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA) requires individuals to report promptly to a child welfare worker if they have reason to believe a child or youth has been or is likely to be:

- physically harmed, sexually abused or exploited, or neglected by a parent, or
- otherwise in need of protection as set out in Section 13 of the CFCSA. Any person with reason to believe that a child needs protection has a duty to report directly to a child welfare worker. Informing another person (e.g., a colleague or the principal) does not discharge your legal duty to report directly to a child welfare worker. You do not need to be certain that abuse and/or neglect has, is, or will occur; a child welfare worker will determine this and can discuss options and courses of action with you.

Please note:

- The legal duty to report overrides any duty of confidentiality, except a solicitor-client relationship or where provisions of the Youth Criminal Justice Act apply.
- A "child welfare worker" is a person delegated under the CFCSA to provide child welfare services, including responses to suspected child abuse and neglect
- In British Columbia, under the CFCSA, a child is anyone under the age of 19.

PROTOCOL:

To report a case of suspected abuse and neglect to the Ministry of Children and Family Development, please call the following number(s):

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- **Phone 1-800-663-9122 at any time of the day or night.**
- To report a case of suspected abuse and neglect involving an Aboriginal student, please call 1-800-663-7867 and ask for the Delegated Aboriginal Child and Family Services Agency nearest you.
- To report that a child is in immediate danger and/or a criminal offence against a child has been or is likely to be committed, please call: Saanich Police: 250 475 4321 -Emergency: 9-1-1

RESOURCES

- A Guide for Independent School Personnel Responding to Child Abuse:
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/independent-schools/sos_guide_independent_schools.pdf
- **The B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect For Service Providers:**

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/public-safety/protecting-children/childabusepreventionhandbook_serviceprovider.pdf
- Helpline for Children: Phone # 310-1234 from anywhere in BC (no area code needed)
- Safe, Caring & Orderly Schools resources:
<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sco/resources.htm>

DEFINITIONS:

- What is Child Abuse and Neglect?
The following definitions are adapted from *The BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect* (pages 23-25):
 - *Physical Abuse*: a deliberate, non-accidental physical assault or injury by an adult or significantly older or more powerful child that results in, or is likely to result in, physical harm to a child.
 - *Sexual Abuse*: the use of a child for sexual gratification by a person in a position of trust and/or authority, or by a significantly older or more powerful child. It includes sexual touching, menacing or threatening sexual acts, obscene gestures, or deliberate exposure of the child to sexual activity or material.
 - *Emotional Abuse*: a pattern of destructive behaviour or verbal attacks by an adult on a child. Typical behaviours may include rejecting, terrorizing, ignoring, isolating, humiliating, insulting, scapegoating, exploiting or corrupting a child.
 - *Neglect*: failure to provide for a child's basic needs: food, clothing, adequate shelter, supervision and medical care. Neglect is the form of abuse most frequently reported to the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
 - *Sexual Exploitation*: permitting, encouraging or requiring a child to engage in conduct of a sexual nature for: stimulation, gratification or self-interest of another person; prostitution; or production of material of a pornographic nature.

1. LEGAL DUTY TO REPORT (ALL STAFF)

(a) Section 14 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA) requires individuals to report promptly to a child welfare worker if they have reason to believe a child has been or is likely to be:

- physically harmed, sexually abused or exploited, or neglected by a parent, or
- otherwise in need of protection as set out in Section 13 of the CFCSA.

(b) Any person with reason to believe that a child needs protection has a duty to report directly to a child welfare worker.

- "Reason to believe" simply means that, based on what was seen or information received, a person believes a child has been or is likely to be at risk.
- The reporter need not be certain. It is the child welfare worker's job to determine whether abuse or neglect has occurred or is likely to occur.

(c) Informing another person (e.g., a colleague or the principal) does not discharge your legal duty to report directly to a child welfare worker.

(d) You do not need to be certain that abuse and/or neglect has, is, or will occur; a child welfare worker will determine this and can discuss options and courses of action

with you.

Please note:

- The legal duty to report overrides any duty of confidentiality, except a solicitor-client relationship or
- where provisions of the Youth Criminal Justice Act apply.

(e) A “child welfare worker” is a person delegated under the CFCSA to provide child welfare services, including responses to suspected child abuse and neglect

(f) In British Columbia, under the CFCSA, a child is anyone under the age of 19.

(g) Staff who are uncertain about their duty to report, will consult with a child welfare worker who can discuss the options and appropriate course of action

2. APPOINTED SCHOOL OFFICIALS (as per Supporting Our Students: A Guide for Independent School Personnel Responding to Child Abuse)

- Primary ASO: Principal – principal@mariamontessoriacademy.net
- Alternate ASO: Vice Principal – viceprincipal@mariamontessoriacademy.net

0. (a) The primary and an alternate ASOs are responsible for working with child care workers to determine whether a child has been harmed by someone who works or volunteers at the school, or works on contract for the school.
1. (b) The role of the alternate appointed official is to ensure the continuity of the reporting and investigation process in the event of possible involvement of the primary appointed official in a matter that falls under section 14 of the CFCSA.
2. (c) In fulfilling the role as a school’s Appointed School Official, a person may be required to:
 - investigate where appropriate on behalf of the school authority; initiate the Employee Investigation process if necessary
 - ensure a safe school environment during investigations;
 - consult with the child welfare worker and/or police;
 - ensure that no school employee interferes with any investigations;
 - communicate with parents with respect to actions taken by the school authority;
 - report to the Commission for Teacher Regulation, Teacher Regulation Branch, Ministry of Education, when the School Authority dismisses, suspends or otherwise disciplines a certified teacher or school principal (Independent School Act section 7 and 7.2); and,

- refer student(s) for counseling according to the school's policies. (No support should be provided until such time as Investigations have been completed.)

3. PROCEDURES:

When a disclosure is received from a student -

- a) If a student discloses their abuse to you:
 - a. Stay calm and listen, be sensitive to their needs, go slowly and ask gentle questions, such as "Can you tell me more about what happened?", reassure the child or youth that they have done nothing wrong and they are not in trouble, tell them you will get them help, but do not promise to keep it a secret.
- b) Complete the necessary form (External or Internal) depending on who it involves.
- c) Be prepared with all of the information on the student prior to calling (use the completed form or the student's MyEd registration form).
- d) You may wish to consult with the school counsellor or administrator prior to making a formal report.
- e) When receiving a report involving an employee of MMA, the Employee Investigation process must be initiated. Ensure the child or youth is safe. The Principal must be Immediately Informed.

The police must be contacted immediately if the child is in any immediate danger. Staff are not required to contact the parents or guardians who may be involved in allegedly abusing the child; this is the responsibility of the child welfare worker.

- Staff will cooperate fully with any resulting investigation, including assisting with the interviews of children and staff as necessary.
- The school will protect personal information regarding the investigation, including the reporter's identity, against improper or unauthorized disclosure or use. School personnel should not share information with outside agencies about child abuse investigations, particularly if the police are involved.
- Disclosure of student records for the delivery of Health Services, Social Services or other Support Services may occur without parental consent.
- The principal will ensure that the school environment is safe during any investigation.

- School personnel will support students who are victims of child abuse or neglect.

4. PROCEDURES WHERE ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE ARE MADE AGAINST INDEPENDENT SCHOOL STAFF, VOLUNTEERS, CONTRACT SERVICE PROVIDERS OR OTHERS IN THE SCHOOL SETTING

- a) According to the MCFD handbook, "*The BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect – For Service Providers*", p 32, "If the abuse occurs in a setting such as a school, youth custody or child care centre, the head of the organization is responsible for responding." It is the legal responsibility of school officials and employees to provide a safe learning environment for students.
- b) If the school officials and employees believe that a child is being abused or at risk, there is a legal duty to report the concern to the local child welfare worker and the police if the child is in imminent danger.
- c) Independent School officials have the primary responsibility for dealing with allegations of child abuse involving independent school employees, volunteers, contract service providers, or others on independent school property or supervising an independent school activity outside of the school.

4.c.1. REPORTS CONCERNING STAFF:

4.c.1.1 Where there are allegations of child abuse by a school staff member, the principal is responsible to initiate an investigation process.

4.c.1.2 The principal has the authority under the Independent School Act (ISA), Section 7 (2) (b) to suspend a school staff member whose presence constitutes potential harm to the safety and welfare of students.

4.c.1.3 The principal shall immediately inform the Board Chair or designate.

4.c.2. REPORTS CONCERNING VOLUNTEERS OR NON-EMPLOYEES IN SCHOOL SETTING:

4.c.2.1. The School Authority has the authority to issue a "No Trespass Order" prohibiting attendance at school by anyone whose presence threatens the safety and welfare of students. Contract Workers and Other Persons

4.c.2.2. Staff who have reason to believe that another employee, volunteer, contract service provider or other person on school property or supervising an independent school activity outside of the school has abused a student, must report the incident or information to the school principal. It is the responsibility of the principal to investigate

the allegations and, in collaboration with the school personnel and Board Chair or designate, determine what action is required.

4.c.2.3. Parents of children alleged to have been abused in the school setting must be informed immediately unless directed otherwise by MCFD or other agencies

4.c.3.0 Reporting to the Police

4.c.3.1 Not every incident that might constitute an offense if proven will warrant police involvement. School officials are expected to exercise judgment.

4.c.3.2 Where there is reason to believe that the alleged child abuse by employees, volunteers, contract service providers or other persons may constitute a criminal offence warranting police involvement, the school official should consult with the police regarding the matter.

5. STAFF TRAINING AND REVIEW

a) The Principal will ensure that annual training is provided to all school personnel, contractors and volunteers who are working with children and ensure they are aware of and understand how to carry out their legal duty when responding to concerns about child abuse and/or neglect.

(b) Training will include recognizing child abuse and/or neglect, what actions are required, prevention measures, reporting child abuse and/or neglect protocols, and everyone's legal responsibility if they suspect abuse and/or neglect of a child.

(c) POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT

- Unexplained bruises, different coloured bruises, welts, cuts, burns, bite marks-especially on the face, lower back, thighs or arms
- Unexplained fractures, repeated injuries over time
- Constant complaints such as sore throats or stomach aches that have no medical explanation

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- ▪Lack of proper hygiene, constant hunger, clothing inappropriate for weather conditions
- ▪Irritation, bruising, bleeding, pain or itching near genitals or anus
- ▪Bruises on breasts, buttocks, or thighs
- ▪Sudden onset of nightmares, bedwetting, and/or fear of the dark
- ▪Cuts or sores on arms or legs
- ▪Self-harming behaviours
- ▪Fear of going home, attempts to run away
- ▪Sudden change in attitude towards someone previously liked and trusted
- ▪Expressing bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge not typical for age, language or play
- ▪Becoming anxious and fearful after being outgoing and friendly
- ▪Expressing sadness, crying frequently, becoming depressed
- ▪Lacking friends or not participating in activities
- ▪Irregular or non-attendance at school

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