

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF WAUZEKA-STEUBEN

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT

The School District of Wauzeka-Steuben is dedicated to the goal of protecting our students from and responding effectively to incidents of child abuse and neglect. The District recognizes the many efforts to confront problems associated with child abuse and neglect and will work cooperatively with all agencies with responsibilities for addressing such concerns.

Wis. Stat. §48.981(2) requires that District personnel, who in the performance of their duties encounter a child they suspect has been physically or sexually abused, is experiencing neglect, or emotional damage, or is threatened with injury, are mandated to report suspicions to the appropriate authorities. Anyone in good faith, participating in the making of a report or participating in an investigation pursuant to this section, shall be immune from any liability. Whoever willfully ignores and violates this section by failure to report as required, may be fined not more than \$1,000, or imprisoned not more than six months, or both.

Wisconsin law assigns the responsibility and authority to investigate certain reports of child maltreatment to law enforcement and county departments of social or human services. Schools do not have the statutory authority to investigate reports of child maltreatment. Mandated reporters, including all staff, are required by law to make a report to Child Protective Services (CPS) or law enforcement when they have reasonable cause to suspect a child has been sexually, physically, or emotionally abused or neglected. The mandated reporter with the most direct knowledge or observation of the abuse should be the person to make this report to CPS or law enforcement. Any doubt about reporting suspecting situations should be resolved in the child's favor. The purpose is to protect the child and help the family.

Following appropriate protocol when there is reasonable suspicion that a child has been abused or neglected, or has been threatened with abuse or neglect, is essential. To help ensure that the proper procedures are followed and the overall process is not compromised, the following reporting procedures are designed to assist in referring a child for suspected physical abuse, sexual abuse, or emotional damage, neglect, or threat of injury as specified in the Wisconsin Statutes:

1. In an effort to better understand the definition and dynamics of child abuse/neglect, prior to making a referral, contact available building resources (school counselor and school psychologist).
2. A staff member, under a duty to report and who suspects a child has been physically or sexually abused, is experiencing neglect or emotional damage, or is threatened with injury, shall immediately inform the Principal or designee if the Principal is not available.
3. The staff member shall also immediately contact the Crawford County Department of Human Services. When calling Human Services, the reporting individual should identify the purpose as a child abuse/neglect referral. This referral shall be made as early in the day as possible so that a social worker from the Department of Human Services has time to begin his/her investigation by interviewing the child at school. (State Statute protects from criminal or civil liability individuals and institutions filing reports and participating in such investigations.)
4. The Principal or designee will document that the referral was made and keep it on file.

Legal References: Wis. Stats. §§ Sections 48.02, 48.981, 115.31, 118.01(2)(d)8, 118.07(5), 118.125, 118.126(1)

Cross References: Policy 720 Safety Program

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