

All Forsyth County School System personnel and volunteers are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect. Child abuse includes physical abuse, physical neglect, sexual abuse and . Abuse information can be revealed during regular contact with a child in the classroom, in a counseling session or through reporting of alleged incidents of suspected abuse by another child or children. The following are procedures for suspected child abuse cases through the school system after initial disclosure to school personnel.

Staff may consult with the Director of Student Support Services for guidance with suspected child abuse cases or with the Chief of Human Resources with cases dealing with school employees.

### **Interview/Disclosure of Abuse**

- If school staff or volunteer suspects abuse, immediately contact the School Counselor
- The School Counselor will interview the child when appropriate.
  - No other students should be present in the session.
  - Ask the child: What happened? and When did the incident occur?
  - Document the child's exact statement using the child's original wording on the Mandated Reporter form.
  - Determine if the alleged perpetrator lives in or out of the home.
  - If necessary, you may want to discuss issues of safety with the child.
  - Note the time and the date of the disclosure.
  - If sexual abuse or exploitation is disclosed, do not use dolls or other materials to obtain information.

### **Report to Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS)**

- All incidences of suspected abuse must be reported immediately, but in no case later than twenty-four (24) hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused, to DFCS regardless of when or where they occurred. (O.C.G.A. 19-7-5)
- Complete the form.
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- If attempts to notify DFCS have been unsuccessful contact your school social worker, school resource officer, and/or 911. Concerns regarding sending the child home from school due to safety issues should be addressed with the school administration with input from the School Safety Department, the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office, and the services staff or supervisors. Note: DFCS and law enforcement have restrictions regarding transporting students. Under most circumstances, the child should proceed home in a normal manner.
- The School Administrator should be notified of the report. Administrator approval is not required to make a DFCS report. Under no circumstances may the principal or designee to whom a notification of child abuse has been made "exercise any control, restraint, modification or make other change to the information provided by the reporter, although each of the aforementioned persons (mandated reporters) may be consulted prior to the making of a report and may provide any additional, relevant and necessary information when making the report. (O.C.G.A. 19-7-5)

### **Following Email Reports to DFCS:**

- Administrators should report criminal incidents (physical, sexual abuse, domestic violence, , etc.) to the school resource officer.

- The DFCS investigator will often request additional information and/or may contact the child at the school. The contact and information gathered is confidential and part of the ongoing investigation process; therefore, the presence of school personnel may not be appropriate. An employee may attend the interview per the child's preference. The employee may be added to the witness list and is subject to subpoena if a case is brought to court.
- The School Social Worker or School Counselor may inquire about case tracking and updates.
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- **School Employee as Alleged Perpetrator**
- If there is an allegation of suspected child abuse against an employee of the Forsyth County School System, the principal of the school or the site supervisor will report to the \_\_\_\_\_, the Superintendent or his/her designee. The Superintendent's designee or the principal will report as mandated by law and the Code of Ethics for Educators.

### **Consequences for Failure to Report**

- Failure to report may result in disciplinary action against the employee.
- Mandated reporters who fail to report child abuse/neglect may be held liable in a court of law and may be found guilty of a misdemeanor. Penalties could include fines and/or imprisonment.