

Plan for Addressing Sexual Abuse and Other Maltreatment of Children



Driscoll Independent School District
Guidance and Counseling

Driscoll Independent School District

Plan for Addressing Child Sexual Abuse and Other Maltreatment of Children

Overview

The Driscoll Independent School District has established a plan for addressing child sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children. A copy of this plan can be assessed at the DISD website. A copy of this plan is also kept in the school counselor's office. The 81st legislative session passed HB 1041 relating to school district policies addressing sexual abuse of children and the establishment of a state strategy to reduce child abuse and neglect and improve child welfare. The safety of the students is of utmost importance to the Driscoll Independent School District.

Methods for Increasing Awareness Regarding Sexual Abuse of Children Teachers and Staff:

Teachers and Staff will be trained annually regarding HB 1041 relating to school district policies addressing sexual abuse of children and other maltreatment of children. Training may be provided through campus counselors, other campus staff, district staff, or outside agencies. The Texas Educator brochure guides for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect are given to teachers and staff at each campus. Flyers are posted on DISD campuses detailing steps to follow if someone suspects abuse or neglect of a child.

Students:

The district counselor will address issues to increase awareness regarding sexual abuse of children utilizing age appropriate conversations and materials no less than once per school year in a classroom group setting grades Pre-K through 8.

Parents:

Information concerning the district plan for assessing sexual abuse and other maltreatment of Children is placed on the DISD Website's Counselor's Link. Information regarding child abuse is also placed in the Student-Parent Handbook.

What is Sexual Abuse of a Child?

Sexual Abuse is defined in the Family Code as any sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct with a child.

Warning Signs in Children and Adolescents of Possible Child Sexual Abuse

Any one sign doesn't mean that a child was sexually abused but the presence of several suggests that you begin asking questions and consider seeking help.

Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse

- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Bedwetting
- Nightmares or bad dreams
- Depression, irritability, or anger
- Low self-esteem, guilt, or shame
- Avoidance of people or places
- Sexual advances or "touching" inappropriately
- Sexual drawings
- Changes in socialization (social withdrawal or social isolation)
- Possible Physical signs of sexually transmitted diseases
- Evidence of injury to the genital area
- Pregnancy in a young girl
- Difficulty in sitting or walking
- Extreme fear of being alone with adults of a certain sex
- Sexual comments, behaviors or play
- Knowledge of sexual relations beyond what is expected for a child's age
- Sexual victimization of other children

What is Maltreatment of a Child?

Texas Law provides a definition of child abuse. According to Chapter 261 of the Family Code, child abuse is an act or omission that endangers or impairs a child's physical or emotional health development, Child abuse may take the form of physical or emotional injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical neglect, medical neglect or inadequate supervision.

Physical Abuse

Physical Abuse is physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child, or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child. The physical injury can result from punching, beating, shaking, kicking, biting, throwing, stabbing, hitting, burning, choking or otherwise harming a child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in a child's growth, development, or psychological functioning. It includes extreme forms of punishment such as confining a child in a dark closet, habitual scapegoating, belittling, and rejecting treatment for a child.

Neglect

Neglect is failure to provide for a child's basic needs necessary to sustain the life or health of a child. A child's parent, guardian, or conservator is responsible for either directly providing safe and adequate food, clothing, shelter, protection, medical care, and supervision of a child or arranging to have someone else provide these needs.

Possible Warning Signs of Abuse

Children who are abused might show physical signs or sudden changes in their behavior or school performance. These signs do not prove that children are being abused, but they could be a signal that the children or their family members need help.

Possible General Warning Signs of Abuse

- Nervous around adults or afraid of certain adults
- Reluctant to go home (e.g. coming to school early or staying late)
- Very passive and withdrawn or aggressive and disruptive
- Tired a lot, or they might complain of nightmares or not sleeping well
- Fearful and anxious

Possible Warning Signs of Physical Abuse

- Frequent injuries such as bruises, cuts, black eyes, or burns without adequate explanations
- Frequent complaints of pain without obvious injury
- Burns or bruises in unusual patterns that may indicate the use of an instrument or human bite; cigarette burns on any part of the body
- Lack of reaction to pain
- Aggressive, disruptive, and destructive behavior
- Passive, withdrawn, and emotionless behavior
- Fear of going home or seeing parents
- Injuries that appear after a child has not been seen for several days
- Unreasonable clothing that may hide injuries to arms or legs

Possible Warning Signs of Emotional Abuse

- Over compliance
- Low self-esteem
- Severe depression, anxiety, or aggression
- Difficulty making friends or doing things with other children
- Lagging in physical, emotional, and intellectual development

Possible Warning Signs of Neglect

- Obvious malnourishment
- Lack of personal cleanliness
- Torn or dirty clothing
- Stealing or begging for food
- Child unattended for long periods of time
- Need for glasses, dental care, or other medical attention

Possible Effects of Child Abuse

- Depression
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Eating Disorders
- Somatic Complaints
- Withdrawal
- Changes in sleeping and eating habits
- Running away and self-destructive behaviors
- Substance abuse
- Regressive behavior including bed-wetting after this stage has already passed
- Low self-esteem and poor social skills
- Distorted body image
- School related problems including learning difficulties
- Blurred boundaries and role confusion
- Guilt and/or shame
- Fear and/or anxiety
- Anger and/or anxiety
- Difficulties in interpersonal relationships
- Potential difficulties in parenting
- Vulnerability to further victimization

Child Sexual Abuse-Tips for Parents

If your child hints even in a vague way that sexual abuse has occurred, stay calm, don't make judgmental comments and encourage your child to talk freely. Here are some more suggestions for handling a child's disclosure of abuse:

- Assure your child that they did the right thing by telling
- Tell your child they are not to blame for the abuse
- Find out how child feels physically
- Be supportive of the child
- Don't exhibit strong angry emotions in the child's presence
- Don't be afraid to show affection toward your child
- Notify the police. Do not take the law into your own hands
- Seek help in coping with the incident
- Contact your local child abuse or rape crisis center. Seek support for both your child and yourself
- Remember that with the love and support of adults such as parents, teachers and counselors, children can recover and thrive after these traumatic incidents

Risk Reduction Tips for Parents

Education is the best way to reduce your child's risk of becoming a victim. Teach your child not to talk to strangers. Discuss the following lures with your child:

- The offering of gifts, candy, money or bribes
- Appealing to the child's sense of helpfulness such as asking for assistance in finding a lost dog
- Offers of rides on cars, motorcycles, or trail bikes
- Telling children that their parents were hurt and offering a ride to the hospital
- Telling the children that they were sent by their parents to pick them up
- Offering to fix bicycles, etc
- Parents should also teach their children about their bodies and about inappropriate and appropriate touching

Legal Obligation

Current law requires that all professionals such as teachers, doctors, nurses, or child daycare workers must make a verbal report within 48 hours. Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect is a misdemeanor. Reporting suspected child abuse to your principal or school counselor will not satisfy your obligation under the law. CCISD school board policy states a Notice of Employee Responsibilities for Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

How to Report Child Abuse

In Texas, anyone "having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect" MUST report the case immediately to a law enforcement agency or to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, under chapter 261 of the

Texas Family Code.

There are two ways to report abuse

- By Phone: 1-800-252-5400

The Texas Abuse Hotline is available 24 hours a day, and 365 days a year to call for suspected child abuse.

- By a Secure Internet Website: <http://www.txabusehotline.org>

Report on a secure website and get a response within 24 hours.

For life threatening or emergency situations, call local law enforcement agency or 911 immediately, then make a report to Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)

Websites:

https://www.oag.state.tx.us/ag_publications/txts/childabuse1.shtml#sexual <http://www.childwelfare.gov/survey/disclaimerAskme.cfm>
http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/commonproblems/child_abuse.html http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_protection/
https://www.oag.state.tx.us/AG_Publications/txts/child_abuse.shtml
<http://www.childhelp.org/pages/hotline-home>
<http://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/programs/types/sexualabuse.cfm> <http://www.helpandhope.org/signs-of-abuse.html>
<http://www.dcac.org>
<http://txabusehotline.org>

Resources:

Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA)
Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Texas Education Agency-
Prevention of Child Abuse
The Attorney General of Texas
Children's Advocacy Center of the Coastal Bend