



7 Pillars Career Academy

7 PILLAR CAREER ACADEMY

POLICY ON CHILD ABUSE

As educational professionals, we have a responsibility to provide the children we teach with the opportunity to obtain the best education possible; however, our responsibility does not end there. We also have a legal responsibility to protect the children we educate from child abuse, including physical injury, neglect, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation. Unfortunately, child abuse occurs all too frequently in today's society. In our capacities as educators and employees in school facilities, we may come into contact with an abused child. This policy is designed to provide guidelines for reporting suspected child abuse.

School personnel must be familiar with the following definitions:

“Abuse”: any willful act or threatened act that results in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm that causes, or is likely to cause, a child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be impaired.

“Neglect”: when a child is deprived of, or is allowed to be deprived of, necessary food, clothing, shelter, or medical treatment or a child is knowingly permitted to live in an environment wherein such deprivation or environment causes the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired or to be in danger of being significantly impaired.

“Abandonment”: a situation in which the parent or legal custodian of a child, or in the absence of a parent or legal custodian, the caregiver responsible for a child's welfare, makes no provision for a child's support and may also fail to communicate with a child; such situation is sufficient to evince a willful rejection of parental or custodial obligations.

Reporting Requirements

School teachers, administrators, and other employees are required by law to report any child abuse that they have reasonable cause to believe has occurred. If you have any belief, concern, or thought that you may have witnessed or heard about a situation possibly involving child abuse, then the following must occur:

1. The situation must be immediately to the school Head of School/Principal. [Note, in some jurisdictions, it may be required that a report is made first to a local or state child welfare office.]



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2. If you cannot contact the Head of Schools/Principal, contact the Assistant Principal, or similar leadership personnel.
3. The appropriate person will then discuss the situation with you to ensure that the proper reports are made to the appropriate legal agencies and authorities.
4. If the situation involves a school employee or occurred at the school, 7PCA's Office of General Counsel must be notified.

Investigations

When an 7PCA person believes that he or she has knowledge of child abuse, a child welfare agency or law enforcement office must be notified. When the proper authority commences an investigation, whether involving an 7PCA person or an outside person, the school shall refrain from conducting its own internal investigation in order to avoid interference and shall assist the investigators as requested by them and as advised by 7PCA's Office of General Counsel.

When a child abuse incident has occurred at the school, the Principal may, in order to make certain that a complete Incident Report is prepared, conduct meetings with staff members who reported or witnessed the abuse, or who otherwise have information about the incident. The school may conduct a full internal investigation only if an agency does not, and then, only to determine appropriate staff action or discipline, not to determine guilt or innocence of a crime.

During this period, the abused student must be removed from the situation and from all contact with the alleged abuser. The school must ensure that the student is offered counseling and support services from a local social service agency.

The alleged abuser must be removed from all contact with students while investigations are being conducted.

Protocols

Unfortunately, there are times that it may in fact be a school staff member that is suspected or accused of child abuse. When this situation arises, it may lead to misunderstandings, rumors, and grave concern among parents, children and staff. Parents may feel that they do not have all of the information they would like to have or that their concerns are



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not being taken seriously; children may feel as if they have done something wrong; and staff members may feel that they are being accused unjustly and without cause. In order to minimize

such reactions, 7PCA has developed this policy guideline, outlining the responsibilities of all concerned and the steps that should be taken in such a situation. This policy is based on the following considerations:

- to keep the children safe;
- to ensure that staff members are given the opportunity for a fair investigation and are not subjected to the ramifications of false accusations; and
- to ensure that parents' concerns are taken seriously and are acted upon promptly.

Other appropriate steps to be taken include the following:

1. Preventive measures must be taken to seek to prevent child abuse from occurring. Prior to hiring any staff member as either a full or part-time employee, a criminal record search must be conducted and references must be checked.
2. All teachers must be observed by school administration or supervisory personnel on a regular basis, and new teachers, more frequently than others.
3. School staff members are required to participate in child abuse awareness training within their first year of employment or to provide adequate information to indicate that they have had such training. In some instances, the training may be conducted via online presentations.
4. School administration and staff members are required by law to report to a local child welfare office or similar agency any incidents of child abuse that they have reasonable cause to believe have occurred. The welfare office conducts its own investigation of such incident reports, and provides a report of its investigation to the school administration.
5. A parent or staff member who suspects a school employee of abusing a child in any way must report the suspected abuse to the appropriate school administrator (preferably to the Principal). A summary of the suspected incident and/or all accusations must be submitted to the Principal in writing.
6. So that parents may feel informed, they should receive as much information from the school as is practicable under the circumstances of each incident. The school must take care not to interfere with ongoing investigations, not to violate privacy rights, and not to speculate.



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Communication with parents should be in school meetings, through email distributions and letters, and through school publications.

7. The privacy rights of all parties involved, and reasonable expectations of confidentiality, must be respected and protected at all times.

Acknowledging Receipt and Understanding of Child Abuse Policy

I acknowledge that I have received and read the Policy on Child Abuse. I understand that 7 Pillars Career Academy, will not tolerate any employee, volunteer, board member, or third party who commits child abuse. Disciplinary actions, including up to immediate termination, will be taken against those who are found to have committed such abuse.

I understand that it is my responsibility to abide by all rules contained in the Policy. I also understand how to report incidents of abuse as set forth in the Policy.

Printed Name

Signature

Date