

# SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 53 (Okanagan Similkameen)

## POLICY

No. F-12

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Adopted: June 20, 2012

Amended: May 22, 2019

Amended: April 24, 2024

### CHILD PROTECTION

#### Preamble:

The Board of Education believes that the health and welfare of a child is an important element which affects a student's success and experience at school.

#### Policy:

All employees of the school district will report cases of child abuse to the Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD) in accordance with the regulations in this policy and as outlined in the *BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect – for Service Providers (Handbook)*.

#### 1. Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to support a comprehensive, coordinated and collaborative approach for responding to child abuse and neglect by:

- a) providing child abuse prevention programs to students;
- b) providing school officials, employees and other persons working in schools with training in recognizing signs of child abuse and neglect;
- c) providing school officials, employees and other persons working in schools with direction and training on their legal obligation to report child abuse and neglect to a Child Welfare Worker under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*, to the police where the child is in immediate danger, and to school officials;
- d) requiring school officials to investigate and/or report to the police allegations of child abuse involving current and former school district employees, volunteers or contract service providers;
- e) establishing a child abuse/neglect reporting and investigation protocol with other responsible agencies, in order to identify the roles and responsibilities of school officials and personnel from other agencies, in responding to allegations of child abuse or neglect;
- f) providing assistance to victims of child abuse and neglect by counselling and making referrals to other agencies, as appropriate.

#### 2. Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse can take physical, sexual, or emotional forms, or may take the form of parental neglect. The descriptions of physical abuse, emotional abuse, emotional harm, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and neglect contained in the [B.C Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect \(2017\)](#) (pages 23-25 or later editions) should be applied for purposes of this policy.

### **3. Reporting and Investigation**

The Board acknowledges that responses to reports of child abuse and neglect may involve Board of Education personnel, child welfare and law enforcement agencies.

The Board supports a coordinated and collaborative response to reports of child abuse and neglect between the School District, the RCMP and the MCFD. The Board supports the development of an interagency child abuse/neglect protocol agreement that sets out roles and responsibilities for reporting and investigating child abuse/neglect issues and is consistent with the *School District Procedures for Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect*.

All school officials and employees must understand and respect their legal obligation to report child abuse and neglect to a child welfare worker where they have reason to believe that a child is in need of protection within the meaning of the [Child, Family and Community Service Act](#). They also need to comply with their reporting obligations as identified in the *School District Procedures for Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect*.

School officials must also understand their role in coordinating with responsible agencies and in investigating allegations of child abuse against school employees, in accordance with the Board's *Child Protection Reporting and Investigation Procedures* and the interagency child abuse/neglect protocol agreement.

### **4. Respecting the Rights of Accused Individuals**

The Board acknowledges that individuals under investigation regarding allegations of child abuse or neglect may have contractual or other legal rights during the investigative process. School District investigations will be conducted in a manner that is respectful of these rights.

### **5. Training and Education Programs**

The Board requires that school officials, employees, volunteers and contract service providers receive training on how to recognize signs of child abuse or neglect, how to respond to reports of child abuse or neglect, and standards of conduct for employees, volunteers and service providers governing their interactions with students.

The Superintendent or designate will ensure that appropriate opportunities to receive and/or review training are made available, on an annual basis, to school officials, employees, volunteers and contract service providers.

The Superintendent or designate will ensure that child abuse prevention programs are provided to students in accordance with the Ministry of Education's prescribed learning outcomes.

# SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 53 (Okanagan Similkameen)

## REGULATIONS

No. F-12

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Adopted: October 27, 2010

Amended: April 24, 2024

### CHILD PROTECTION

#### 1. Areas of Responsibility

- 1.1 The overall responsibility to coordinate and communicate the child abuse and neglect policy for School District No. 53 lies with the Superintendent of Schools or designate.
- 1.2 The responsibility for the planning of an investigation of alleged child abuse involving district employees lies with the RCMP, MCFD, and the Superintendent of Schools or designate.
- 1.3 The Principal of each school within the district is responsible for carrying out the School District No. 53 Child Protection Policy with that school. This includes ensuring that:
  - a. employees are aware of the importance of following district procedures concerning child abuse and neglect reporting;
  - b. employees receive information about child abuse and neglect and are familiar with the B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect;
  - c. employees are aware that under the terms of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*, they are immune from civil action in reporting suspected abuse cases based upon reasonable grounds;
  - d. teachers responsible for teaching the Physical and Health Education curriculum in child abuse prevention have received the appropriate in-service;
  - e. students receive instruction on child abuse prevention as part of the Physical and Health Education curricula.
- 1.4 The Principal or Director of Learning & Inquiry - Student Support Services is responsible for the development and review on a "Resource Package on Child Abuse and Neglect" for distribution to all schools.
- 1.5 The Principal or Director of Learning & Inquiry - Student Support Services shall ensure that all counsellors employed in the district receive training in understanding the dynamics of child abuse and neglect, and in strategies to help teachers provide appropriate support in the classroom for the victim of abuse or neglect.

#### 2. Definitions

The functional definitions listed below are included to aid in the clarification of a complex problem. Each abuse case must be viewed as unique and should always be considered within its own context, and not simply as fitting into one of the definitions described here. The prime consideration is, and must always remain, the child.

2.1 Physical abuse is any physical action by a person that harms, or could harm, a child or youth. It includes hitting, kicking, slapping, shaking, burning, pinching, biting, choking, throwing, shoving and whipping. It also includes using unreasonable force to punish children or youth or to prevent them from harming themselves or others.

2.2 Emotional harm is the most difficult type of harm to recognize. A child or youth is defined as emotionally harmed if they demonstrate severe:

- Anxiety;
- Depression;
- Withdrawal; or
- Self-destructive or aggressive behavior.

Reason to believe that a child or youth needs protection from being emotionally harmed may arise due to emotional abuse from a parent. It is best described as a pattern of harmful behaviour. It includes any attitude or action by an adult that is likely to have serious, negative emotional effects on a child or youth. Emotional abuse can include a pattern of:

- Scapegoating;
- Rejection;
- Verbal attacks on the child or youth;
- Threats;
- Insults; or
- Humiliation.

Emotional harm can also happen to a child or youth who is living in a situation where there is domestic violence by or towards a person who lives with the child or youth. Domestic violence may involve physical abuse, threats, verbal insults or psychological abuse such as stalking.

2.3 Sexual abuse happens when a person uses a child or youth for sexual purposes. It can include:

- Sexually touching a child or youth, or inviting a child or youth to touch;
- Intercourse (vaginal, oral or anal);
- Threatening sexual acts, obscene gestures or communications, or stalking;
- Sexual references (words or gestures) to the child's or youth's body or behaviour;
- Asking the child or youth to expose their body for sexual purposes;
- Exposing the child or youth to sexual activity or material; or
- Sexual aspects of organized or ritual abuse.

2.4 Sexual exploitation happens when a child or youth becomes involved in sexual activity, usually through manipulation or coercion, in exchange for things like money, drugs, food or shelter. Sexual activities include:

- Sexual acts;
- Sex for the purpose of entertainment;
- Escort or massage parlor services; and
- Appearing in pornographic images.

2.5 Neglect happens when a parent or guardian ignores or overlooks a child's or youth's basic needs – to the point where the child or youth is, or could be, harmed. Neglect

includes failing to provide a child or youth with food, shelter, basic health care, supervision, nurturing or protection from risks.

### 3. Reporting Procedures

- 3.1 DUTY TO REPORT. As noted in the Handbook, the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* requires that anyone who has reason to believe that a child or youth needs protection under section 13 of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* must promptly report the matter to a child welfare worker. (See page 41 for section 13.)
- 3.2 WHAT DOES “REASON TO BELIEVE” MEAN? In British Columbia, anyone with reason to believe a child or youth has been or is likely to be abused or neglected — and the child’s or youth’s parent is unwilling or unable to protect them — has a legal duty to report that concern to a child welfare worker. “Reason to believe” simply means that, based on what you have seen or information you have received, you believe a child or youth has been or is likely to be at risk. You do not need to be certain. It is the child welfare worker’s job to determine whether abuse or neglect has occurred or is likely to occur.
- 3.3 If a child or youth tells you they have been abused or neglected – or if you have a reason to believe a child or youth is being harmed – call a child welfare worker. Phone 1-800-663-9122 at any time of the day or night.
- You do not need proof. Just report what you know.
  - If you are not sure, or if you have questions, or if you think someone else has already made a report, or if you think a child welfare worker is already involved, you should still call.
  - If you are unsure that the parent is unable or unwilling to protect the child or youth you should report your concerns and the child welfare worker will assess the information further.
  - If the child or youth is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1 or your local police.
- 3.4 When making a report to a child welfare worker, it is helpful to include your name, your phone number and your relationship to the child or youth. But you can make an anonymous call if you prefer. The child welfare worker will want to know:
- The child’s or youth’s name and location;
  - Whether there are any immediate concerns about the child’s or youth’s safety;
  - Why you believe the child or youth is at risk;
  - Any statements or disclosures made by the child or youth;
  - The child’s or youth’s age and vulnerability;
  - Information about the family, parents and alleged offender;
  - Information about siblings or other children or youth who may be at risk;
  - Whether you know of any previous incidents involving, or concerns about the child or youth;
  - Information about other persons or agencies closely involved with the child, youth and/or family;
  - Information about other persons who may be witnesses or may have information about the child or youth;
  - Information about the nature of the child’s or youth’s disabilities, their mode of communication, and the name of a key support person; and
  - Any other relevant information concerning the child, youth and/or family, such as language or culture.

- 3.5 After You Make a Report: as a service provider, you may be well positioned to offer support or assistance to a child or youth who may have been abused or neglected. For example, the child welfare worker may ask you to assist by:
- Offering an appropriate place for the child welfare worker to interview the child or youth;
  - Being present during the interview to support the child or youth if requested;
  - Offering your support to the child, youth and/or family if they would like to talk with someone;
  - In situations involving youth who are on their own, letting the youth know you are a support for them.

Resources:

B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect (2017)

[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/public-safety/protecting-children/childabusepreventionhandbook\\_serviceprovider.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/public-safety/protecting-children/childabusepreventionhandbook_serviceprovider.pdf)

Child Abuse Prevention Handbook (2017)

[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/public-safety/protecting-children/childabusepreventionhandbook\\_generalpublicbooklet.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/public-safety/protecting-children/childabusepreventionhandbook_generalpublicbooklet.pdf)