

Guidelines for Handling Disclosures Made by Children/Youth in VIRTUAL Classroom Settings During COVID-19

Remember, any person who has reason to believe a child has been subjected to Abuse (including Sexual Abuse) or Neglect must make a report to the local office of the Department of Social Services or Law Enforcement as soon as possible.

For assistance in reporting, please contact the Office of Child and Youth Protection. Principals and School Employees may reach the Director at her cell phone number: 443 813 2138.

Evidence suggests that very few allegations are false allegations; therefore, every disclosure should be taken seriously. If a child discloses abuse in a classroom setting:

- Remain calm.
- Tell the child that what he/she is sharing is important.
- *DURING THIS COVID-19 CRISIS REQUIRING CLASSES TO OCCUR VIRTUALLY, DELAY IN REPORTING CAN BE ESPECIALLY DANGEROUS. YOU ARE UNLIKELY TO HAVE A CHANCE TO SPEAK TO THE CHILD PRIVATELY, SINCE HE/SHE IS LIKELY AT HOME WITH FAMILY. DO NOT LET THIS DETER YOU FROM MAKING A REPORT IF YOU HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE A CHILD IS BEING HARMED.*
- *You may need to calmly cut class session short so that the entire class does not hear a disclosure and so that you can make a report to civil authorities/law enforcement ASAP.*

Inquire but Do Not Investigate

- Your job is NOT to investigate the abuse, but if possible, find out the minimal amount of information necessary to determine whether a report needs to be made.
- Remember not to force a child to talk about abuse.

Report

- Because children are isolated, it is more important than ever not to delay contacting the local Department of Child Protective Services and/or local Police Department to report the allegation. Report the allegation to the jurisdiction where the abuse allegedly occurred. When making a report, always write down the name of the intake worker or Police Officer with whom you spoke. You will need to follow up in writing within 48 hours. If you find that the CPS intake worker is not helpful, do not be afraid to ask to speak with their supervisor.
- Let CPS and/or the Police know who is at home with the child.
- Remember that individuals who make reports of child abuse in good faith are immune from civil liability.

- Inform the administrator on site that you are making a report. However, it is the responsibility of the individual to whom the disclosure was made to call CPS.
- If the allegation involves church personnel, also report the concern to the church administration immediately.
- If the child discloses abuse but does not name an offender, or if the alleged offender is a family member, **NEVER** call the primary family member/caregiver before calling CPS. Be sure to inform the CPS intake worker if the situation is urgent. If you have questions as to whether or not to call the parents, discuss the situation with the CPS intake worker but do not make the decision on your own. A poor decision may interfere with an investigation and may place a child in danger.
- *DURING THIS COVID-19 CRISIS REQUIRING CLASSES TO OCCUR VIRTUALLY, YOU MAY NOT HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TO THE CHILD PRIVATELY. THIS SHOULD NOT CAUSE A FAILURE TO REPORT TO CIVIL AUTHORITIES. THE OFFICE OF CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION WILL ASSIST YOU IN MAKING A REPORT.*