

Descriptor Term:
CHILD ABUSE – REPORTS AND INVESTIGATION

Descriptor Code:
4.4900/7.1550

Legal References: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. 1232g; G.S. 7B-101, -301, -302, -309, -3100; 8-53.4; 14-318.2; 115C-400, -402

Cross References: 4.8000 Student Records

The board of education supports all employees who in good faith make a report of suspected child abuse or neglect, dependency or death as a result of maltreatment.

Any school employee who knows or has cause to suspect child abuse, neglect, dependency or death as a result of maltreatment is legally required to report the case of the child to the director of social services. The employee also shall immediately report the case to the principal.

Any doubt about reporting a suspected situation must be resolved in favor of reporting and the report must be made immediately. A school employee is immune by statute from any civil and/or criminal liability when reporting in good faith suspected child abuse, neglect, dependency or death as a result of maltreatment. Failure on the part of any school employee to report may result in disciplinary action being brought against the employee by the school system or civil action under the law.

The principal may establish a contact person in the school to act as a liaison with the department of social services. All employees shall cooperate fully with the department of social services in its investigation of suspected child abuse, neglect, dependency or death as a result of maltreatment. Employees shall permit the child to be interviewed by the department of social services on school campuses during school hours and shall provide the department of social services with confidential information, so long as the disclosure does not violate state or federal law. Employees shall maintain as confidential any confidential information disclosed by the department of social services to the employee unless disclosure of such confidential information is necessary for purposes directly connected with carrying out the responsibilities of the school system or the employee.

Upon request and to the extent permitted by law, school system employees shall share with other agencies designated in G.S. 7B-3100 (a) information that is relevant to:

1. any assessment by the department of social services of a report of child abuse, neglect, dependency or death as a result of maltreatment;
2. the provision or arrangement of protective services in a child abuse, neglect or dependency case by the department of social services; or
3. any case in which a petition is filed alleging that a juvenile is abused, neglected, dependent undisciplined or delinquent.

School system employees and the designated agencies must continue to share such information until the protective services case is closed by the department of social services or, if a petition is filed, until the juvenile is no longer subject to the jurisdiction of juvenile court.

Agencies designated in G.S. 7B-3100 (a) may include:

1. local mental health agencies;
2. local health departments;

3. local departments of social services;
4. local law enforcement agencies;
5. local school administrative units;
6. the local district attorney's office;
7. the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and
6. the Office of Guardian ad Litem Services of the Administrative Office of the Courts.

The superintendent shall develop any necessary procedures for reporting suspected child abuse, neglect, dependency or death as a result of maltreatment for sharing information with designated agencies and for cooperating with investigations by the department of social services.

The board encourages school officials to provide staff development opportunities related to identifying and reporting child abuse, neglect, dependency or death as a result of maltreatment.