

## **Plan for Addressing Sexual Abuse and Other Maltreatment of Students**

### **What is Sexual Abuse of a Child?**

The Texas Family Code defines “sexual abuse” as any sexual conduct harmful to a child’s mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as, in certain circumstances, failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct harmful to a child.

### **What is Other Maltreatment of a Child?**

Under state law, “other maltreatment” of a child includes “abuse” or “neglect,” as defined by Texas Family Code sections 261.001 and 261.401.

### **Reporting Obligation**

Anyone who suspects that a child has been or may be abused or neglected has a legal responsibility, under state law, for reporting the suspected abuse or neglect to law enforcement or to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (“DFPS”). Reports may be made by contacting one of the following:

- Texas Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400 or, in non-emergency situations only, <http://www.txabusehotline.org>.
- [REDACTED] Local Police Department at Phone Number [REDACTED].
- Call 911 for emergency situations.

The School has established the following Plan for Addressing Sexual Abuse of Children (the “Plan”). The Plan may be accessed on the School’s website, and copies of the plan are also available at the Principal’s office and central administrative office.

### **Methods for Increasing Awareness Regarding Sexual Abuse or Other Maltreatment of Children**

#### *For Teachers*

The school annually trains teachers in all content areas addressed in the Plan. Training will include contents of board policy and is provided by campus staff, administrative staff, or outside agencies as determined by the campus administration.

#### *For Students*

School counseling staff will address issues to increase awareness regarding sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children and anti-victimization programs with age appropriate conversation and materials no less than once per [school year/semester]. These discussions will occur in classroom group settings for all students.

#### *For Parents*

Parents must be aware of warning signs indicating that their child may have been or is being sexually abused or otherwise maltreated. A child who has experienced sexual abuse or other maltreatment should be encouraged to seek out a trusted adult. Be aware, as a parent or other trusted adult, that evidence of sexual abuse or other maltreatment may be more indirect than disclosures or signs of physical abuse. It is important to remain calm and comforting if your child, or another child, confides in you. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing in coming to you.

The fact that the abuser is a parent or other family member does not remove your obligation to protect the child. Parents who permit their child to remain in a situation where he or she may be injured or abused may also be subject to prosecution for child abuse. And, if you are frightened for your own safety or that of your child, you should call 911 or 1-800-252-5400.

Also remember that parents are legally responsible for the care of their children and must provide their children with safe and adequate food, clothing, shelter, protection, medical care and supervision, or arrange for someone else to provide these things. Failure to do so may be considered neglect.

The Principal or designee will provide information regarding counseling options available in your area for you and your child if your child is a victim of sexual abuse or other maltreatment. DFPS also provides early abuse intervention through counseling programs. The [REDACTED] County location may be contacted at [REDACTED]. Services available in your county can be accessed at the following web address:

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/prevention\\_and\\_early\\_intervention/programs\\_available\\_in\\_your\\_county/default.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/prevention_and_early_intervention/programs_available_in_your_county/default.asp).

These websites are also helpful:

- Texas Education Agency – Prevention of Child Abuse Overview:  
<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2820>
- Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs:  
<http://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/programs/types/sexualabuse.cfm>
- Promoting Healthy Families in Your Neighborhood:  
[http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/res\\_packet\\_2008/](http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/res_packet_2008/)
- Signs of Child Abuse:  
[http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/commonproblems/child\\_abuse.html](http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/commonproblems/child_abuse.html)
- DFPS – How to Stop Child Abuse; Texas Statutes:  
[http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/commonproblems/child\\_abuse.html](http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/commonproblems/child_abuse.html)
- DFPS – How to Report Child Abuse or Neglect:  
[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Contact\\_us/report\\_abuse.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Contact_us/report_abuse.asp)
- Texas Attorney General – What Can We Do About Child Abuse?  
[https://www.oag.state.tx.us/AG\\_Publications/txts/child\\_abuse.shtml](https://www.oag.state.tx.us/AG_Publications/txts/child_abuse.shtml)
- Prevent Child Abuse.org – Texas Chapter:  
<http://www.preventchildabuse.org/chapters/statecontact.cfm?stateabbrev=tx>
- Texas Council on Family Violence – Abuse Prevention Links:  
<http://www.tcfv.org/>

### **Likely Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse or Other Maltreatment**

Psychological and behavioral signs of possible sexual abuse may include:

- Nightmares, sleep problems, extreme fears without an obvious explanation.
- Sudden or unexplained personality changes; becoming withdrawn, angry, moody, clingy, “checking out” or showing significant changes in eating habits.
- Depression or irritability.
- An older child behaving like a young child, for example, bedwetting or thumb-sucking.
- Developing fear of certain places or resisting being alone with an adult or young person for unknown reasons.

- Resistance to routine bathing, toileting, or removing clothes, even in appropriate situations.
- Play, writing, drawings, or dreams of sexual or frightening images.
- Refusal to talk about a secret he or she has with an adult or older child.
- Leaving clues that seem likely to provoke a discussion about sexual issues.
- Using new or adult words for body parts.
- Engaging in adult-like sexual activities with toys, objects or other children.
- Developing special relationships with older friends that may include unexplained money, gifts, or privileges.
- Intentionally harming him or herself, for example, drug/alcohol use, cutting, burring, running away, and sexual promiscuity.
- Thinking of self or body as repulsive, dirty, or bad.
- Becoming increasingly secretive about Internet or telephone use.

Physical symptoms of possible sexual abuse or other maltreatment include:

- Stomachaches or illness, often with no identifiable reason.
- Difficulty in walking or sitting.
- Stained or bloody underwear.
- Genital or rectal pain, itching, swelling, redness, or discharge.
- Bruises or other injuries in the genital or rectal area.
- Unexplained soreness, pain or bruises around the mouth, sexually transmitted disease, or pregnancy.

Any one sign does not necessarily mean that a child has been sexually abused or maltreated, but the presence of several signs is the time you should begin asking questions and seeking help. Signs often first emerge at other times of stress, such as during a divorce, death of a family member or pet, problems at school or with friends, or other traumatic or anxiety-inducing events.

#### **Actions That a Child Who is a Victim of Sexual Abuse or Other Maltreatment Should Take**

During student awareness sessions concerning sexual abuse and other maltreatment issues, students will be encouraged to tell a trusted adult in a private and confidential conversation if they have been a victim of sexual abuse or have been in situations that make them feel uncomfortable in any way. School employees are trained to take appropriate actions to help the child obtain assistance and to follow proper reporting procedures. Older students will also be provided with local crisis hotline numbers to obtain assistance.

#### **Available Counseling Options**

*[Insert list of counseling providers in the area and a brief description of the services offered. DFPS maintains a database of providers at [http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/prevention\\_and\\_early\\_intervention/programs\\_available\\_in\\_your\\_county/default.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/prevention_and_early_intervention/programs_available_in_your_county/default.asp)]*