

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Board of Education
Upper Marlboro, Maryland

0127
Policy No.

BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY

BASIC COMMITMENTS

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

The Board of Education is committed to ensuring that all employees, contractors and volunteers are informed of the obligation to report suspected child abuse, be it physical, sexual, mental injury, or child neglect in accordance with Maryland law, and of the consequences for failing to do so. Our priority is to provide a quality education to all students in a safe and secure environment, which requires those individuals employed or engaged in the PGCPSS community to recognize and report any suspicious or inappropriate behavior towards students in our care.

Maryland State law mandates the direct reporting of suspected child abuse, be it physical, sexual, mental injury or child neglect, by every professional employee of any school who has reason to believe that a child has been abused by a parent, legal guardian or custodian of a child under the age of 18 years. (Maryland Code, Family Law Article §5-701; COMAR 07.02.07.04.) By adoption of this policy, we extend this reporting obligation to all employees, contractors, and volunteers who work with the school system.

Any PGCPSS employee, contractor or volunteer must report suspected child abuse or neglect: (1) immediately, by oral report to Child Protective Services; and (2) following the oral report, in writing, within 48 hours of the contact that revealed the suspected abuse or neglect. Where school personnel, contractors or volunteers are unsure whether abuse or neglect has taken place, the employee, contractor or volunteer should promptly discuss the situation with the local Department of Social Services.

Formal investigation procedures - distinct from any personnel or labor relations procedures - are the responsibility of Child Protective Services and law enforcement agencies to which the report is made. Maryland law provides immunity from civil liability or criminal penalty for any individual who reports suspected abuse or neglect in good faith, or who participates in any investigation or judicial proceeding resulting from the report.

Administrative Procedures

Consistent with the laws of the State of Maryland, and our commitment to safeguard the students of our school system, the Chief Executive Officer is directed to develop and/or update the appropriate administrative procedures and protocols to include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Definitions of suspected physical abuse, sexual abuse, mental injury or neglect of a child;
2. Reporting procedures that must be followed when an employee, volunteer or contractor observes or suspects child abuse or neglect, including the requirement to immediately provide an oral report to Child Protective Services;
3. Information that must be maintained by the appropriate office in a confidential database of all alleged and confirmed cases of child abuse by employees, volunteers or contractors – disaggregated by name, school and school year – with the final disposition of all appeals and criminal proceedings duly noted; and
4. Consequences for failing to provide a timely report to Child Protective Services, including:
 - a. For employees, disciplinary action up to termination and a request to the State Superintendent of Schools to suspend or revoke the employee's professional certificate, as appropriate; and
 - b. For contractors and volunteers, removal or disqualification from being selected for future contracts and school volunteering, respectively.

See also: Maryland Code, Family Law Article §5-701; COMAR 07.02.07.04; Board Policy 0106; Administrative Procedure 4216.6; Administrative Procedure 5145

Policy Adopted
07/19/16