

Orange Windsor Supervisory Union

Royalton School District

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect children whose health and welfare may be jeopardized by abuse or neglect and to ensure that school district employees meet their legal reporting obligations under 33 V.S.A. §4913. It is further the purpose of this policy to make clear to school district employees that it is not their role to be investigator, judge and jury in cases of suspected abuse or neglect. Rather, it is the role of the school district employees to be faithful and timely reporters of suspected abuse or neglect so that allegations can be brought to the attention of objective, trained and experienced investigators.

General Policy

Any school district employee, regardless of whether he or she is a “mandated reporter,” shall report suspected child abuse or neglect to the building principal or his or her designee. If the building principal or designee is the person suspected of child abuse, the report shall be made to the superintendent of schools. Any school district employee who is a “mandated reporter,” in addition to reporting such suspected abuse or neglect to the principal, principal’s designee or superintendent, shall immediately report the suspected abuse or neglect to the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS). Upon receiving a report, the principal, principal’s designee or the superintendent, shall remind the reporter of his or her legal responsibility to further report immediately to SRS.

Definitions

“Mandated reporter” means a school principal, school teacher, school guidance counselor, school librarian, school nurse, and other health care provider.

“Immediately” means as soon as the abuse or neglect is suspected but in no case later than 24 hours after such abuse or neglect is suspected.

“Suspected” means the school district employee has reasonable cause to believe such abuse or neglect may have occurred. This does not mean that the employee must be convinced that the abuse or neglect occurred, only that it might have occurred. Any doubts the employee may have shall be resolved in favor of reporting the suspicion. Further, the employee shall not refrain from making a report under this policy for the reason that there may be retaliation against the child, the employee has a confidential relationship with the child, or for any other reason no matter how well-intentioned.

“Report” means an oral and/or written description of the suspected abuse or neglect. If the report is made orally, the reporter should make a written notation of when and to whom the report was made

and when the report was made. A copy of this notation shall be submitted to the principal. A report made to SRS shall contain the following:

1. The name and address of the reporter
2. The name and address, if known, of the child and the child's parents or other persons responsible for the child's care
3. The age of the child
4. The nature and extent of the child's injuries together with any evidence of previous abuse or neglect of the child or the child's siblings
5. Any other information the reporter believes might be helpful

"Abused or neglected child" means a child under the age of eighteen whose physical or mental health or welfare is harmed or threatened with harm by the acts or omissions of the child's parents or other individual who may be responsible for the child's welfare (e.g. guardian, foster parent, stepparent, teacher, etc.) or in the case of sexual abuse, any individual. Harm can be caused by the actual infliction of harm, by allowing such harm to occur, by failing to provide the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter or health care, or by abandonment of the child.

"Sexual abuse" means any act by a person involving sexual molestation or exploitation of a child. Sexual abuse also includes the aiding, abetting, counseling, hiring, or procuring of a child to perform or participate in any photograph, motion picture, exhibition, show, representation, or other presentation which, in whole or in part, depicts sexual conduct, sexual excitement or sadomasochistic abuse involving a child. Sexual abuse may also be sexual harassment. However, following the school district's policy on sexual harassment does not fulfill a mandatory reporter's legal responsibility under the SRS reporting law. Suspected sexual abuse must be reported to SRS

Training

All staff shall receive training in reporting suspected child abuse and neglect. Such training shall include assistance in recognizing the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect

Availability of Policy

This policy shall be provided each year to the parents of students in attendance and to each employee of the school district.

Date Reviewed: 10-16-01, 11-6-01, 11-27-01

Date Warned: 12-6-01

Date Adopted: 12-18-01

Legal Reference(s): 33 V.S.A. §4911, et. seq.

Cross Reference: Unlawful Harassment