

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

Effective: August 17, 2015

All adults have a moral responsibility to keep children including “vulnerable adults”^{*} safe. All individuals employed by a school district or b) contracted and paid by a school district, including any school superintendent, school principal, , school teacher, student teacher, school librarian, and school counselor are *mandated reporters*. They are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect; and abuse, neglect and exploitation of “vulnerable adults”.

While WSSU has a recommended procedure for reporting, individual mandated reporters are legally required to report suspected child abuse and neglect to FSD within 24 hours. Each mandated reporter is responsible for making a report on time and is liable if one is not made. No one, including supervisors and managers, may prevent a mandated reporter from making a report within the required timeframe.

WSSU abuse reporting process in each school is designed to assist employees in meeting their reporting responsibilities. The process includes a Reporting Team composed of the principal, an assistant principal at the middle/high school, nurse(s), school guidance counselor(s) and when available the student assistance professional (SAP).

- If any school employee reasonably suspects a child/”vulnerable adult” is being abused or neglected or exploited, he or she should report it immediately to one of the members of the team listed above.
- The available team representatives will meet and collectively review the situation. The team will include other employees in gathering appropriate information as needed.
- It is not the job of the team or individual to conduct an investigation, or to come to a conclusion that abuse or neglect occurred, or to weigh the consequences to the educator or the student of reporting. However, the Reporting Team can assist in determining if they reasonably suspect child abuse or neglect and report.
- If the individual or team reasonably suspects child abuse or neglect, a designee will report it to Vermont’s Child Protection Line within 24 hours of the time information was first received or observed. The team may share additional information with the reporter or with other school employees, if sharing such information is appropriate and compliant with confidentiality laws. (The need to know is the main criterion.)
- “Reasonably suspects abuse or neglect of a child” means that you need only suspect that abuse or neglect might have taken place to make a report. If more than one individual within an organization needs to make a report about the same information or incident, FSD strongly recommends they report as a group—by phone or in writing. The same 24-hour limit applies.
- The best way to ensure a staff or team has met their legal responsibility is by having everyone with direct knowledge of the information in the room together when the report is made. The names of everyone who is in the room making the report should be clearly communicated to FSD.
- Another option is for one person to draft a written report and have everyone involved sign it.
- Whether to inform families of a report is determined by the team or FSD will be contacted for advice. In some cases, informing the family, could endanger the student and hinder response.

It is an individual’s or the team’s responsibility to report suspected abuse or neglect and to let appropriate state investigators make a final determination. The reporter need only reasonably suspect that abuse or neglect might have occurred. Any doubts that the team or reporter may have should be resolved in favor of reporting the possible abuse of neglect. *When in doubt, report!*

These procedures ensure that school officials with a need to know about student circumstances are informed and meaningfully involved. Those persons are also in the best position to be able to gather pertinent information and to ensure that the student gets support at school. The intent of these procedures is to assist reporting individuals.

Vermont Child Protection Line 1-800-649-5285 (24/7)

(802) 241-3301 FAX for written reporting

Dial 911 if a child is in immediate danger, then call FSD to report.

The Child Protection Line is run by the Family Services Division of the Department for Children & Families (FSD), which is part of the Agency of Human Resources.

Reports of Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of Vulnerable Adults are made to the Commissioner of DIAL
1-800-564-1612

**Vulnerable Adults- a person over the age of 18 with some form of disability.*