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Category: Safety and Wellness

Child Abuse

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

CAPE believes that children, as a matter of right, should be safe, secure and cared for adequately. While parents have primary responsibility to ensure the welfare of their children, the CAPE Charter Board and staff have a particular responsibility beyond that of the general public. Therefore, it is the obligation of all CAPE staff to be guided by the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act with respect to child abuse and to report any suspected cases to Southeast Alberta Child and Family Services and/or the Medicine Hat City Police.

PURPOSE

Any person who has reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a child is in need of intervention due to abuse or neglect has a legal duty under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act to promptly report the matter to Southeast Alberta Child and Family Services.

It is not up to an individual to determine if the disclosure or indicators of abuse are sufficient evidence for an investigation. That decision is made by the intake worker in consultation with the supervisor. The obligation to report is absolute.

The obligation to report is not discharged until the individual who has observed the indicators of abuse has reported directly to Southeast Alberta Child and Family Services.

DEFINITIONS

1. Abuse - sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological, or physical. It can also take the form of harassment or neglect.
2. Neglect - a form of abuse, an act of caregivers (e.g., parents) that results in depriving a child of their basic needs, such as the failure to provide adequate supervision, health care, clothing, or housing, as well as other physical, emotional, social, educational, and safety needs.
3. Investigation - learn if a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, reduce the risk and increase the safety of the child, determine if a criminal action has occurred, and determine the need for services to support the family.

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4. Indicator - an alert or warning that you need to give more attention to a situation. Indicators of abuse can be obvious: for example, a child with the mark of a belt showing on his or her back or burns in the shape of an iron or cigarette tip gives clear support for reasonable cause to suspect child abuse.
5. Disclosure - a victim's direct or indirect information about abuse. Most likely a disclosure will be indirect, which can mean the child does not share the details of the abuse without being prompted, or does so in a roundabout way.

PROCEDURE

Deciding to Report – Responding to a Disclosure

6. A disclosure made by a child to an individual must be recorded in writing by that individual using the child's own words. The record should include observed facts such as the child's behaviour, actions, comments, persons present at the time of the incident and physical marks. The child's parent/guardians should not be contacted.
7. A principal or any other person cannot direct an individual not to make a report.

Making a Report

8. Reports are to be made to the Southeast Alberta Child and Family Services.
9. When making the report, ask for and record the intake worker's name and the file number for your call.

Confidentiality/Record Keeping

10. All staff are expected to respect the child and family's right to **privacy** throughout the reporting and investigation procedures.
11. Notes, reports or written observations regarding alleged abuse or neglect are to be kept separate from the student's school record and any other record accessible to other staff. Any record made regarding alleged or reported abuse should be kept secure and disclosed only to police or a caseworker during the investigation process. Reports should be kept by the school counsellor.

Child, Youth and Family Enhancement interviewing on School Property

12. A caseworker may, during the course of an investigation, request permission from the principal to interview the child on school premises. School personnel are expected to cooperate with the request. (AP - Interview by Police, Public Health and Child and Family Services)

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13. The caseworker will ask, in the presence of a school staff member, if the child wishes a staff member to be present during the interview. Unless agreed to by the child and the caseworker, school personnel should not participate in the interview. Prior to leaving the school, the caseworker should notify the principal (or designate) of the plan for the child. The caseworker will notify the parents/guardian of the interview.
14. Follow-up Communication between Southeast Alberta Child and Family Services and CAPE Staff Southeast Alberta Child and Family Services should ensure the school principal (or designate) will be given any necessary information needed to provide education services to children involved in their services.

References:

CAPE Policy Manual, Section 9

Education Act

Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act Human Rights Act

Criminal Code of Canada

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Teachers' Code of Professional Conduct

CAPE Codes of Conduct

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