

POLICY #9611

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

1. PHILOSOPHY

The Surrey Board of Education believes that the problem of child abuse and neglect can be partly addressed by a comprehensive program that seeks to prevent abuse through the education of the children, parents and employees of the district.

The board also recognizes the need to provide a safe learning environment for children, one in which the children, and the adults who work with them, must operate in a climate of trust, mutual respect and understanding.

2. POLICY GOALS

The major commitment to reduce or prevent child abuse and neglect can be achieved by reaching the following goals:

- a) The education of all students in preventative measures to decrease the possibility of child abuse and neglect.
- b) The training of school district employees in recognizing signs of child abuse and neglect.
- c) The training of school district employees in the correct reporting procedures of child abuse and neglect.
- d) Increase the understanding of child abuse and neglect issues with parents and other members of the community.
- e) The effective coordination of all agencies regarding child abuse and neglect reporting, prevention training, investigation and treatment programs.
- f) The reporting of all suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to the Ministry for Children and Family Development according to the agreed Trilateral Protocol and accompanying regulations.
- g) The assistance to victims of child abuse and neglect by appropriate counselling, and any necessary referrals to outside agencies; and
- h) The maintenance of the protection of children without the violation of the rights of any other individual.

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3. COOPERATION OF AGENCIES

The board understands that the issue of child abuse and neglect must involve other agencies such as the Ministry for Children and Family Development and the R.C.M.P. and that the interests of all children are best served by the efficient cooperation of all such agencies concerned.

The board supports effective communication and coordination of response and intervention between, the School district, Surrey R.C.M.P. and the Surrey office of the Ministry of Children and Family Development. The board recognizes the collaboratively developed Trilateral Protocol Agreement responding to child abuse and neglect, as well as referenced documents and resources identified in [Regulation 9611.1 – Child Abuse Prevention](#). These documents should be consulted for more comprehensive information.

4. UNDERSTANDING AND RESPECTING THE LAWS

The board realizes that the laws governing the area of child abuse are designed for the protection of children and those laws must be understood and respected by all school district officials and employees. (N.B. The Child, Family and Community Service Act, The School Act, The Criminal Code of Canada.)

5. LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY TO REPORT

The board recognizes that it is the legal responsibility of every person who has **reason to believe** that a child has been or is likely to be physically harmed, sexually abused or sexually exploited, or needs protection due to specific circumstances outlined in *The Child, Family and Community Service Act*, to report the matter to a Child Protection Social Worker.

“Reason to believe” above simply means that, based on what you have seen or information you have received, you believe a child has been or is likely to be at risk. You do not have to be certain. It is the child welfare worker’s job to determine whether abuse or neglect has occurred or is likely to occur.

The B.C. Handbook for *Action on Child Abuse and Neglect* (2007), pg. 40.

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6. PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS

The board further recognizes that the rights of any individual under investigation must be protected, not only for the sake of the alleged abuser, but also for the maintenance of the integrity of the investigation. It must be remembered that total confidentiality is the only safeguard for the right of the victim and the individual under investigation.

7. COMMUNITY

The issue of child abuse has emotional, social and political complexities. It directly involves the family and indirectly the larger community. It is essential, therefore, that the community should be actively involved in the development and implementation of programs designed to prevent child abuse and neglect. It is also essential that the community in general, and families in particular, recognize that the prevention of child abuse and neglect is a responsibility of every community member, not just those within the school system.

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