

SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

The Ohio General Assembly has granted legal immunity for those persons reporting suspected cases of child abuse. Such persons must immediately report any and all suspected cases of child abuse.

- A. Employees of the Board of Education who are acting in an official or professional capacity who know or have reasonable cause to suspect based on the facts that would cause a reasonable person in a similar position to suspect that a child less than eighteen (18) years of age or any developmentally disabled; or physically impaired child under twenty-one (21) years of age has suffered or faces the threat of suffering a physical or mental wound, injury, disability or condition of such a nature as to reasonably indicate abuse or neglect of such child shall immediately report the knowledge or reasonable cause to suspect to the public children's services agency or a peace officer in the county in which the child resides or in which the abuse or neglect is occurring or has occurred. Such reports shall be made forthwith by telephone or in person and shall be followed by a written report, if requested. Such report shall contain:
 - 1. The name and address of the child and his parents or person or persons having custody of such child, if known;
 - 2. The child's age and the nature and extent of the child's injuries, abuse, or neglect, that is known or reasonably suspected or believed, as applicable, to exist, including any evidence of previous injuries, abuse, or neglect;
 - 3. Any other information which might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injury, abuse, or neglect that is known or reasonably suspected or believed as applicable, to have occurred or of the threat of injury, abuse, or neglect that is known or reasonably suspected or believed, as applicable, to exist; and
 - 4. A copy of the above-listed report items shall be forwarded to the Superintendent and building principal.
- B. The building principal shall be notified immediately of any suspected child abuse or neglect. The building principal or designee will assist in the notification of proper authorities, the preparation of the written report, if required, and such other matters as may be necessary.
- C. Anyone or any hospital, institution, school, health department or agency participating in the making of such reports, or anyone participating in a judicial proceeding resulting from such report shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed as a result of such actions.

Each person employed by the Board to work as a nurse, teacher, counselor, school psychologist or administrator shall complete at least four hours of in-service training in the prevention of child abuse, violence, and including human trafficking content; substance abuse; the promotion of positive youth development; and school safety and violence prevention within two years of commencing employment with the District and every five years thereafter. The in-service training shall incorporate training on the Board Policy on Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying.

In the course of conducting child abuse investigations and in the absence of a court order or subpoena directing otherwise, a District administrator shall be present for any interviews conducted by county children services officials and/or municipal or county peace officers while under the supervision of the school.

Sexual Grooming

Grooming is the process of cultivating trust with a victim and gradually introducing inappropriate behaviors until reaching the point where it is possible to perpetrate a crime, including a sex crime, against the victim. Sexual grooming erodes a victim's boundaries to physical touch and desensitizes him/her to sexual matters and sexual conduct. Grooming can also occur through telephonic and online means. Offenders may use information gained from social networking sites to build rapport, assess the potential risks in targeting a specific child, and to communicate with and progressively groom their victim.

The Board believes that grooming constitutes a threat of a physical or mental wound, injury, disability, or condition of such a nature as to reasonably indicate abuse or neglect of the subject child. Therefore, employees of the Board who know or have reasonable cause to suspect, based on the facts that would cause a reasonable person in a similar position to suspect, that a fellow employee or another adult is engaged in the process of grooming a student must immediately report such behavior to the agency or officer responsible for children services functions in the county in which the child resides, and to the relevant building principal.

LEGAL REFS: O.R.C. §§ 2151.421; 3319.073

Adopted: September 9, 2019