
CHILD PROTECTION

Child abuse and neglect is a growing concern in schools throughout the world. Child abuse and neglect is a violation of children's human rights and an obstacle to their education and development.

Schools hold a particular institutional role in society to protect children and to insure all children are afforded a safe and secure environment in which to grow and develop. Schools and educators, having the opportunity to observe and interact with children over a long period of time, are in a unique position to identify children who need help and protection. As such, schools and educators have a professional and ethical obligation to identify children who are in need of help and protection and to take steps to ensure that the child and family avail of the services needed to remedy any situation that constitutes child abuse or neglect.

All staff employed at AIS-R must report suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect whenever the staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect. Reporting and follow through of all suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect shall proceed in accordance with administrative regulations respective to this policy. Furthermore, cases of suspected child abuse and neglect may be reported to appropriate employment sponsor, to the respective embassy in Riyadh, to the appropriate child protection agency in the home country, and/or local authorities.

American International School - Riyadh endorses the Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which the host country Saudi Arabia is a signatory and seeks to be a safe haven for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives. AIS-R will make child protection a part of every aspect of the school. As such, AIS-R will distribute this policy annually to all parents, will communicate this policy annually to students, will provide annual training for all staff and will make every effort to implement hiring practices to ensure the safety of children. In the case of a staff member reported as an alleged offender, AIS-R will conduct a full investigation following carefully designed course of due process.

Adopted: 27 May 2003

Reviewed: 15 May, 2005

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Procedures For Reporting Suspected Cases Of Child Abuse Or Neglect:

Where there is cause to suspect an incident of child abuse or neglect, or a pattern of behavior that indicates a child may be subject to abuse or neglect, it is the responsibility of the staff member to report this suspected incident to the building principal of the school division in which the child is enrolled. It is the responsibility of the principal to inform the superintendent of the suspected case of child abuse and neglect.

The principal will form a child abuse response team to include the referring teacher, school nurse and counselor and will take initial steps to gather information regarding the matter. In all cases, follow up activities will be conducted in a manner to insure information is documented concisely and factually and that strict confidentiality is maintained.

Procedures For Addressing Sexual And Physical Abuse:

Based on the information we have acquired, a plan of action is developed to assist the child. Actions that have taken place in the past have involved:

- I. Interviews between the child and counselor to attempt to gain more information. Depending upon the age of the child these interview may include drawing pictures, play with dolls and conversation with the child in an attempt to elicit more information as to what may or may not have occurred.
 - II. Ongoing in-class observations of the child by the teacher, counselor or administrator.
 - III. Meetings with the family to present our concerns.
 - IV. Referral of the student and family to external professional counseling services.
 - V. Referral to our consultation with the school or company doctor.
 - VI. Notification of the management of the sponsoring company of the concern with the child/family. This approach has been effective in at least one case. It seems very dependent upon the company management at the given time.
 - VII. Consultation with the embassy or consulate of the country of the involved family.
 - VIII. Consultation with the school or private attorney.
 - IX. Informal consultation with the local authorities. While they have not become actively involved, they have provided guidance as to what actions on our part they would find acceptable.
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Ethical Mandate For Reporting:

A report of child abuse to authorities must be submitted within 48 hours after there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse. Any report or other action must be kept confidential.

Reports can be made to building principal who will form child abuse response team to develop a plan of action that will include:

Procedure For Follow Up Regarding Suspected Cases Of Child Abuse And Neglect:

Once a teacher reports suspected case of abuse or neglect, the principal organizes the child abuse response team consisting of reporting teachers, counselor, nurse and other personnel as required by specifics of the case of suspected abuse. The principal assigns a case manager, usually the school counselor, who implements the following procedure for gathering information.

1. Interview staff members to document factually all pertinent information related to the case.
2. Consult with school personnel to review child's history in the school. Consult with counselor to determine the nature of suspected abuse.
3. Report status of case to superintendent.
4. Determine the course of follow-up actions.
5. Develop strategies for referral to outside agencies such as:
 - Referral for further investigation by neutral third party for serious physical abuse and neglect and all sexual offenses.
 - Referral to third party in incidences when there is a repeated pattern of behavior or there is little evidence of support for the family.
 - Referral to family services organization for counseling /therapy.

Notification of other staff will be made on a need-to-know basis emphasizing the need to support the child and maintain confidentiality.

Reporting To Outside Authorities:

When making a report to authorities, the staff member must include as much of the following information as is available or can be gathered through interviews with teachers and other relevant adults close to the child.

Follow Up And Continuing Support:

In the incidence of a reported or substantiated case of child abuse or neglect:

- The counselor will maintain follow up contact with the child and family to provide support and guidance as appropriate.
- The school counselor will meet with the child's teachers and the school principal to provide in-service training regarding the needs of abused or neglected children and the important role teachers play in assisting the child's recovery and future development.
- The counselor will provide resource materials and strategies for teacher use.
- The counselor will maintain contact with outside therapists and investigators to update the situation of the child in school.

All documentation of the investigation will be kept in the child's school records file and will be a part of information sent to schools to which the student may transfer.

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WHAT CONSTITUTES CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT?

Definitions of abuse:

- Infliction of physical injury on a child by other than accidental means, causing death, disfigurement, skin bruising, impairment of physical or emotional health or loss or impairment of any bodily function, and/or
- Creating a substantial risk of physical harm to a child's bodily functioning, and/or
- Committing or allowing to be committed any sexual offense against a child [as defined in the criminal code of country when exists, or school policy], or intentionally touching, either directly or through clothing, the genitals, anus or breasts of a child for other than hygiene or child care purposes, and/or
- Committing acts that are cruel or inhumane regardless of observable injury. Such acts may include, but are not limited to, instances of extreme discipline demonstrating a disregard of a child's pain and/or mental suffering, and/or
- Assaulting or criminally mistreating a child [as defined by the criminal code or school policy], and/or
- Engaging in actions or omissions resulting in injury to, or creating a substantial risk to the physical or mental health or development of a child
- Failing to take reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of all the above

The following outlines indicators of abuse and neglect and should be used by the educator as a guideline for reporting. It is not necessary to know the details of the possible abuse or to be certain whether or not an indicator means abuse has taken place in order to report. The reporting law specifies reporting when you have "reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect." Reasonable cause/suspicion exists when it is objectively reasonable for a person to entertain a suspicion based upon facts that could cause a reasonable person in a like position, drawing when appropriate on his or her training and experience, to suspect child abuse.

The severity of an indicator or statements by the child as to the non-accidental nature of the injury may indicate possible abuse.

Indicators of Physical Abuse: *

- Unexplained bruises and welts on any part of the body
 - Bruises of different ages (various colors)
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- Injuries reflecting shape of article used (electric cord, belt, buckle, ping pong paddle)
- Injuries that regularly appear after absence or vacation
- Unexplained burns, especially to soles, palms, back or buttocks
- Burns with a pattern from an electric burner, iron or cigarette
- Rope burns on arms, legs, neck or torso
- Injuries inconsistent with information offered by the child
- Immersion burns with a distinct boundary line
- Unexplained lacerations, abrasions or fractures

Indicators of Sexual Abuse:*

- Venereal disease in a child of any age
- Evidence of physical trauma or bleeding to the oral, genital or anal areas
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Refusing to change into gym clothes
- Child running away from home and not giving any specific complaint
- Pregnancy at 11 or 12 with no history of peer socialization
- Sexual knowledge, behavior, or use of language not appropriate to age level

*** Behavioral indicators in and of themselves do not constitute abuse. Together with other indicators they may warrant a referral.**

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SERVICES PROVIDED BY AIS-R

School counseling professionals will define annually the range of services to be provided by the school and the range of services to be referred to outside resources.

Typically handled by school counseling professionals:

- Student relationships with peers
- Parenting skills related to disciplining children at home
- Student-parent relationships
- Mental health issues such as depression, low self-esteem, grieving

Typically referred to outside resources:

- Mental health issues such as depression, psychosis, dissociation

Typically reported for investigation and outside resources:

- Severe and ongoing physical abuse or neglect
- Sexual abuse and incest

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