

SCHOOL DISTRICT 82 (COAST MOUNTAINS)

Educational Administration

2200: Child Abuse

Policy

The Board of School Trustees believes children have a right to be protected from abuse and neglect, and employees have a right to protection from malicious or unfounded allegations of abuse.

The Board has an obligation to ensure that students under its care are protected from abuse. It is understood that touching or hugging can be part of the role of teachers and some other employees when such support is beneficial to the student. Employees have a privileged relationship with students and must not exploit that relationship for personal advantage.

The Board requires its employees to be aware of their obligation to report child abuse as prescribed in the Child, Family, and Community Service Act.¹

If it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Board, that on the balance of probabilities, an employee has been inappropriately involved, including but not specifically restricted to sexual involvement with any student, the Board will consider such action(s) a fundamental breach of the employees duties and obligations to the School District.

¹ From *Responding to Abuse and Neglect: A Guide for Vancouver School Board Employees*.

Definitions

1. **Sexual Abuse** means any sexual exploitation of a child whether consensual or not. It includes touching of a sexual nature and sexual intercourse, and may include any behaviour of a sexual nature toward a child. In determining whether behaviour is of a sexual nature, one should ask whether a reasonable observer, looking at the behaviour in its context, would conclude that it is. This would exclude normal affectionate behaviour towards children and normal health or hygiene care.

Sexual activity between children may constitute sexual abuse if the difference in age or power between the children is so significant that the older or more powerful child is clearly taking advantage of the younger or less powerful child. This would exclude consensual, developmentally appropriate sexual activity between children where there is no significant difference in age or power between the children.

2. **Physical Abuse** means any physical force or injury which results in or may potentially result in a non-accidental injury to a child which exceeds that which could be considered reasonable discipline.
3. **Emotional Abuse** means acts or omissions of those responsible for the care of a child which are likely to produce long term and serious emotional disorder. This might include effects such as non-organic failure to thrive; developmental retardation; serious anxiety; depression or withdrawal; or serious behaviour disturbance.
4. **Neglect** means the failure of those responsible for the care of the child to meet the physical, emotional or medical needs of the child to an extent that the child's health, development or safety is endangered.²

Role of Employees in Reporting Abuse

1. Steps to be taken when an employee of School District 82 (Coast Mountains) has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been abused **when the alleged abuser is a person other than a School District employee** are as follows:
 - a) Employees having a reasonable belief or suspicion that a child is or has been abused shall immediately report the information or incident to the local office of the Ministry for Children and Families. The employee's responsibility is not discharged by reporting to any person other than a social worker who is the delegate of the Ministry for Children and Families.
 - b) The teacher or other School District employee advises the principal that he or she has grounds to suspect child abuse and has notified the Ministry for Children and Families.

² *Inter-Ministry Child Abuse Handbook*, 1988.

- c) The investigation is under the authority of the Ministry for Children and Families and the RCMP.
 - d) Any statement made to a School District employee which indicates that the child is or may be an abuse victim must be recorded in the child's own words. School District employees, while offering support, should avoid continued discussion of the details with the child. This will ensure that the number of times the child is interviewed is kept to a minimum.
 - e) Where the alleged abuser is a student currently attending school, the parents will be informed of the information or incident by the school. In all other cases the parents are not to be informed by the school. Responsibility for informing the parent lies with Ministry for Children and Families or the RCMP.
 - f) Although an educator may be asked to be present during an interview to provide support to the child, he or she is not required to be present when the child is interviewed. If the child requests a support person to be present, the educator may request permission of the social worker or RCMP officer to attend the interview. It is the responsibility of the social worker or RCMP to inform parents that an interview with their child is taking place.
2. Steps to be taken when an employee of School District 82 (Coast Mountains) has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been abused **when the alleged abuser is a School District employee** are as follows:
- a) The School District employee immediately reports the information or incident to the local office of Ministry for Children and Families and to the Superintendent of Schools.
 - b) The Superintendent of Schools will consult on the matter with the District Supervisor of the local Ministry for Children and Families office and the local RCMP officer in charge.
 - c) The Superintendent of Schools will consult with Ministry for Children and Families/RCMP as the investigations proceed and will act as necessary with respect to Section 15 of the School Act.
 - d) No discussions regarding the alleged offence shall take place with the alleged offender until the RCMP, the Ministry for Children and Families, and the Superintendent of Schools consent to the discussion.

Staff Responsibilities

1. The principal of each school is responsible for updating all School District employees on an annual basis of their responsibilities for reporting child abuse.

Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs

1. The Board approves the following Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs for use in School District 82 (Coast Mountains):
 - a) For Kindergarten, *Let's Talk about Touching: A Sexual Abuse Prevention Program for Pre-Schoolers*. Victoria, B.C.: Ministry of the Attorney General, 1987.
 - b) For Grades 1, 2, and 3, *The Revised C.A.R.E. Kit*, Surrey B.C.: C.A.R.E. Productions.
 - c) For Grades 4, 5, and 6, *Feeling Yes, Feeling No*. Ottawa, Ontario: National Film Board or for Grades 5 and 6, *Talking About Touching*, Seattle, Washington: Committee for Children, 1987.
2. The classroom teacher is responsible to ensure the delivery of the program. The principal is responsible to ensure the programs are delivered at each mandated level.
3. The School District has the responsibility for providing inservice in the Child Abuse prevention programs, *Let's Talk About Touching*; the *Revised C.A.R.E. Kit*; *Feeling Yes, Feeling No*; and *Talking About Touching*. This inservice will be available on one non-instructional day in each school year.
4. Instruction on sexual abuse prevention is on a voluntary basis with the exception of Kindergarten, Grade 2, and Grade 4. It is expected that a sexual abuse program will be taught to all students in each of these years.
5. Parents are to be informed when sexual abuse prevention will be taught in their child's classroom. Parents should be given the opportunity to preview the material being taught.
6. The School District will provide each school enrolling students in Grades 1 through 4 with one copy of each of the appropriate kits. In dual track schools the C.A.R.E. Kit will be available in both English and French.

Prevention Programs for Special Populations

1. **Students with Intellectual Disabilities.** For students in Grades 8–12 with identified developmental disabilities, the program "Life Horizons" is available. Specific training will be available to teachers or Special Services assistants wishing to use this material.
2. **Students with Visual Disabilities.** Due to great variability in the degree of visual impairment and to the possibility that visual disabilities may be associated with other disabling conditions, no specific program is recommended. Teachers and principals should consult with the Teacher of the Visually Impaired regarding appropriate programs.
3. **Students with Hearing Disabilities.** For students who are deaf or hearing impaired the following programs are approved for use in School District #82

- (Coast Mountains). Teachers and principals should consult with the Teacher of the Hearing Impaired before implementing the program:
- a) For Kindergarten through Grade 2, the program *No Go Tell* by Lexington School for the Deaf: Lexington, N.Y.
 - b) For Grade 3 through 6, *The Care Kit*, Surrey B.C.: C.A.R.E. Productions.
 - c) For Grade 7 through 12, the video, *Sharing Secrets*, Vancouver B.C.: Vancouver School Board. This is a video in American Sign Language using deaf actors.
4. Parents should be informed of the intent to use materials and their consent obtained before implementing the program.