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Coláiste Abbáin

[PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF CHILD ABUSE]

This document contains Coláiste Abbáin's Procedures for Dealing with Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse

COLAISTE ABBAIN

PROPOSED PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

A child is an individual under 18 years of age.

Definitions of Child Abuse

1. Physical Abuse

This is physical injury to a child including poisoning where the injury was deliberately inflicted. Examples could also include inadequate provision of food, clothes or housing which result in the serious impairment of a child's development or welfare.

2. Sexual Abuse

This is the use of children by others for sexual gratification. This includes rape and other sexual assaults, allowing children to view sexual acts, involvement in pornography and other perverse acts and their involvement in sexual activity they do not fully comprehend and about which they are unable to give informed consent.

3. Emotional Abuse

This is the adverse effect on the behavioural and emotional development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection.

Signs of Child Abuse

See Appendix

Guidelines and Procedures for Dealing with Child Abuse

The steps outlined below follow the guidelines laid down in "Procedures for dealing with Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse " Department of Education 1992.

Reporting Procedure

Where there are allegations or suspicions that a pupil is being abused:

The teacher should pass on the information to the Principal

Where the Principal is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the allegation or suspicion he should report the matter to the director of Community Care and forward a copy of the report to the C.E.O. In exceptional circumstances the teacher can decide to pass on the information directly to the C.E.O. who will then decide to make a report to the Director of Community Care.

Points to Note

- The matter must be confidential to the parties concerned. The Principal may decide to inform Staff in a general way that a child is experiencing some problems at present. This information will not be specific.
- School Staff should not carry out an investigation into the case. This is a matter for the Health Board and/or the Garda authorities.
- It is important to stress that the teacher is merely passing on information and is not making an allegation.
- The Principal will not divulge the name of the teacher without his/her consent or unless legally required to do so.

Where a pupil is being abused by another pupil:

The procedure will be the same as above.

Where a pupil is being abused by an employee of the school:

The teacher will pass on the information to the Principal.

The Principal will pass on the information to the C.E.O.

The C.E.O. will inform the employee concerned of the information received.

The employee will be given an opportunity to respond.

The C.E.O. should, if there are reasonable grounds, report the matter to the Director of Community Care and, with the permission of the employee, include the employee's response with the report.

The teacher may in exceptional circumstances pass on the information directly to the C.E.O.

WHAT YOU CAN DO IF A PUPIL TELLS YOU THAT S/HE IS BEING ABUSED

Some General Advice

Listen to what is being said without displaying shock

Accept what is being said.
Take notes if possible.
Reassure the child, but only as far as is honest.
Don't promise confidentiality. Explain to the child that you will need some help to deal with what s/he has told you.
Seek to alleviate any feelings of guilt the child may have. Ask open questions rather than leading questions.
Do not criticise the perpetrator as s/he may be a victim's family member.
Keep in contact with the child.

KEEPING RECORDS

Keep a record of the date of the interview. State who was present, description or comments made (verbatim, if possible). Record your own observations etc. Record the action you intend to take.

This record should be given to the Principal for recording purposes.

Whom do you contact?

The Director of Community Care, Upper George's Street,
Wexford. 053-9123394

Dealing with Queries from the Health Boards /Garda

The query in the first instance should be made to the school Principal or the Programme Co-ordinator who will pass it on to the teacher concerned. The teacher if s/he so wishes can then deal directly with the query.

The social worker should advise the teacher as to what will happen to the information afterwards. This advice would include details of any case conference that may arise at a later stage.

Where time permits, a Special form, drafted by the Health Board, should be used. Any information passed on by a teacher will be rechecked (or read back) at the time of contact for his/her agreement. Once again, a teacher should be advised of the use of the completed form afterwards.

NOTES

The aim of these steps is to keep the name of the teacher confidential as much as possible. The information would be coming from the school/centre through the Principal rather than from an individual.

All of the above procedures have been agreed by the Eastern Health

Board and Co. Wexford V.E.C. and social workers have been advised accordingly.

Case Conferences

As already stated the social worker will have advised the teacher as to what a case conference entails.

The Principal might attend instead of the teacher if the teacher so desires. It is assumed the Principal will have the relevant information.

Follow Up Information

The Health Board will inform the school when a case is closed.

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