

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

DEFINITIONChild Abuse and Neglect:

Under Wyoming law, Child Abuse means inflicting or causing physical or mental injury, harm or imminent danger to the physical or mental health or welfare of a child other than by accidental means, including abandonment, excessive or unreasonable corporal punishment, malnutrition or substantial risk thereof by reason of intentional or unintentional neglect and the commission or allowing the commission of a sexual offense against a child as defined by law. A child means any person under the age of eighteen (18).

Child Neglect:

Means a failure or refusal by those responsible for the child's welfare to provide adequate care, maintenance, supervision, education, or medical, surgical or any other care necessary for the child's well-being.

Suspected child abuse and neglect cases are investigated by the Goshen County Office of the Department of Family Services, the Torrington Police Department, and the Goshen County Sheriff's Department.

The law provides immunity from any civil liability or criminal penalty to all who participate in good faith in reporting suspected abuse and neglect, or in any judicial proceedings resulting from such a report. The procedures below are to be followed in cases of suspected abuse and neglect.

School Procedure:

All school district employees are mandated reporters and have a responsibility to ensure reports of child abuse and neglect are submitted to the Department of Family Services (DFS) or local law enforcement agency.

1. School staff members may initially question the child to determine if the child's injuries resulted from cruel or inhumane treatment, sexual abuse, or malicious acts by the child's caretaker. However, in no case should the child be subjected to undue pressure in order to validate the suspicion of abuse. Validation of suspected child abuse is the responsibility of the DFS, assisted by law enforcement. Any doubt about reporting a suspected situation is to be resolved in favor of the child and the report made immediately to DFS.
2. To report a suspected abuse or neglect situation, contact the building principal and/or school counselor immediately to assist with the reporting process. If neither the principal nor counselor are available, the employee is responsible for making an oral report of the incident to DFS and informing the school administration as soon as possible.
3. Report suspected child abuse and neglect to DFS at 532-2191 between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on business days. For reports made outside of business hours, telephone the Torrington Police Department at 532-7001 and tell them you are making a suspected child abuse/neglect report.

4. After an oral report has been made to DFS, school personnel will complete the "Child Abuse/Neglect Referral" form (Exhibit 1) with school administration and submit it to the Superintendent.
5. In suspected cases of physical and sexual abuse, the child may be questioned by law enforcement and/or DFS without the principal obtaining permission of the child's parent or guardian. The principal will designate school personnel to be present at the investigation.
6. After the report is made to DFS, district and school staff members will make themselves available for meetings with the department's representative to facilitate communication. The school will report any further incidents of abuse to the agency's representative.
7. Once a report of child abuse/neglect is given to DFS, the responsibility for investigation and follow-up lies with that department. It is not the responsibility of the school staff to investigate the case. Therefore, the school staff will not:
 - a. Make home visits for investigative purposes;
 - b. Take the child for medical treatment (this does not preclude taking action in an emergency situation);
 - c. Convey messages between the agency and the parents/guardians.

Reference: Wyoming State Statute W.S. §14-3-205

Adopted: May 13, 1991

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