

Chireno ISD

Plan for Addressing Child Sexual Abuse and Other Maltreatment of Children

The Chireno Independent School District has established this plan for addressing child sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children. This plan may be accessed at the district website. A copy of the plan will also be kept in the principal's office, counselor's office and at the CISD administrative office.

This plan includes the legal definition of sexual abuse, methods for increasing awareness regarding sexual abuse of children, and the psychological, behavioral, and physical warning signs of abuse. Since the typical signs of abuse may vary by age, we have also included signs more typical in younger children and adolescents. This plan addresses suspected physical abuse and suspected neglect. Facts on your legal obligation and your legal protection can be found in this plan and also a summary of Texas state law, and instructions for making an online report.

What is Sexual Abuse of a Child?

Sexual abuse in the Texas Family Code is defined as any sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as a failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct with a child.

Methods for Increasing Awareness Regarding Sexual Abuse of Children

Staff: Each year, all staff will review this plan and participate in a campus training. The campus may utilize materials published by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services for educational professionals <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Training/Reporting/default.asp> or resources provided by Region VII ESC.

Students: The school counselor will address issues to increase awareness regarding sexual abuse of children and anti-victimization programs with age appropriate conversation and materials no less than once per school year in grades PK-12th.

Parents: Information concerning the district plan for Addressing Sexual Abuse of Children will be available in the principal's office, counselor's office, CISD administrative office and is available on the CISD website.

As a parent, it is important for you to be aware of warning signs that could indicate a child may have been or is being sexually abused. A child who has experienced sexual abuse should be encouraged to seek out a trusted adult.

As a parent, be aware that disclosure of sexual abuse may be more indirect than disclosures of physical abuse, and it is important to be calm and comforting if your child, or another child, confides in you. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing by telling you.

As a parent, if your child is a victim of sexual abuse, the principal or counselor will provide information regarding counseling options for you and your child available in your area. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services also manages early intervention counseling programs.

As a parent, if you permit your child to be in a situation where he or she may be injured, then you may be prosecuted for child abuse. The fact that the abuser is a parent or other family member does not remove your obligation to protect the child. If you are frightened for your own safety or that of your child, call 911 or the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400.

Warning Signs in Children and Adolescents of Possible Sexual Abuse

Any one sign does not mean that a child was sexually abused, but the presence of several signs should warrant the asking of questions and possibly seeking help. Keep in mind that some of these signs can emerge at other times of stress such as: during a divorce, death of a family member or pet, problems at school or with friends, and any other anxiety-inducing or traumatic events.

Possible Psychological and Behavioral Signs of Sexual Child Abuse

- changes in sleeping patterns
- bedwetting
- nightmares or bad dreams
- depression, irritability or anger, low self-esteem, guilt, shame
- avoidance of people or places
- sexual advances or “touching” inappropriately
- sexual drawings
- changes in socialization (withdrawal or isolation)

Possible Physical Symptoms

- becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under 14
- trauma to the mouth or genitals
- rectal bleeding
- pain around the genital area
- poor appetite
- weight loss or weight gain

Signs More Typical of Younger Children

- an older child behaving like a younger child (such as bed-wetting or thumb-sucking)
- uses new words for body parts
- resists removing clothes at appropriate times (bath, bed, toileting, diapering)
- asks other children to behave sexually or play sexual games

- mimics adult-like sexual behaviors with toys or stuffed animals
- wetting and soiling accidents unrelated to toilet training

Signs You May See in a Child or Adolescent

- has nightmares or other sleep problems without an explanation
- seems distracted or distant at odd times
- has a sudden change in eating habits or refuses to eat
- has trouble swallowing
- sudden mood swings: rage, fear, insecurity or withdrawal
- leaves “clues” that seem likely to provoke a discussion about sexual issues
- writes, draws, plays or dreams of sexual or frightening images
- develops new or unusual fear of certain people or places
- refuses to talk about a secret shared with an adult or older child
- talks about a new, older friend
- suddenly has money, toys or other gifts without reason
- exhibits adult-like sexual behaviors, language and knowledge

Signs More Typical in Adolescents

- self-injury (cutting, burning), inadequate personal hygiene
- drug and alcohol abuse
- sexual promiscuity
- running away from home
- depression, anxiety
- suicide attempts
- fear of intimacy or closeness
- compulsive eating or dieting

Consider the Possibility of Sexual Abuse when the Parent or Other Adult Caregiver

- is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the other sex
- is secretive and isolated
- is jealous or controlling with family members

Physical Warning Signs

Physical signs of sexual abuse are rare. If you see these signs, take your child to a doctor. Your doctor can help you understand what may be happening and test for sexually transmitted diseases.

- pain, discoloration, bleeding or discharges in genitals, anus or mouth
- persistent or recurring pain during urination and bowel movements -wetting and soiling accidents unrelated to toilet training

Suspect Physical Abuse When You See

- frequent injuries such as bruises, cuts, black eyes or burns, especially when the child cannot adequately explain their cause
- burns or bruises in an unusual pattern that may indicate the use of an instrument or a human bite; cigarette burns on any part of the body
- frequent complaints of pain without obvious injury
- aggressive, disruptive and destructive behavior
- lack of reaction to pain
- fear of going home or seeing parents
- passive, withdrawn, emotionless behavior
- injuries that appear after the child has not been seen for several days
- unseasonable clothes that may hide injuries to arms or legs

Suspect Neglect When You See in a Child

- obvious malnourishment, lack of personal cleanliness
- torn and/or dirty clothes
- obvious fatigue and listlessness
- a child unattended for long periods of time
- need for glasses, dental care or other medical attention
- stealing or begging for food
- frequent absence or tardiness from school

Educator Obligations and Procedures

Current law requires that professionals such as teachers, doctors, nurses, or child daycare workers make a verbal report within 48 hours. Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect is a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment of up to 180 days and/or a fine of up to \$2,000 (Texas Family Code, Chapter 261). Reporting suspected child abuse to the principal, counselor, or superintendent will NOT satisfy your obligation under this law. CISD Board Policy FFG (EXHIBIT) states the Notice of Employee Responsibilities for Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect.

Your Legal Protection

Your report of child abuse or neglect is confidential and immune from civil or criminal liability as long as the report is made in “good faith” and “without malice”. In good faith means that the person making the report took reasonable steps to learn facts that were readily available and at hand. Without malice means that the person did not intend to injure or violate the rights of another person. Provided these two conditions are met, you will also be immune from liability if you are asked to participate in any judicial proceedings that might result from your report.

If You Suspect Abuse

DON'T try to investigate. DON'T confront the abuser. DO report your reasonable suspicions. It is not up to you to determine whether your suspicions are true. A trained investigator will evaluate the child's situation. Even if your report does not bring decisive action, it may help establish a pattern that will eventually be clear enough to help the child.

Disclosure

If you are the first person the child tells about sexual abuse, your testimony as “outray witness” may be especially important in future legal proceedings. What you say the child told you is not considered hearsay but is admissible evidence in a trial involving a sexual offense against a child. The exception applies only to the first person the child approaches.

Reports may be made to any of the following:

Nacogdoches County Sheriff’s Department: 936-560-7777

Child Protective Services 800-252-5400

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

<https://www.txabusehotline.org/Login/Default.aspx>

Nacogdoches County Resources

http://www.helpandhope.org/Find_Help/programs-results.asp?findcounty=NACOGDOCHES

The following websites might help you become more aware of child sexual abuse:

Prevent Child Abuse America <https://preventchildabuse.org/>

Prevent Child Abuse Texas <https://www.texprotects.org/about/PCAT/>

Texas Department of Family & Protective Services <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/>

Available Counseling Options and Other Resources

National Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-4-A-Child <http://www.childhelp.org/hotline/> Stop It Now

<https://www.stopitnow.org/>