

LA GRANGE ISD

PLAN FOR PREVENTING SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN

REQUIREMENT OF HB 1041

The 81st Legislative Session passed HB 1041 relating to school district policies addressing sexual abuse of children and the establishment of a strategy to reduce child abuse and neglect to improve child welfare. The safety of the children of the La Grange Independent School District is of utmost importance. This plan is to increase teacher, parent, and student awareness of issues regarding sexual abuse of children.

What is Sexual Abuse of a Child?

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

*Abuse is also compelling or encouraging the child to engage in sexual conduct as defined by Section 43.01 of the Penal code, causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing the photographing, filming, or depicting of the child if the person knew or should have known that the resulting photograph, film, or depiction of the child is obscene as defined by Section 43.21 of the Penal Code, or pornographic.

*Or causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing a sexual performance by a child as defined by Section 43.25 of the Penal Code.

*Sexual abuse includes activities by a parent or caregiver such as fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials.

Suspect Sexual Abuse When You See:

- *Physical signs of sexually transmitted diseases
- *Evidence of an injury to the genital area or rectal pain, itching, swelling, redness, or discharge
- *Pregnancy in a young girl
- *Difficulty in sitting or walking
- *Extreme fear of being alone with adults of a certain sex
- *Sexual comments, behaviors or play
- *Knowledge of sexual relations beyond what is expected for a child's age
- *Sexual victimization of other children
- *Child tells you he/she was sexually mistreated
- *Stained or bloody underwear
- *Bruises or other injuries in the genital or rectal area
- *Changes in behavioral and emotional signs such as:
 - Difficulty eating or sleeping
 - Soiling or wetting pants or bed after being potty trained
 - Acting like a much younger child
 - Excessive crying or sadness
 - Withdrawing from activities and others

Prevention of Abuse

The term "prevention" is typically used to represent activities that stop an action or behavior. It can also be used to represent activities that promote a positive action or behavior. Research has found that successful child abuse interventions must both reduce risk factors and promote protective factors to ensure the well-being of children and families.

The following protective factors have been linked to a lower incidence of child abuse and neglect:

- *Nurturing/Attachment—When parents and children have strong, warm feelings, for one another, children develop trust that parents will provide what they need to survive
- *Knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development—parents providing an environment where children can grow and develop to reach their potential
- *Parent Resilience—Parents who possess the emotional skills by having a positive attitude, effectively address challenges and are less likely to direct anger and frustration at their children

Who is Responsible for Preventing Abuse?

A person responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare means a person who "traditionally" is responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare including:

- *a parent, guardian, managing, or possessory conservator, or foster parent of the child
- *a member of the child's family or household, as defined by Chapter 71
- *a person with whom the child's parent cohabits
- *school personnel or a volunteer at the child's school
- *personnel or a volunteer at a public or private residential institution or facility where the child resides

What to do if You Suspect Child Sexual Abuse

If you suspect child sexual abuse you should:

- *Take the child to a quiet, private area
- *Gently encourage the child to give you enough information to evaluate whether abuse may have occurred
- *Remain calm as not to upset the child
- *If the child reveals the abuse, reassure him/her that you believe him/her, that it is right to tell you, and that he/she is not bad
- *Tell the child that you are going to talk to persons who can help him/her
- *Record all information
- *Immediately report the suspected abuse to the proper local authorities; reporting suspected abuse is required by law; a professional may not delegate to or rely on another person to make the report; the suspected abuse must be reported within 48 hours after the professional first suspects abuse (Policy FFG Legal)

Methods for Increasing Awareness Regarding Sexual Abuse of Children

Teachers: Teachers in the La Grange Independent School District will be trained in addressing Sexual Abuse of Children. This training may be provided through campus staff, district staff, on-line or outside agencies as appropriate at the discretion of the campus administration. All new staff that is hired by the district each year will also receive training. Training will include contents of the adopted board policy in the La Grange Independent School District. (Policy FFG Legal)

Students: The counseling staff of the La Grange Independent School District will address issues to increase awareness regarding sexual abuse of children and anti-victimization programs with age appropriate conversation and materials. Counselors at each campus in the district will also be able to provide information regarding outside counseling options available for students and their parent/guardian.

Parents: Information concerning the LGISD Plan for addressing Sexual Abuse of Children will be posted on the district 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. Be aware that as a parent or other trusted adult that disclosures of sexual abuse may more be indirect. It is important to remain 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.

*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 ever frightened for your own safety or that of your child, please call 911.

Anyone who suspects that a child may have been sexually abused or may be abused has a legal responsibility, under state law, for reporting the suspected abuse to law enforcement or to Child Protective Services (CPS). (Policy FFG Legal)

Reports may be made by contacting one of the following:

- *Texas Abuse Hotline—1-800-252-5400, <http://www.txabusehotline.org>
- *Sexual Assault Legal Hotline—1-888-296-SAFE (statewide)
- *Family Violence Legal Hotline—1-800-374-HOPE (statewide)
- *La Grange Police Department—968-5806
- *Fayette County Sheriff's Department—968-5856
- *Call 911 for emergency situations

Other Resources:

The following websites may be helpful in helping you become more aware of child sexual abuse:

- *Prevent Child Abuse America: www.preventchildabuse.org
- *Prevent Child Abuse Texas: www.preventchildabuse.org
- *Texas Association Against Sexual Assault: www.taasa.org
- *Child Welfare Information Gateway: www.childwelfare.gov
- *Texas Department of Family and Protective Services: www.dfps.state.tx.us

*Stop It Now! – Provides a national helpline for supportive guidance, information, and resources. The Helpline is staffed by professionals who can provide assistance in how to deal with suspected sexual abuse situations.

Additional resources are available on their website: www.stopitnow.org

Helpline: 1-888-PREVENT

Email: helpline@stopitnow.org

Attachments:

LGISD Policy FFG (Legal)

LGISD Policy FFG (Exhibit)

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY!