



REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE (INS-G016)

Clarksville-Montgomery County School System (CMCSS) recognizes that state law specifies that every citizen has a duty to report suspected brutality, abuse, neglect, or child sexual abuse. In accordance with T.C.A. §37-1-403(b), the district has developed its own policy and procedures for reporting suspected cases of abuse or neglect to give employees guidance to ensure that suspected child abuse is reported promptly.

The district requires any employee who suspects abuse to report that suspicion directly to the Department of Children's Services (DCS) AND to the District Lead School Counselors and SRO. In addition to reporting to DCS, any employee who suspects severe physical or sexual abuse is required to contact SRO by phone directly, if not available then contact the Level Director who will notify the appropriate law enforcement agency.

In addition to reporting to DCS, in all cases where the suspected abuser is a CMCSS employee, volunteer, or contracted services provider, or if it is suspected that the abuse occurred on school grounds or while the child was under the supervision or care of the school, district employees will report their suspicions directly to their supervisor who will then report to the Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO)/ designee who will notify the appropriate law enforcement agency. If an employee suspects a supervisor, he/she may contact CHRO/designee directly.

Each employee has an independent duty under state law and this policy to report child abuse. Persons making a report of child sexual abuse or reporting harm or physical abuse of a child are presumed to be acting in good faith and are immune from any liability, civil or criminal, that may be brought in a state court action. Such person's identity will remain confidential as set forth in the school system's applicable policies and procedures unless otherwise required by law or court order. His/her name will not be released to any person other than DCS and/or law enforcement and school administrators on a need to know basis as required by state law and as needed to "protect the health and safety of the student or other individuals."

The information contained in these training guidelines is to provide supervisors information to use in informing all district employees about the definition of child abuse, how to report suspicions of child abuse, and how to accommodate related investigations.

How Do I Report Suspicion of Child Abuse? (See Exhibit A)

1. Any CMCSS employee who suspects child abuse must relay their suspicions immediately by telephone, or online, to Central Intake, DCS, Child Protective Services.
 - a. **Telephonic referrals** - call **Central Intake** at 1-855-209-4226 (Educators only) or **1-877-237-0004 or 1-877-54ABUSE (Public)**. This line is manned 24-hours a day by Central Intake personnel. The referring party should document the nature of the referral, with whom they spoke, and other pertinent information related to the referral. INS-F140 Telephonic Referral Form, is an available tool to assist in documenting telephonic referrals.
 - b. **Online referrals** –For online referral, complete INS-F139, Child Protective Services Intake Report Complete the online report at <https://app.tn.gov/carat> and keep a record of the online report. **Online referrals are for non-emergency situations only per DCS.**
 - c. If the person who suspects child abuse does not have access to a telephone, he or she will contact the highest authority in the building or area who will make a telephone available so that the employee can report the suspected child abuse.
 - d. After DCS Central Intake has been notified, the employee or his or her supervisor will email the referral to District Lead School Counselors at leadcounselors@cmcss.net and the school resource officer assigned at that location. If the referral involves a CMCSS employee, volunteer or contracted services provider, the referral should be scanned and emailed to the CHRO/designee as well.

- e. School personnel will take no action to verify or investigate the complaint.
 - f. Building Principals and Department Directors must maintain a record of all referrals/supporting documentation (Telephonic and Verification of Online Reports, etc.) and maintain these in a secure location at the building/site level. Record of referrals should include who made the call, the purpose of the call, and the name of the DCS staff member contacted. Due to the sensitive nature of this information, it must be maintained in a secure manner.
 - g. The employee making the report should provide as much of the following information as possible to DCS: 1) Name, address, and age of child; 2) Name, address and person responsible for the care of the child; 3) Facts that led to the report., and 4) Other pertinent information such as the location of the child's parents, identity of the alleged perpetrator, other agencies working with the family, the family's knowledge of the referral, the school's past experience with the family, and other children in the family.
 - h. DCS will provide the referent with a case number. Referral information/updates will be available from the DCS online using the case number.
2. In addition to reporting to DCS, any CMCSS employee who suspects child abuse that is of a **severe physical** or **sexual nature** must report their suspicions directly to the SRO by telephone, if SRO not available the Level Director should be contacted, who will notify the Clarksville Police Department or Montgomery County Sheriff's Office as appropriate.
 3. If an allegation of abuse is made against a CMCSS Employee, volunteer, or contract vendor, suspicions should be reported to the Chief Human Resources Officer, or designee immediately after DCS referral has been made, who will notify law enforcement.
 - 3.1.1 Only if the alleged abuse is made against a CMCSS employee, volunteer, or contractor, or if the abuse occurred on school grounds or while the child was under the supervision or care of the school, will the school administrator notify the parent/guardian of the student.

CLARIFICATION OF INFORMATION

Employees should address questions regarding this information directly to his or her principal or department head for clarification. Principals or Department Heads should notify the District Lead School Counselors of any atypical situations involving DCS personnel that may require Central Office involvement.

RELATED TRAINING INFORMATION

PURPOSE: To familiarize participants with the roles, responsibilities, and functions of both the Department of Children Services (DCS) and CMCSS regarding the reporting of suspected child abuse AND accommodating investigations into alleged child abuse.

TRAINING FOLLOW UP PLAN: Principals and Department heads will familiarize ALL personnel assigned to their respective buildings/areas with basic procedures for reporting suspected abuse and accommodating DCS investigations.

REFERENCES: Tennessee Code Annotated §37-1-4-01, et. seq. and §37-1-611, §37-1-612; DCS Administrative Policy 14.1 – 14.6; CMCSS Policies and Procedures for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Accommodating DCS Investigations

INTRODUCTION: Public school systems are considered local agencies with a duty to cooperate in child abuse investigations; therefore, any employee of the public school system must report suspected child abuse in accordance with state law and the district's related policies and procedures. DCS is the agency charged with conducting such investigations. As such, we share a common goal and must partner together to ensure the protection and privacy of our children. We are not adversaries and must see ourselves as co-advocates in doing what is right for the children in Montgomery County. This is the law!

1. Child Abuse
 - A. Definition of Child Abuse and Neglect

- 1) Child abuse or neglect exists when any person under the age of 18 has sustained an injury or is in immediate danger of being injured by the actions or inactions of a parent, relative, guardian, or caretaker.
- 2) Injury includes significant physical trauma to the child including: broken bones, eye socket injuries, brain or spinal cord injury, puncture wounds, abrasions, auditory damage, any type of burn, any bruising on any part of a child age two or younger that is not the result of an accident, normal developmental activity, or developmentally appropriate discipline, deep penetrating contusions elsewhere on the body of a child over two years of age, any sexual contact, use of life threatening weapons against any child, or any other willful or knowing behavior which may cause any of the injuries.
- 3) Injury includes repeated and continuous failure to provide minimally adequate food, medical care, shelter, or supervision. It may also include psychological abuse such as constant belittling, violent acts directed toward the child's possessions, or any other acts which are likely to cause profound and long-term emotional damage.

B. DCS accepts a report of child maltreatment provided it meets these three criteria:

- 1) The report pertains to a child under the age of 18 years, and
- 2) The report alleges harm or imminent risk of harm to the child, and
- 3) The alleged perpetrator is:
 - a. A parent or caretaker, or
 - b. A relative or other person living in the home, or
 - c. An educator, volunteer or employee of a recreational/ organizational setting who is responsible for the child; or any individual providing treatment, care or supervision for the child. (Note: you have a professional obligation to report suspected abuse. "If you think it. . . report it.")

C. Referral types:

Minor physical abuse	Lack of Supervision	Other
Severe physical abuse	Abandonment	Abuse – Death
Failure to thrive	Sexual Abuse	Neglect – Death
Malnutrition	Emotional Abuse	Substantial Risk, Physical Injury
Physical Neglect	Emotional Neglect	Substantial Risk, Sex Abuse
Medical Neglect	Educational Neglect	Substance Affected Infant

D. DCS does not investigate allegations of minor injuries that are the result of developmentally appropriate discipline or allegations of physical abuse of children by strangers or persons who were not in a caretaking role unless the parent refuses to take necessary action to protect the child from future harm.

DCS accepts all referrals involving sexual abuse of children under the age of 13 years regardless of the previous relationship between the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator. DCS does not investigate sexual abuse allegations of a child 13 to 18 years old by an alleged perpetrator who does not have a relationship with the child as defined in B.3) above. DCS may assist law enforcement or the district attorney's office in such cases if resources allow.

E. Child abuse may lead to behavioral manifestations in the child victim. While most of the below listed behavioral indicators can have numerous explanations besides child abuse, they are important when they are linked to abuse allegations (see next page).

Preadolescent	Adolescent
1. Stylized behavior; excessive seductiveness	1. Stylized behavior; excessive provocativeness beyond norm for age
2. Unusual interest in sex organs of self or others	2. Shy, withdrawn, overburdened appearance
3. Fearful or suspicious of adults	3. Change in school grades
4. Tugging at clothing in genital area	4. Running away
5. Tired, lethargic, sleepy appearance	5. Self-destructive behavior
6. Regressive behaviors, such as whining, negative changes in toilet habits	6. Substance abuse that is more than experimental
7. Persistent fears or overwhelming nightmares	7. Unwillingness to participate in group activities
8. Blaming or dislike of self	8. Stealing; shoplifting
9. Change in school grades	9. Pregnancy wishes
10. Public or excessive masturbation	10. Prostitution
11. Developmental delays	11. Fear or distrust of men, adults
12. Perceived and/or treated by parent as bad, unusual, and/or different	12. Statements about being bad or undesirable
13. Behavioral extremes (e.g., extremely aggressive or passive, persistent crying)	13. Wary of/avoidance of physical contact
14. Child assumes parent role (i.e., caretaking of one or both parents and/or siblings beyond normal "role-playing" for child's age.	14. Child assumes parent role (i.e., caretaking of one or both parents and/or siblings beyond normal "role-playing" for child's age.
	15. Excessive longing for affection
	16. Reluctant to change clothes for gym

F. Conversely, there are "normal" preadolescent and adolescent behaviors that in and of themselves that do not indicate great need for concern. These might include the following.

Preadolescent	Adolescent
1. Playing doctor.	1. Sexually explicit conversations, non-coercive, with similar age peers
2. Occasional masturbation	2. Sexual innuendo – flirting
3. Imitation – kissing and flirting	3. Hugging, kissing and holding hands
4. Genital conversations with similar age peers	4. Petting and fondling, non-coercive
5. Show me and I will show you mine with similar age peers	5. Dirty words or jokes

Associated Documents: INS-A085 Reporting Suspected Child Abuse
INS-A086 Accommodating DCS Investigations
INS-P040 Reporting Suspected Child Abuse Procedure
INS-P041 Accommodating DCS Investigations Procedure
INS-F139 Child Protective Services Intake Report
INS-F140 Department of Children's Services (DCS) Referral
INS-G017 Training Guidelines for Accommodating DCS Investigations

A flowchart detailing these training guidelines is below.

