

## **BOARD PROCEDURE**

**Descriptive Code: JGI**

### **STUDENT WELFARE – CHILD ABUSE**

**Date: August 11, 2008**

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Georgia law requires school system employees who have reasonable cause to suspect a child is abused or neglected to report this to the proper authority. System employees should understand that their obligation is to report the suspicion or allegation, not to investigate or decide the validity of the suspicion or allegation. Anyone making such a report in good faith is entitled to immunity, provided that the person making the report is not responsible for the abuse. Any person required to report a suspected case who knowingly and willfully fails to do so shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and conviction thereof shall be punished for a misdemeanor.

#### **Procedures for reporting child abuse or neglect are as follows:**

School personnel are not to do any extensive questioning of or obtain written statements from elementary students. Any questioning of young children should be limited to what is needed to gain information for reporting, as required by the statute, such as the nature and extent of the child's injuries, including any evidence of previous injuries, and any other information that the reporting person believes might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injuries and the identity of the perpetrator.

#### **Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect from Home**

Any staff member suspecting child abuse or neglect is to report to his or her principal/department head or his/her designee the suspicion immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe the child has been abused. The principal/department head is required to report the incident immediately to the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) using the CCSS Child Abuse/Neglect Referral Form. After verbally notifying DFCS, the principal or department head is to forward promptly a written referral to DFCS and the school social worker.

#### **Suspected Child Abuse by a School System Employee**

Upon receiving information that a staff member is suspected or accused of child abuse or neglect, the principal or department head should question the employee regarding the suspicion or allegation (if any). If after initial inquiry, talking with any witnesses, and consulting with a school safety officer, there is reasonable cause to suspect that a crime may have been committed, the principal or department head should notify the appropriate legal authority, the Human Resource Department, and the Superintendent's Office immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe the child has been abused. Following verbal notification, a written report is to be made to the superintendent.

#### **Suspected Child Abuse by Another Child**

Any complaint of inappropriate physical contact made by an elementary student against another student should not automatically be considered or assumed to be a crime. With the exception of incidents of statutory rape or aggravated sexual assault as defined in the Columbia County Student Code of Conduct, elementary student actions should be handled as disciplinary infractions and the incidents should be reported to the children's parents and the school safety

officer. The safety officer will assist in making the determination of any criminal activity and if the incident should be reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency. Such a report should be made immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe the child has been abused.

Any complaint of inappropriate physical contact made by a middle or high student against another student should be investigated, reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency, and acted upon in accordance with the Columbia County Student Code of Conduct.

The Columbia County School System superintendent is to be notified promptly of all cases of alleged child abuse or neglect when the alleged perpetrator is a CCBOE employee, the alleged abuse occurred on CCBOE property, or the local law enforcement is involved in the investigation.

When an official of either DFCS or the local law enforcement agency desires to speak with a student to investigate a complaint of abuse or neglect, the principal or his/her designee is to view proper identification of the official, to introduce the child to the investigator, and to remain present with the child throughout the meeting. Only with the written permission of the child's parent or guardian may school officials allow the child to meet alone with other agency officials. Photographs of the child's injuries to be used as documentation in support of allegations may be taken pursuant to state law, (Code Section 19-7-5 G), and, if reasonably possible, should be taken in a manner which shall not reveal the identity of the child. Parental notification should be coordinated between school officials and the other agencies involved depending upon the circumstances unique to each investigation.

All school personnel who have contact with students are to receive training in identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect. Annual updates on the identification and reporting of child abuse or neglect are provided to all veteran employees. – Standard G11.2; Authority O.C.G.A. 19-7-5; GBOE Rule 160-4-8-.04 (JGI)

During pre-planning the Columbia County School System social worker will provide to all school personnel new to the school system an in-service regarding the identifying and reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect cases. It is the responsibility of each principal and department head to provide an annual update on the identification and reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect to all veteran employees. An attendance roster (form 2 attached) will be utilized at each in-service to record the name, position, and school or site of each employee in attendance. These attendance rosters are to be kept on file by the school and the system social worker.

Children experiencing acute thoughts of self-harm or suicide should be handled according to Children Expressing Suicidal Ideations (Form 3 attached).

**ADOPTED:**

**REVISED: 8/13/02, 9/7/04, 8/13/02, 3/7/05, 10/11/05, 11/22/05, 6/21/06, 9/25/06, 4/14/08**

**Columbia County Board of Education**



CHILD ABUSE AND HIV/AIDS TRAINING/UPDATE  
ATTENDANCE ROSTER

SCHOOL YEAR: \_\_\_\_\_

Training/Update conducted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF CCSS EMPLOYEE	POSITION	SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT
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Please send completed copy of Attendance Roster to School Social Worker

## CHILDREN EXPRESSING SUICIDAL IDEATIONS

Children experiencing acute thoughts of self-harm or suicide have become a growing concern. These concerns frequently come to light while the child is present at a school facility, having disclosed these feelings to a peer or school personnel. There may be many reasons and factors contributing to the child's thoughts or ideation of self-harm. Issues of child maltreatment by the child's parent/guardian may or may not be one of the issues immediately apparent. In order to deal with every such occurrence in a consistent and effective manner and to help the child safely through the immediate crisis, the following guidelines for intervention will be followed:

1. The school principal or designee will be notified immediately by any school personnel who are aware that a child may have expressed thoughts or ideation of self-harm.
2. The school principal, designee, will contact either a guidance counselor, a school social worker, or a school psychologist, where one is available, to immediately talk with the child in question.
3. The school principal, designee, or the person who interviewed the child will contact the child's parent/guardian and inform him/her of concerns regarding the child's thoughts of self-harm or suicide except in those instances where child maltreatment by the parent or care provider is suspected.
4. In cases where the parent/guardian agrees to seek immediate help for the child, school principal or designee will obtain a release of information from the parent using the attached form and will follow up with mental health professional or physician to insure that parent followed through with appropriate action.
5. The school principal or designee will immediately contact DFCS in those instances where parental or care provider maltreatment of the child is suspected, the parental response to the behavior is believed to be insufficient to see the child safely through the crisis, or the school is unable to make parental contact.
6. DFCS will initiate a Child Protective Services (CPS) investigation immediately on all reports from a school indicating a child is expressing suicidal thoughts or ideation and parental maltreatment is suspected or parental response is insufficient to meet the child's immediate safety needs.
7. DFCS will immediately forward a copy of the report to the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction where the child resides.
8. On all reports meeting the above criteria, DFCS will immediately contact **Serenity Behavioral Health System** and request the assistance of a licensed therapist.
9. The Mental Health therapist will make the determination as to what interventions are required to address the child's immediate needs and ensure the child's safety.
10. DFCS will determine what interventions are necessary to ensure the child's safety in reports that involve allegations of maltreatment.
11. Should a school employee receive a phone call from a student expressing suicidal ideations during non-school hours, while on the phone with the student, the employee should gather as much information possible, i.e., student's full name, phone number, address, if there is anyone else with the student, etc. and then immediately call 911 and provide them with all the information gathered. As soon as possible, the employee is to notify his/her immediate supervisor of the event.

**PERMISSION TO GAIN/SHARE INFORMATION**

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

I have been informed by School Officials that my child has expressed thoughts of suicide or has threatened suicide or physical harm to himself/herself.

Accordingly, I understand that the Columbia County School System is concerned for the health and safety of my child and is required by policy to request that I, as the parent or guardian of such child, seek immediate help for my child from a physician, appropriate health care provider or appropriate governmental agency. I agree to seek such help immediately. I further understand the Columbia County School System is required by policy to contact such physician, health care provider or governmental agency to confirm the treatment or advice given and to follow up as appropriate for my child.

In this connection, I give my permission for the exchange of confidential information contained in the school, health or medical records of my child with his/her physician, appropriate health care provider(s) and/or governmental agency(s), and the Columbia County School System.

I further grant to the Columbia County School System permission to follow through and implement any recommendation or action that may be indicated by an order of the treating physician, appropriate health care provider or governmental agency, recognizing the order must be in writing and received by the School System before it can be implemented.

Signed this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
CHILD'S NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME OF PHYSICIAN/APPROPRIATE HEALTHCARE PROVIDER AND/OR GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE