

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

The Board recognizes that Maine law requires every school unit with a Pre-K through 5th grade program to adopt a policy for child sexual abuse prevention education and response. The Board adopts this policy in the interest of promoting the well-being of students and providing a supportive learning environment as well as compliance with the law.

For the purpose of this policy, “child sexual abuse” means any sexual engagement either through “hand on” or “hands off” activities between an adult and a child. Sexual engagement between children can also be sexual abuse when there is a significant age difference between the children involved or if the children are very different in development, size, or other power differential.

I. REPORTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

- A. Any employee of the school unit who has reason to suspect that a child has been sexually abused is to immediately notify the building principal or designated agent.
 - 1. In addition to notifying the building principal/designated agent, the employee may also make a report directly to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).
 - 2. School volunteers who have reason to suspect that a child has been sexually abused may report their suspicions directly to DHHS.
 - 3. Neither the employee or volunteer nor the building principal/designated agent should attempt to further question or interview the child nor otherwise undertake an investigation.
- B. If the reporting employee or volunteer does not receive written confirmation from the building principal/designated agent or Superintendent within 24 hours of his/her report that a report has been made to DHHS, the employee or volunteer shall make an immediate report directly to DHHS. In such cases, the employee or volunteer shall then complete a copy of the school unit’s Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Form (JLF-E).
- C. If the reporting employee or volunteer does receive written confirmation from the building principal/designated agent or Superintendent within 24 hours of his/her report (i.e., a copy of the Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Form (JLF-E)), he/she shall sign the form as acknowledgement that the report was made and return it to the building principal/administrator or Superintendent.
- D. The administrator reporting and confirmation duties shall be the same as provided in Section III of the Board’s policy JLF, Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect.

II. CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION EDUCATION FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL

All school personnel shall be required to complete a minimum of one hour of training in child sexual abuse awareness and prevention, with training to be updated at least once every four years thereafter. New employees must complete training within six months of hire.

Training must be “evidence-informed” (i.e., based on research and best practices) and delivered by a qualified instructor (i.e., a person with appropriate knowledge, skills, and experience or training in child sexual abuse awareness and prevention). The trainer may be an employee or volunteer with an agency/organization specializing in sexual assault and/or child sexual abuse or an employee of the school unit (e.g., school social worker, guidance counselor, school nurse, health educator) who has received appropriate training from such an agency/organization.

The goals of the training for school personnel are:

- Increased awareness of developmentally appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviors in children;
- Increased ability to recognize indicators of child sexual abuse;
- Enhanced ability to respond effectively when a student or student’s friend or peer discloses sexual activity or the staff member suspects child sexual abuse has occurred; and
- Awareness of local resources available to students, parents, schools, and community members, and how these resources may be accessed.

Training should also address confidentiality/disclosure concerns (beyond the mandated reporting).

III. CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION EDUCATION IN THE PRE-K THROUGH 5TH GRADE CURRICULUM

The school unit will provide child sexual abuse prevention programming to its Pre-K through grade 5 students. Such instruction will be aligned with the health education standards of Maine’s system of Learning Results for this grade span, and incorporated into the written school health education curriculum.

Programming of appropriate scope and sequence will be delivered by qualified instructors, who may

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be from a local or regional agency/organization with experience and expertise in sexual assault and child sexual abuse or by a school unit employee deemed competent by the Superintendent/designee to deliver such instruction. If the instructor is a school unit employee, the Board anticipates that this will be a person with the knowledge, skills, sensitivity and “comfort level” necessary to deliver the curriculum in the classroom setting, i.e., school nurse, school social worker, guidance counselor, or teacher with experience in health education. Any instructor who is a school employee is expected to take full advantage of the evidence-informed educational resources available on websites hosted by the DOE and/or MECASA. Any instructor who is a school employee should be familiar with the local community-based agencies/organizations that provide assistance or services to children and families that are experiencing or have experienced sexual assault or child sexual abuse.

It is the intent that the curriculum, as delivered in the classroom, will:

- Include age-appropriate education regarding physical and personal boundaries; including biologically accurate body terminology;
- Help children identify unsafe or uncomfortable situations including a range of feelings, touches, or violations of physical boundaries;
- Help children identify safe adults with whom they can talk about unsafe or uncomfortable situations.

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA §§ 254(18), 4502(5-C)
22 MRSA § 4011-A
20-A MRSA §§ 5051-A(1)(C); 5051-A(2)(C)

Cross Reference: JLF- Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect
JLF-E - Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect Report Form

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