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REPORTING ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Adopted from FISA BC Child Abuse and Neglect Policy Template

Purpose:

To protect students from abuse and neglect

Scope:

All employees and volunteers

Policy:

Khalsa School is committed to the prevention of child abuse and the enhancement of the well-being and safety of the students entrusted to its care. This commitment is made first and foremost as an ethical and legal responsibility, but is also recognized as a response to government and societal expectations for the well-being and safety of students.

Child abuse is a serious problem. Its impacts can last a lifetime and even extend to future generations. Understanding child abuse and neglect and knowing how to respond are critical. All of us – families, communities and service providers – share responsibility for the safety and well-being of British Columbia’s children. Khalsa School personnel are responsible both for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect to a child welfare worker and also for cooperating with resulting investigations. Identifying and supporting students who have experienced child abuse and neglect is important in meeting these responsibilities.

Procedure:

Protocol on Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect

Khalsa School uses the “BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect 2015” to provide guidelines for establishing our school policy on responding to child abuse and neglect.

Principles - BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect 2015 (page 14)

- The safety and well-being of children are the paramount considerations.
- Children are entitled to be protected from abuse, neglect, harm or threat of harm.
- A family is the preferred environment for the care and upbringing of children and the responsibility for the protection of children rests primarily with the parents.
- If, with available support services, a family can provide a safe and nurturing environment for a child, support services should be provided.
- The child’s views should be taken into account when decisions relating to a child are made.
- Kinship ties and a child’s attachment to the extended family should be preserved if possible.

- The cultural identity of Aboriginal children should be preserved.
- Decisions relating to children should be made and implemented in a timely manner

What is Child Abuse and Neglect?

The following definitions are adapted from BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect 2015 (pages 23-25):

Physical Abuse: a deliberate, non-accidental physical assault or action by a person that results in, or is likely to result in, physical harm to a child. It includes the use of unreasonable force to discipline a child or prevent a child from harming him/herself or others.

Emotional Harm: A child is defined as emotionally harmed if they demonstrate severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or self-destructive or aggressive behavior. Emotional abuse can include a pattern of scapegoating, rejection, verbal attacks, threats, insults, or humiliation. Emotional harm may also be caused by the child living in a situation where there is domestic violence by or towards a person with whom the child resides.

Sexual Abuse: When a child is used (or likely to be used) for the sexual gratification of another person. It includes:

- Touching or invitation to touch for sexual purposes;
- Intercourse (vaginal, oral or anal);
- Menacing or threatening sexual acts, obscene gestures, obscene communication or stalking;
- Sexual references to the child's body/behavior by words/gestures;
- Requests that the child expose their body for sexual purposes;
- Sexual aspects of organized or ritual abuse.

Sexual Exploitation: a form of sexual abuse that occurs when a child engages in a sexual activity, usually through manipulation or coercion, in exchange for money, drugs, food, shelter or other considerations. Sexual activity includes:

- Performing sexual acts;
- Sexually explicit activity for entertainment;
- Involvement with escort or massage parlour services; and
- Appearing in pornographic images.

Neglect: failure to provide for a child's basic needs. It involves an act of omission by the parent/guardian, resulting in (or likely to result in) harm to the child. Neglect may include failure to provide food, shelter, basic health care, supervision or protection from risks, to the extent that the child's physical health, development or safety is, or is likely to be, harmed.

Legal Duty to Report

The "Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFSA) requires that anyone who has reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be abused or neglected, and that the parent is

unwilling or unable to protect the child, **must** report the suspected abuse or neglect to a child welfare worker or directly to the police if a child is in immediate danger. “Reason to believe” simply means that, based on what you have seen or information you have received, you believe a child has been or is likely to be at risk.

Training

At the beginning of each school year, the school Principal at each campus will review with all school personnel the following 3 documents:

- 1) “BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect 2015” (BC Ministry of Children and Family Development)
https://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/child_protection/pdf/handbook_action_child_abuse.pdf
- 2) “Responding to Child Welfare Concerns” (BC Ministry of Children and Family Development),
https://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/child_protection/pdf/child_welfare_your_role.pdf
- 3) “Supporting our Students: A Guide for Independent School Personnel Responding to Child Abuse” (Office of the Inspector of Independent Schools BC)
http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/independent-schools/sos_guide_independent_schools.pdf

School personnel hired during the school year will be informed of the above information within one week of employment.

Reporting

Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

1. School personnel will report suspected child abuse, neglect or violence immediately. Everyone who has a reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be physically harmed, sexually abused or exploited, or neglected by a parent, or otherwise in need of protection as set out in Section 13 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act is legally responsible under section 14 of that Act to report promptly to a social worker. School personnel, who are uncertain about their duty to report, will consult with a social worker who can discuss the options and course of action.
2. School personnel will inform the “Appointed School Official” (ASO) of the situation as soon as possible. The Principal at each campus is designated as the ASO. If the ASO is the alleged abuser, then school personnel, after reporting to the previously mentioned agencies, will report to the Director of Education who will immediately inform the chairperson of the Board of Trustees.
3. The police must be contacted immediately if the child is in immediate danger.

4. School personnel will not contact the parents or guardians who may be involved in allegedly abusing the child; this is the responsibility of the child welfare worker.
5. School personnel will cooperate fully with any resulting investigation.
6. Schools will protect personal information regarding child abuse, neglect or violence against improper or unauthorized disclosure and use.
7. School personnel will support students who have experienced child abuse, neglect or violence.

Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect by a Service Provider (School Personnel and Volunteers)

Under the “Child, Family and Community Service Act,” anyone who has reason to believe a child has been or is likely to be abused or neglected by an employee, contractor, service provider or volunteer in an agency or organization, should contact the agency or organization to ensure that the appropriate person is informed, and able to respond according to their mandate. You may also contact a child welfare worker to discuss the situation. The police should be called if a criminal offence is suspected.

At Khalsa School, the principal at each campus serves as the Appointed School Official and should be informed of any concerns against school personnel or volunteers. The ASO will investigate the allegations and report the matter to a Child Welfare Worker if there is reason to believe that the child is in need of protection, or the police if there is reason to believe the child is in imminent danger or that a criminal offense has been committed. The principal has the authority under the Independent School Act (ISA), Section 7 (2) (b) to suspend a school staff member whose presence threatens the safety and welfare of students. The principal also has the authority to issue a “No Trespass Order” prohibiting attendance at school by a volunteer or contract worker whose presence threatens the safety and welfare of students.

School personnel who have reason to believe that another employee, volunteer, contract service provider or other person on school property or supervising a school activity outside of the school has abused a student, must report the incident or information to the ASO. It is the responsibility of the principal to investigate the allegations and, in collaboration with other school personnel and directors, determine what action is required.

Additional Resources

- Appendix
- Helpline for Children: Phone # 310-1234 from anywhere in BC (no area code needed)
- Ministry of Children and Family Development Child Protection Publications:
http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/child_protection/publications.htm
- Safe, Caring & Orderly Schools resources:
<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sco/resources.htm>