

HOPKINTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE POLICY

MANDATED REPORTING OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 119, § 51A, any public or private school teacher, educational administrator, guidance or family counselor, nurse, social worker, or member of certain other professions who in his/her professional capacity shall have reasonable cause to believe that a child under eighteen years of age is suffering physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse inflicted upon him/her which causes harm or substantial risk of harm to the child's health or welfare including sexual abuse, or from neglect, including malnutrition, shall **immediately** report such conditions to the Department of Social Services. School employees meet their responsibilities for reporting by informing the school principal (see How to Report below). A written report to DSS must then be filed within 48 hours. The Hopkinton Public Schools affirms its responsibility to provide for the safety and well-being of students. This responsibility extends to fully complying with the Massachusetts Mandatory Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Statute, Chapter 119, Section 51A. It is expected then, that when any staff member in his/her professional capacity, has reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of eighteen years is suffering from the effects of any form of child abuse and neglect, that the staff member will report his/her concerns to the building principal for consideration of reporting to the Department of Social Services.

How to Report

The school staff member informs the principal or administrator in charge if she/he has reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of 18 years is being abused or neglected.

The building principal, staff member informing the principal, school nurse and/or counselor, or a school-based child abuse crisis team constituted by the principal, must discuss the case and decide a plan of action which must include an immediate oral report followed by a written report within 48 hours to the Department of Social Services whenever there is reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of 18 years is being abused or neglected. Mandated reporters are not permitted to weigh the credibility of witnesses or sift the evidence or determine whether DSS would find reasonable cause to conclude that abuse did in fact occur. Mandated reporters are not investigators and need only have reasonable cause.

Staff Awareness of Responsibilities

Principals shall ensure that all school staff is fully informed of responsibilities to report suspected child abuse and neglect and must ensure that reporting procedures are followed in all cases. The Superintendent shall ensure that annual training is provided to principals and administrators in regard to compliance issues and best practices in regard to the reporting of child abuse and neglect.

Adoption Date: October 17, 2002

Hopkinton School Committee
Hopkinton, Massachusetts