



**RICHMOND  
CHRISTIAN  
SCHOOL**

EST. 1957

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| POLICY NUMBER AND NAME:<br><b>04.10.01 SUSPECTED CASES OF CHILD ABUSE – VERSION 1.0</b> | RESPONSIBILITY                  | BOARD | SUPERINTENDENT | SLT |
|                                                                                         |                                 | A     | D              | I   |
| SECTION: 04 – STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND EDUCATION                                          | LAST REVISION DATE:             |       |                |     |
| ADOPTED: FEBRUARY 27, 2023                                                              | REVIEW FREQUENCY: EVERY 5 YEARS |       |                |     |

#### PREAMBLE

The Administration shall ensure all school employees are aware of the duty to report suspected child abuse and neglect and RCS's reporting procedures. The Administration shall also facilitate and support any investigations conducted by the appropriate authorities to ensure that suspected cases of child abuse and neglect are investigated in the least intrusive and most respectful way possible for the child.

| REVIEW HISTORY |         |         |
|----------------|---------|---------|
| DATE           | VERSION | CHANGES |
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## 1. BACKGROUND

- a. Richmond Christian School recognizes that all RCS employees play a unique and important role in the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect. RCS recognizes its responsibilities in the prevention of child abuse and neglect and in the reporting of suspected cases of abuse and neglect to the appropriate authority/authorities.
- b. The Child, Family and Community Service Act imposes a duty on any person who has reason to believe that a child needs protection to promptly report the matter to the appropriate authorities.
- c. “Reason to believe” means that, based on observation or information received, the person believes that a child has been or is likely to be at risk.
- d. Understanding child abuse and neglect and knowing how to take appropriate action are critical in protecting our students. Responding to child abuse and neglect is a societal responsibility. RCS staff share this responsibility with parents, child protection social workers, police, and every citizen. RCS staff can help by identifying and reporting suspected child abuse and neglect, cooperating with all investigations, and supporting our students, both emotionally and socially, in our classrooms and schools.
- e. Child abuse and neglect means the physical or emotional injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child under the age of 19 by a person who is responsible for the child’s care. Child abuse refers to the non-accidental situations in which a child suffers physical trauma, deprivation of basic physical and developmental needs, or emotional injury as a result of an act or omission by a parent, supervisor, or legal guardian.
- f. There are three major categories of abuse:
  - i. Physical or sexual abuse (physical injuries, molestation, incest or sexual abuse)
  - ii. Physical neglect (gross lack of supervision or abandonment, gross or repeated failure to meet the child’s nutritional needs, failure to seek or comply with needed medical advice)
  - iii. Emotional injury or neglect (failure to meet the emotional needs of the child for normal development, refusal to recognize and seek help for a child’s emotional disturbance)

## 2. APPOINTED SCHOOL OFFICIALS

- a. As outlined in the Ministry of Education document, “*Supporting our Students; A Guide for Independent School Personnel Responding to Child Abuse*,” there must be two appointed school officials who are responsible for working with childcare workers to determine whether a child has been harmed by someone who works or volunteers at the school, or works on contract for the school. The role of the alternate appointed official is to ensure that continuity

of the reporting and investigating process in the event of the possible involvement of the primary appointed official.

- b. In fulfilling the role as a school's Appointed School Official, a person may be required to:
  - i. investigate where appropriate on behalf of the school authority;
  - ii. ensure a safe school environment during investigations;
  - iii. consult with the child welfare worker and/or police;
  - iv. ensure that no school employee interferes with any investigations;
  - v. communicate with parents with respect to actions taken by the school authority;
  - vi. report to the Commission for Teacher Regulation, Teacher Regulation Branch, Ministry of Education, when the School Authority dismisses, suspends or otherwise disciplines a certified teacher or school principal (Independent School Act section 7 and 7.2); and,
  - vii. refer student(s) for counseling according to the school's policies.
- c. The **appointed school officials** shall be:
  - i. **Primary Official** – the Campus Principal
  - ii. **Alternate Officials** - the on-staff school counsellor or Superintendent

## PROCEDURES

### 1. Duty to Report

- a. The legal duty to report is the responsibility of each individual.
- b. Any person with reason to believe that a child needs protection, or is likely to need protection, has a duty to report directly to a Child Protection Social Worker at the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
  - i. If you have any doubts or questions about the Ministry of Children and Family Development term "reason to believe," contact the Child Protection Social Worker and seek advice.
  - ii. Also, if you have any doubts about whether a report should be made, or whether further questions need to be asked, contact the Child Protection Social Worker and seek advice.
- c. Informing another person (e.g. colleague, Principal) does not discharge your legal duty to report directly to a Child Protection Social Worker.
- d. **If a child is in immediate danger, police should also be called. Call 911.**

## 2. Reporting Procedures

### a. **When the suspected abuser is an adult outside the school system:**

- i. Call 911 if the student is in immediate danger - Immediate danger means that an emergency is occurring and the reporting employee is currently witnessing harm.
- ii. Provide a verbal report to Campus Principal
- iii. Document the information on the “Report of Suspected Child Abuse” form (attached)
- iv. Make a Report to a Ministry of Children & Family Development Child Protection Worker (1-800-663-9122).
  - 1) If the report is being made because of a student’s disclosure, the staff member receiving the disclosure shall make the report to MCFD immediately.
  - 2) Whenever possible, when making the report, the reporting person should have available the child’s name, address, and birthdate, parent(s) names, sibling(s) names, indicate if the child is Aboriginal or if an interpreter will be needed.
  - 3) The child protection worker will also ask for as much of the following information as is available:
    - a) The child’s location
    - b) Whether there are any immediate concerns about the child’s safety
    - c) Why you believe the child is at risk
    - d) Any statements or disclosures made by the child
    - e) Information about the family, parents and alleged offender
    - f) Information about siblings or other children who may be at risk
    - g) Whether you know of any previous incidents involving, or concerns about the child
    - h) Information about other persons or agencies closely involved with the child and/or family
    - i) Information about other persons who may be witnesses or may have information about the child
    - j) Information about the nature of the child’s disabilities, his or her mode of communication, and the
    - k) name of a key support person, and
    - l) Any other relevant information concerning the child and/or family such as language or culture.

- v. Do not contact the parents of the child. This is the responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
    - 1) MCFD may involve the RCMP in a joint investigation.
  - vi. Do not inform parent(s), suspected abuser or any other parties. This is the responsibility of the Child Protection Social Worker.
  - vii. Put the “Report of Suspected Child Abuse” form or your summary in an envelope, seal it, sign it, and bring to the office to be stored in a secure location.
- b. **When the suspected abuser is a school employee, contract service provider or a volunteer:**
- i. The same procedures as above are to be followed
  - ii. If the suspected abuser is an administrator, contact the Board Chairperson.
  - iii. Do not inform the parent(s), suspected abuser or any other parties.
- c. **When the abuser is a child:**
- i. notify and consult with the principal of the school. It may or may not result in a report to the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
3. **Responsibilities of the School Administrator:**
- Upon receiving a report of suspected child abuse or disclosure, the school administrator shall:
- a. Support the reporting employee in their duty to report.
  - b. Support the MCFD or RCMP investigation team.
    - i. School administrators shall allow the investigating child protection worker and/or the police to interview the child in the school. As the school is a safe, neutral environment in which to conduct interviews, child protection workers or police officers may choose the school as an interview site.
    - ii. The school administrator may discuss the need for school representative presence during the interview with the child protection worker or police officer. However, the presence of a school representative during the interview is not mandatory. It is expected that the administrator shall afford the investigating child protection worker or police officer all pertinent information.
  - c. Follow-up from the Child Protection Worker
    - i. Section 16 of the Child, Families and Community Services Act requires the Ministry of Children and Family Development to make reasonable efforts to report results of the child protection investigation to the reporter. The employee who made the abuse report or the school administrator originally informed of the allegation by the

employee may follow up the matter with the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

- d. Support the Child
  - i. If the student's ability to function at school is affected by the investigation or the results of the investigation, the school administrator may, in consultation with the Ministry of Children and Family Development, arrange for appropriate support or assistance to be provided to the student.

#### 4. **Procedures for Supporting the Student:**

When it becomes apparent that a student may be communicating to you verbally or non-verbally that he or she is being neglected and/or abused

- a. Remain calm and proceed slowly. Set aside the time needed to listen carefully to the student and be supportive.
- b. Listen to the student as he/she tells her story. Allow the child to communicate at his or her pace and comfort level. Document only the facts as the student has told them to you.
- c. Wherever possible, questions should be framed in an open-ended manner. Leave more detailed questioning to MCFD and/or RCMP.
- d. Reassure the student that he or she has not done anything wrong in sharing this information and that doing so will lead to accessing help.
- e. Be honest and up front about the fact that you will need to share this information with people who are specialized in helping children and their families. Reassure the child that you will inform him or her of what will happen next.
- f. Ensure that supports are in place for the student. Clarify with MCFD what your role will be during the investigative phase.