

Students

Welfare

Reporting of Child Abuse/Neglect

The Watertown Unified School District is concerned with the health, safety and welfare of all children and recognizes the legal and ethical obligations that school employees have to report suspected or threatened child abuse or neglect. Therefore, the Board expects school employees to carry out those obligations with due diligence in accordance with state law requirements.

Any school employee having reasonable cause to suspect that a child seen in the course of their duties has been abused or neglected or having reason to believe that a child has been threatened with abuse or neglect and that abuse or neglect will occur, shall report that suspicion or belief to the appropriate authorities. At all times it shall be the aim of the school employee to make the report to county child protective services or law enforcement personnel as quickly as possible. Any delay would not be in the best interests of the child and is not the policy of the District.

A school employee making a child abuse or neglect report shall inform the building principal or his/her designee of the report so they are aware of the situation. School employees may also consult with student services staff (i.e. school social worker, school guidance counselor, or school psychologist) on the reporting process and any necessary follow-up activities. No building principal or other District employee may attempt to delay, modify or prevent any report of suspected or threatened child abuse or neglect. It is not the responsibility of school personnel to investigate child abuse or neglect reports or to prove that abuse or neglect has occurred or will occur. Investigation of child abuse and neglect reports is the legal responsibility of trained county child protective services and/or law enforcement personnel.

All information pertaining to a child abuse or neglect report shall be kept confidential, including the identity of the reporter, and shall only be shared with those individuals specifically authorized by law to have access to that information.

The District shall not take any disciplinary action against a school employee, discriminate against an employee in regard to employment, or threaten an employee with any such treatment for making a child abuse or neglect report in good faith under this policy. School employees may be subject to school disciplinary action, as well as penalties under state law, for failure to report suspected or threatened child abuse or neglect which they have knowledge of or for divulging confidential child abuse and neglect report information to an unauthorized person.

If a school employee or student is suspected of misconduct under this policy, the District shall conduct its own internal investigation to determine appropriate school disciplinary and other actions.

The District Administrator shall establish any necessary procedures to implement this policy and to comply with state law requirements. To maintain awareness on the part of school employees of their child abuse and neglect reporting responsibilities under this policy and state law, each school employee shall participate in required training in identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect. In addition, school employees shall be informed of this policy and its implementing procedures annually through the employee handbook and through other means deemed appropriate by the District Administrator.

Legal References: Wisconsin Statute - Section 48.02
Wisconsin Statute - Section 48.981
Wisconsin Statute - Section 115.31
Wisconsin Statute - Section 118.01(2)(d)8
Wisconsin Statute - Section 118.07(5)
Wisconsin Statute - Section 118.125
Wisconsin Statute - Section 118.126(1)
Federal Laws and Regulations - Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

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