

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Child abuse and neglect is a growing concern in schools throughout the world. Child abuse and neglect is a violation of children's human rights and an obstacle to their education and development.

Schools hold a particular institutional role in society to protect children and to insure all children are afforded a safe and secure environment in which to grow and develop. Schools and educators, having the opportunity to observe and interact with children over a long period of time, are in a unique position to identify children who need help and protection. As such, schools and educators have a professional and ethical obligation to identify children who are in need of help and protection and to take steps to ensure that the child and family avail of the services needed to remedy any situation that constitutes child abuse or neglect. In addition to protecting children from abuse and neglect, schools must also protect them from suspected or identified abusers and sex offenders.

All staff employed at ZIS must report suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect whenever the staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect. Staff members must also report suspected or identified child abusers and sex offenders. Reporting and follow through of all suspected incidences shall proceed in accordance with administrative regulations respective to this policy. Furthermore, cases of suspected child abuse/abusers and neglect may be reported to appropriate employment sponsor, to the respective embassy in Bern, to the appropriate child protection agency in the home country, and/or local authorities.

Zurich International School endorses the Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which the host country Switzerland is a signatory and seeks to be a safe haven for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives, or exposed to a suspected or identified child sex offender. ZIS will make child protection a part of every aspect of the school. As such, ZIS will distribute this policy annually to all parents, will communicate this policy annually to students, will provide annual training for all staff and will make every effort to implement hiring practices to ensure the safety of children. In the case of a staff member or community member is reported as an alleged offender, ZIS will conduct a full investigation following carefully designed course of due process.

Neglect is: failure to provide for a child's basic needs within their own environment. Neglect may be:

Physical: (e.g., failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision- this would include failure to provide proper adult guardianship such as leaving children unsupervised at home for any extended period of time. Should parents/guardians leave the country for any reason then the responsibility for informing the school of all appropriate contact details lies with the parent or guardian.

Temporary changes of guardian forms are available from ZIS. These are expected to be completed prior to parents/guardians leaving the country)

Medical: (e.g., failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment)

Emotional: (e.g., a pattern of actions, such as: inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs,

specific examples may include verbal humiliation, refusing to acknowledge presence of a child, invasion of privacy for no specific reason, violent threats, etc.)

Abuse: Inflicting physical injury on a child by other than accidental means, causing skin bruising, burns, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, or loss or impairment of any bodily function, death; and creating a substantial risk of physical harm to a child's bodily functioning; and/or committing acts that are cruel or inhumane regardless of observable injury. Such acts may include, but are not limited to, instances of extreme discipline demonstrating a disregard of a child's pain and/or mental suffering; and/or assaulting or criminally mistreating a child as defined by either the criminal code or school policy; and/or engaging in actions or omissions resulting in injury to, or creating a substantial risk to the physical or mental health or development of a child; and/or failing to take reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any of the above.

Sexual Abuse: committing or allowing sexual offense to be committed against a child as defined in either the criminal code of the host county or school policy, or intentionally touching either directly or through clothing, the genitals, anus, or breasts of a child for other than hygiene or child care purposes.

Sexual abuse has some different characteristics of child abuse that warrant special attention. While physical abuse is often the result of immediate stress and not usually planned, sexual abuse requires planning with results that are more insidious. The planning, referred to as *Grooming*, often results in victims accepting the blame, responsibility, guilt and shame for the sexual behavior of the offender. Sexual abuse requires far more secrecy than other forms of child abuse, so is more difficult to report.

Many victims, through the process of *grooming*, are taught that the sex is a form of love, so tend to love their offender and often present as happy and well-adjusted children with no negative symptoms because of their perception of being loved.

Working with the sexual offender cannot be done by school counselor.

Child Protection Procedures

Procedures for Reporting Suspected Cases of Child Abuse or Neglect

Where there is cause to suspect an incident of child abuse or neglect, or a pattern of behavior that indicates a child may be subject to abuse or neglect, it is the responsibility of the faculty/staff member to report this suspected incident to the building principal of the school division in which the child is enrolled. It is the responsibility of the principal to inform the Director of the suspected case of child abuse and neglect.

The principal will form a response team to include the referring teacher, school nurse and counselor and will take initial steps to gather information regarding the matter. In all cases, follow up activities will be conducted in a manner to insure information is documented concisely and factually and that strict confidentiality is maintained.

Procedures for Addressing Sexual and Physical Abuse

Based on the information acquired, a plan of action is developed to assist the child. Possible actions include:

- Interviews between the child and counselor to attempt to gain more information. Depending upon the age of the child these interviews may include drawing pictures,

- play with dolls and conversation with the child in an attempt to elicit more information as to what may or may not have occurred
- Ongoing in-class observations of the child by the teacher, counselor or administrator
- Meetings with the family to present our concerns
- Referral of the student and family to external professional counseling services
- Consultation with the school attorney
- Informal consultation with the local authorities. While not actively involved, they have provided guidance as to what actions on our part they would find acceptable

Ethical Mandate for Reporting

A report of child abuse to external authorities by the Director must be submitted within 48 hours after there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse. Any report or other action must be kept confidential.

Reporting To Outside Authorities:

When making a report to authorities, the Director or Designate must include as much of the following information as is available or can be gathered through interviews with teachers and other relevant adults close to the child.

Follow Up and Continuing Support:

In the incidence of a reported or substantiated case of child abuse or neglect:

- The counselor will maintain follow up contact with the child and family to provide support and guidance as appropriate
- The school counselor will meet with the child's teachers and the school principal to provide in-service training regarding the needs of abused or neglected children and the important role teachers play in assisting the child's recovery and future development.
- The counselor will provide resource materials and strategies for teacher use
- The counselor will maintain contact with outside therapists and investigators to update the situation of the child in school.

All documentation of the investigation will be kept in the child's school records file and will be a part of information sent to schools to which the student may transfer.

