

Child Protection Handbook



International School of Dakar

Dear Parents,

I am writing to inform you of a matter that is of sincere personal interest to me and is one that I am sure is of utmost importance to all of you. I would like you to know that the ISD Board of Trustees has adopted a Child Protection Policy to guide our staff and families in matters related to the health, safety and care of children in attendance at our school. This policy is not in response to an issue but is following best practice. I am required by this policy to send a letter to parents annually. Thus with this letter not only am I fulfilling my assigned duties; I also have the opportunity to write to you about this important aspect of our school's program.

The ISD Child Protection Policy is based on international law and on the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* of which Senegal is a signatory. These two key articles from the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* are important and we wish to draw your attention to them.

Article 19 - Protection from abuse and neglect

The State shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programs for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims.

Article 34 - Sexual exploitation

The State shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.

By enrolling your child at ISD, you agree to work in partnership with the school and abide by the policies adopted by the ISD Board of Trustees. All of us at ISD want you to know that we genuinely value our partnership with you in providing for the safety and care of your children. It is for this reason that ISD has endorsed a Child Protection Policy that defines the standards by which all ISD students should be treated with respect and dignity at all times. As part of our overall educational programs and specific to our shared responsibility to educate children and to ensure a safe environment in which all children can learn and grow ISD will:

- Provide age appropriate lessons for all grade levels to help students understand personal safety, needs and rights.
- Provide parent materials and information sessions to help you better understand our programs and policy.
- Annually train faculty and staff to recognize and report issues of abuse and neglect.

Let's work together at home and school to ensure that our children are safe and are knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities to themselves and to each other so they can grow and learn free of fear in a safe and supportive environment. I thank you for your support of our efforts and invite you to contact your school counselor or principal regarding any specific questions you may have in this regard.

Sincerely,
Alan Knobloch

8.6018 ISD Policy: Child Protection

Child abuse and neglect are violations of a child's human rights and are obstacles to the child's education as well as to their physical, social, and emotional development. The International School of Dakar endorses the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, to which our host country, Senegal, is a signatory.

All staff at the International School of Dakar must report suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect whenever the staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered or is at significant risk of suffering abuse or neglect. Reporting and follow up of all suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect will proceed in accordance of administrative regulations under this policy. Furthermore, cases of suspected child abuse or neglect may be reported to the appropriate employer, to the respective consulate in Dakar, to the appropriate child protection agency in the home country, and to local authorities.

ISD will distribute this policy annually to all parents and applicants, communicate this policy annually to students, provide training for all staff, and make every effort to implement hiring practices to insure the safety of children. In the case of a staff member reported as an alleged offender, the International School of Dakar will conduct a full investigation following a carefully designed course of due process, keeping the safety of the child at the highest priority.

Please refer to the Parent-Student Handbook for more details.

For detailed information on the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* see the following link: http://unicef.org/crc/index_30160.html



How is abuse and neglect defined?

Definitions of abuse are complex and based in various cultures of child-rearing behaviors, gender and role responsibilities and expectations. The primary determination of abuse is that it is dependent on some form of a relationship that is used to meet the need of the more powerful person, either a member of the family, a teacher, or a friend.

Abuse is:

- Inflicting physical injury on a child by other than accidental means, causing skin bruising, burns, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, loss or impairment of any bodily function, or death.
- Creating a substantial risk of physical harm to a child's bodily functioning.
- 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 disregard for a child's pain and mental suffering.
- Assaulting or criminally mistreating a child as defined by either the criminal code or school policy.
- 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.
- Failing to take reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any of the above.

Possible Indicators of Physical Abuse

- Unexplained bruises and welts on any part of the body
- Bruises of different ages (various colors)
- Injuries reflecting shape of article used (electric cord, belt, buckle, ping pong paddle, hand)
- Injuries that regularly appear after absence or vacation
- Unexplained burns, especially to soles, palms, back, or buttocks
- Burns with a pattern from an electric burner, iron, or cigarette
- Rope burns on arms, legs, neck, or torso
- Injuries inconsistent with information offered by the child
- Immersion burns with a distinct boundary line
 - Unexplained laceration, abrasions, or fractures.



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, including failure to provide proper adult guardianship, such as leaving children unsupervised at home for an extended period of time).
- 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 drugs. Specific examples may include verbal humiliation, violent threats, etc.).

Possible Indicators of Neglect

- Child is unwashed or hungry
- Parents are uninterested in child's academic performance
- Parents do not respond to repeated communications from the school
- Child does not want to go home
- Both parents or legal guardian are absent from Dakar for any period of 24 hours or greater
- Parents can not be reached in the case of emergency



Sexual abuse

is committing or allowing to be committed any sexual offense against a child as defined in either the criminal code of the host country 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 counselors.

Possible Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Sexual knowledge, behavior, or use of language not appropriate to age level
- Unusual interpersonal relationship patterns
- Venereal disease in a child of any age
- Evidence of physical trauma or bleeding to the oral, genital, or anal areas
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Refusing to change into PE clothes, fear of bathrooms
- Child running away from home and not giving any specific complaint
- Not wanting to be alone with an individual
- Pregnancy, especially at a young age

What happens when a teacher has reasonable cause to believe there is abuse or neglect?

These indicators of abuse and neglect will be used by the staff member as a guideline for reporting to the counselor, who will determine if the case needs further attention. A report must be made when a staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect. All reports are confidential.

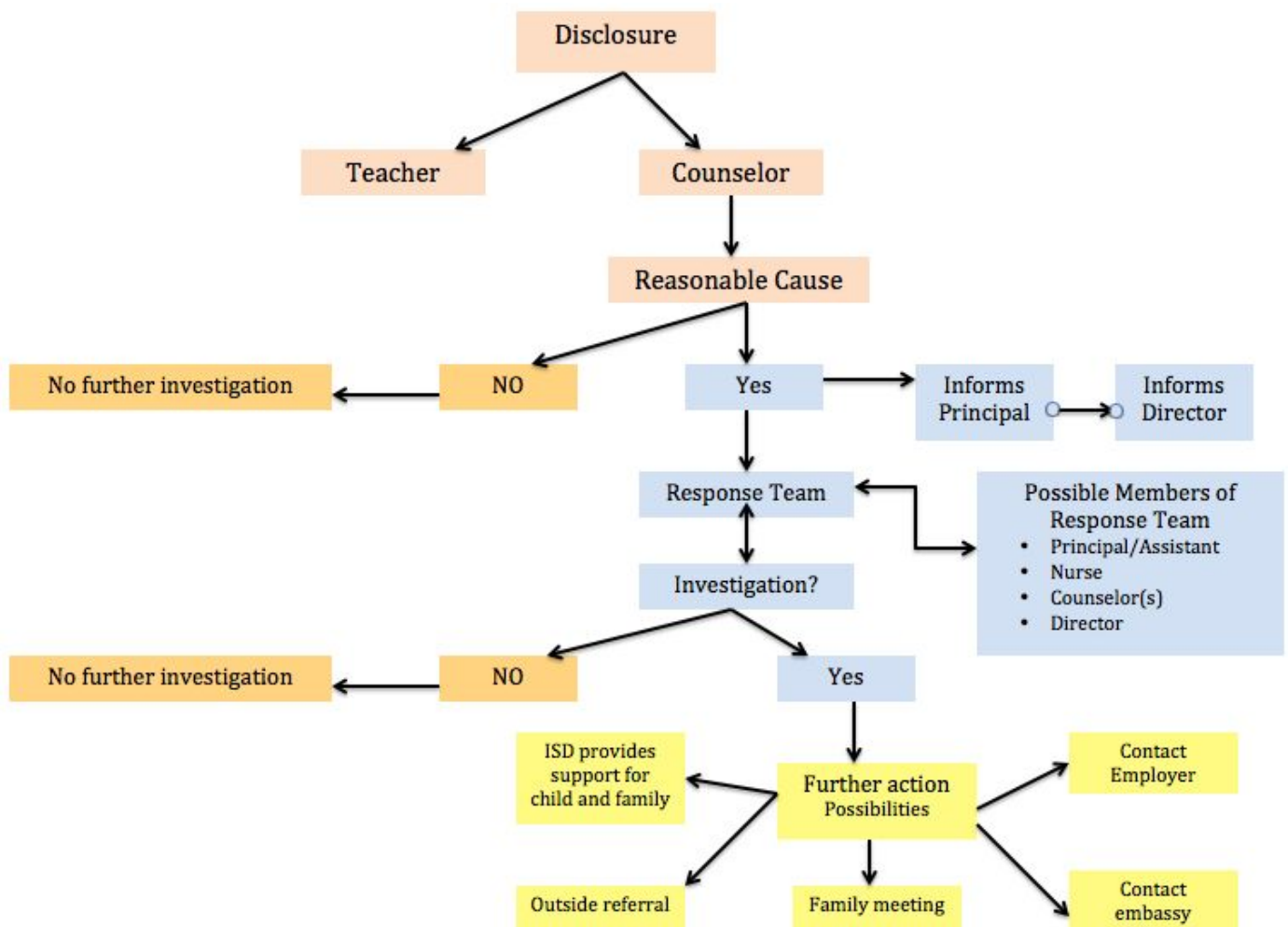


What happens after suspected abuse or neglect is reported?

Where there is cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, it is the responsibility of the staff member to report their suspicions to the counselor, or to the principal. In all cases, the principal will be notified. It is the responsibility of the principal to inform the Director of the suspected case of child abuse or neglect.

All staff, faculty and administrators are mandated to report incidences of abuse and neglect. All ISD employees are also required to report suspicion of abuse or neglect. All reports of abuse and neglect must be made to the counselor within 24 hours for immediate response.

Steps followed after disclosure



- This process is modeled after the reporting flow chart in the AISA Child Protection Handbook.

Procedures for reporting suspected cases of child abuse or neglect

Step 1

When a child reports abuse or there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse is occurring, the teacher will seek advice from the grade level counselor within 24 hours. The counselor will take initial steps to gather information regarding the reported incident and will form a school-based response team as needed to address the report. The response team could include the school nurse, counselor, principal, and other individuals as the director sees fit. In all cases, follow up activities will be conducted in a manner that ensures that information is documented factually and that strict confidentiality is maintained. The following procedure will be used:

1. Interview staff members as necessary and document information relative to the case
2. Consult with school personnel to review the child's history in school
3. Report status of case to the Director
4. Determine the course of follow-up actions



Step 2

Based on acquired information, a plan of action will be developed to assist the child and family. Actions that **may** take place are:

- Discussions between the child and counselor in order to gain more information. Depending upon the age of the child, these discussions may include drawing pictures and playing with dolls to elicit more information as to what may have occurred.
- In-class observations of the child by the teacher, counselor, or administrator.
- Meetings with the family to present the School's concerns.
- Referral of the student and family to external professional counseling.
- Notification of the management of the sponsoring employer of the concern with the child/family, or to the welfare office at the home-of-record.
- Consultation with the embassy or consulate of the country of the involved family.
- Informal consultation with local authorities.

Most cases of suspected abuse or neglect will be handled by school counselors, such as those involving:

- Student relationships with peers
- Parenting skills related to disciplining children at home
- Student-parent relationships

Some cases will be referred to outside resources, for example:

Mental health issues such as depression, low self-esteem, grieving.

Cases reported for investigation and outside resources:

- Severe and ongoing physical abuse or neglect
- Sexual abuse and incest.

In extreme cases when families do not stop the abuse or concerns remain about the safety of the child, reports could be made to:

- The consulate
- The employer
- The home-of-record welfare office.

Step 3:

Subsequent to a reported and/or substantiated case of child abuse or neglect:

- The counselor will maintain contact with the child and family to provide support and guidance as appropriate.
- The counselor will provide the child's teachers and the principal with ongoing support.
- The counselor will provide resource materials and strategies for teacher use.
- The counselor will maintain contact with outside therapists to update the progress of the child in school.

All documentation of the investigation will be kept in the divisional counselor's office in a separate confidential file that will be passed to the next divisional counselor when the child moves up. Records sent to schools to which their student may transfer will be flagged to let the receiving school know there is a confidential file for the child. ISD will make every attempt to share this information to protect the child.

In the event that the abuse or neglect allegation involves a staff or faculty member of ISD, the divisional principal will follow board policy pursuant to ethical professional behavior.

What does a Child Protection Policy mean for the ISD community?

ISD is defining a standard for the treatment of all children and youth - that they be treated with respect and dignity at all times.

Children and youth have legal and moral rights to their individuality, that when protected, will develop into the ability to meet the needs of the family, community, and global society. Child protection standards defined by ISD encompass all cultures and international law. When given reasonable cause to believe that these rights are violated, ISD will seek all available resources to restore those rights.

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Middle States Association



Council of International Schools



International Baccalaureate (IB)

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