

School-based Prevention Services:

Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting Best Practices

If a student reports they are being abused or neglected, or someone is suspicious of abuse or neglect:

➤ **You must promptly report this to the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS).** Oklahoma law expressly requires that **every person** having reason to believe that a child is a victim of abuse or neglect shall promptly report the matter to DHS. **The number to DHS Child Abuse Hotline is 1-800-522-3511.**

- This **does not** equate to solely reporting this to the principal or someone else in the chain of command at the school.
- **Counselors should be available to sit in** with the other person while the report to DHS is made.
- The [Child Abuse Reporting Form](#) should be completed. The report should **NEVER** go into the cumulative folder, but a private file in the counselor's office. A copy may also be sent to the district office to be kept in a private file.

➤ If a DHS official and/or the police come to the school to interview the child, **a school official MAY sit in the interview** with the student's permission. However, anyone who sits in while a student reports abuse to police or DHS may be called to testify in court.

- If DHS and/or police come to the school to interview a child or investigate abuse, a [Child Abuse Investigation Form](#) should be completed. The report should **NEVER** go into the cumulative folder, but a private file in the counselor's office. A copy may also be sent to the district office to be kept in a private file.

➤ If the student **needs medical attention**, they should be referred to the nurse and/or emergency medical responders immediately.

➤ **Police MUST be contacted any time a Child Abuse Report is made.** This could include informing the on-site School Resource Officer. Consider giving police a copy of the DHS form you filled out.

➤ If you are questioning whether you should contact DHS about a situation, the answer is almost always, **YES YOU SHOULD.** Remember that **our job is to report information, not to investigate.** That job is for the police and DHS.

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- Even if you have made a **previous report** about a student, it is almost always appropriate to **file another report**. When you file the report, you can refer to the case numbers from the former reports. However, filing a new report is important in order to continue to "build a case" for DHS to investigate.
- If a parent/guardian or someone else close to a child confronts you on why you called DHS, **best practice is to NOT talk to them about this**. You can say, "We do not discuss things like this in our district. If you have questions, you can contact (the appropriate district-level administrator)."
- All documentation for a report must be turned in to a district-level administrator **within 24 hours** so they have it on file.
- A **district-level administrator should be notified** as soon as possible, even before the paperwork is turned in.

What is the Law?

Child Sexual Abuse Reporting and Education Requirements

Erin's Law requires Oklahoma public schools to train staff on identifying and reporting abuse, and it allows schools to provide age-appropriate curriculum, decided on by local districts, to students, on what abuse is and how to report it.

At least a minimum of once an academic year a program shall be offered which includes

1. Training on recognition of child abuse and neglect;
2. Recognition of child sexual abuse;
3. Proper reporting of suspected abuse; and
4. Available resources.

According to the Oklahoma State School Boards Association, "**every person** having reason to believe that a child under the age of eighteen (18) years is a victim of abuse or neglect shall report the matter **immediately** to the Department of Human Services and the local law enforcement agency." 10A O.S. § 1-6-102.

Reports shall be made **immediately** to the state hotline at **1-800-522-3511**.