

Child Abuse

Protection of our Students
from Child Abuse, Discrimination,
and Sexual Harassment

- The Law
- Rights And Responsibilities
- How To Recognize Child Abuse
- What To Do About It

What must I do if I suspect child abuse?

Every person who has information whether or not confidential or privileged that indicates a child is in need of protective services must report this to an agency, immediately.

Every person who performs professional or official duties with respect to a child who in the course of those duties has reasonable grounds to suspect a child is or may be suffering abuse must immediately report that suspicion and the information upon which it is based to an agency whether or not confidential or privileged.

Professionals and officials include teachers, principals, social workers, family counsellors, staff of day care or child care facilities or child care services.



Supporting school board policy in accordance with:

Education Act
Children and Family Services Act
Human Rights Act

School Boards in Nova Scotia each have a policy that clearly sets out the rights and responsibilities of all school community members regarding child abuse, discrimination, and sexual harassment.

It is the responsibility of every school community member to be aware of the policy and their responsibilities.

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Who is protected?

A “child” defined by the *Children and Family Services Act* is a person under sixteen years of age.

If abuse is suspected for someone sixteen or older, this falls outside the Act but the behaviour may still be criminal, and reporting of such instances may still be warranted.

Am I protected if I report?

No action may be taken against a person who reports unless false and malicious.

What if I don't report something I've observed?

A person who does not report information as required is guilty of an offence and upon conviction is liable for a fine up to \$2,000, or 6 months in prison, or both.

For professionals or officials the fine is up to \$5,000, 1 year in prison, or both.

False and malicious reporting, upon conviction, is liable for a fine up to \$2,000, or 6 months in prison, or both.

Where can I find details?

A “child in need of protective services” is defined in the *Children and Family Services Act*, Sections 22 and 25. Both these sections are included with the school board's policy, as Appendix A.

For further information, contact your principal or supervisor.

Examples of indicators of possible child abuse are included in this brochure.

Recognizing Possible Physical Abuse

These are likely to be repeated over time, and will affect child's behaviour. Indicators include:

- Unexplained, or unlikely or inconsistent explanation of, bruises, cuts, burns, other injuries
- Wariness of parents or adults in general
- Resistance to being touched
- Extreme watchfulness
- Apprehensiveness when other children cry
- Fear of going home
- Unexplained prolonged absence (guardian may keep child home until injury heals)
- Extreme aggressiveness or withdrawal
- Extreme fearfulness or fearlessness (recklessness)
- Extreme attention seeking or attention avoidance
- Extreme tearfulness, tearlessness or no expectation of comfort

Recognizing Possible Emotional Abuse

These behaviours tend to reveal themselves over a period of time, as some form of misbehaviour. Common indicators are:

- Developmental lags (physical, mental, emotional)
- Habit disorders (sucking, biting, rocking)
- Conduct disorders (antisocial and destructive behaviours)
- Speech disorders, sleep disorders, inhibition of play
- Extreme passivity or aggressiveness
- Extreme infantile behaviour or extreme adult behaviour (taking over/caring for parent)
- Hysteria, obsessions, phobias, hypochondria
- Severe anxiety, depression, attempted suicide

Recognizing Possible Sexual Abuse

Any of the indicators of physical or emotional abuse, and in addition:

- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Torn, stained, or bloody underwear
- Pain, itching, bruises, or bleeding in the genital, vaginal, or anal areas
- Venereal diseases or pregnancy
- Apparent fear of a parent or other adult
- Sexually intrusive or aggressive behaviour
- Excessively affectionate or seductive behaviour
- Fear of the night or the dark
- Sophisticated or bizarre sexual behaviour, knowledge
- Unwillingness to change for phys ed, or to participate in active sports or games
- Speech disorders

Recognizing Possible Child Neglect

Can be more difficult to identify. Indicators include:

- Consistent hunger, child is underweight, malnutrition, dehydration
- Poor hygiene, dirtiness, lice, skin disorders associated with improper hygiene
- Inappropriate dress, symptoms of exposure (sunburn, frostbite, recurrent colds)
- Consistent fatigue, is listless, falling asleep in class
- Unattended health problems
- Inadequate supervision (i.e. left in the care of a child who is too young to protect them)
- Abandonment
- Verbal evidence there is no caretaker at home, arriving early/staying late at school
- Begging, stealing food and theft in general
- Delinquency, drug or alcohol use