

Mandated Reporting Requirement at Parkview Christian School

Volunteer training for reporting child abuse is required by the State of Georgia, and is not just for classroom teachers and faculty, but also for any parent/community volunteers. We appreciate your participation. Make a note of any questions you may have as you proceed. Please complete this short training session, which concludes with an electronic signature, to certify that you have read the material and understand it.

Who is a Mandated Reporter?

A Mandated Reporter is a person required to report known or suspected child abuse, neglect, or exploitation under penalty of law for failure to report. Changes in the Mandated Reporting statute took place in July 2012 to include everyone who works with children, including volunteers. The purpose of this training is for school employees and volunteers to become familiar with indicators of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, including neglect, of a minor.

Georgia law requires anyone who works or volunteers at a child-serving agency to report suspected child abuse or neglect within 24 hours (O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5). The child abuse report protocol at Parkview Christian School is to communicate immediately to the school principal (Shane Swezey), assistant principal (Jan Collier), or office manager (Geri Newhouse). Written documentation is requested ([Confidential Incident Report Form](#)).

If a mandated reporter informs the school's designated reporter of suspected abuse or neglect, the mandated reporter is considered to have fulfilled his/her obligation under the law.

Any person or official required by Georgia law to report suspected cases of child abuse who knowingly and willfully fails to do so shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. A misdemeanor is a crime that is less serious than a felony but can still be punishable by fine or incarceration in a county jail.

Make the report even if you do not have all the information. It is unfortunate that statistics indicate our school is not immune to the problem of abuse. Our hearts are broken when children suffer. During this training, please take a moment to pray for the protection of our children, those in our community, our city, our state, and our world. The risk exists in all socioeconomic groups. When you see or suspect something, please report it. This is not a situation where you are asked to make a judgment call. This is left to the school administration. They contact experts trained to ask the right questions.

Mandated reporters who report in good faith are protected by the law, even if the report is not substantiated. All reports are confidential and the reporter may remain anonymous, if they choose to do so. However, in some instances, the mandated reporter does not wish to remain anonymous and would like to be interviewed and/or serve as a resource for the child/family. DFCS is required to keep the reporter's name confidential.

Categories of Abuse

Neglect

Neglect is overwhelmingly the most common of all. Neglect is the failure of a parent, guardian, or other caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs. Remember that poverty is not equivalent to neglect.

Physical indicators:

- abandonment
- lack of shelter
- unattended medical and/or dental needs
- consistent lack of supervision
- ingestion of cleaning fluids, medicines, etc.
- consistent hunger
- nutritional deficiencies
- inappropriate dress for weather conditions
- poor hygiene

Behavioral indicators:

- depression
- poor impulse control
- demands constant attention and affection
- lack of parental participation and interest
- delinquency
- misuse of alcohol/drugs
- regularly displays fatigue or listlessness, falls asleep in class
- steals food or begs for food from classmate(s)
- reports that no caregiver is at home
- frequently absent or tardy
- self-destructive
- takes over adult caring role (of parent)
- lacks trust in others, unpredictable

Physical Abuse (any non-accidental injury to a child). Georgia law permits corporal punishment, however discipline should not include violence.

- unexplained burns, bite marks, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes that are inconsistent with the explanation offered

- fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- seems frightened of parents and protests/cries when it is time to go home
- shrinks at the approach of adults
- reports injury by a parent or caregiver
- describes self as bad and deserving to be punished
- may flinch when touch unexpectedly
- extremely aggressive or withdrawn
- displays indiscriminate affection-seeking behavior

Emotional Abuse

- bedwetting and/or diarrhea
- frequent psychosomatic complaints, headaches, nausea, abdominal pains
- mental or emotional development lags
- behaviors inappropriate for age
- fear of failure, overly high standards, reluctance to play
- fears consequences of actions, often leading to lying
- excessive neatness and cleanliness
- extreme withdrawal or aggressiveness, mood swings
- overly compliant, too well-mannered
- poor peer relationships
- violence is subject for art or writing

Sexual Abuse may involve direct sexual contact with a child, but it is also abuse to expose a child, for a person to expose him/herself to a child, to show pornography to a child, etc. Other indicators may include:

- fatigue due to sleep disturbances
- sudden weight change
- cuts or sores made by the child
- difficulty in walking or sitting
- unusual or excessive itching in genital or anal areas
- inappropriate sexual play with toys, self, others
- inappropriate sexually explicit drawings and or descriptions
- dramatic behavioral changes, sudden non-participation in activities
- overall poor self-care
- fearful or startled response to touching
- need for constant companionship
- recurrent physical complaints without physiological basis

NOTE: Physical and sexual abuse include incidents, isolated or otherwise. Emotional abuse and neglect are about a pattern of behavior.

Responding to a Disclosure of Abuse

If a child discloses abuse, here are a few things to keep in mind:

Believe the child – a child rarely lies about abuse; denial is more common. Tell the child you believe him/her.

Reassure the child that the abuse is not his/her fault – the child's greatest fear is that he/she is responsible for the abuse.

Do not interrogate the child – it can be traumatic to repeat his/her story numerous times.

Stay calm – even if you feel surprised or upset; your calmness will reassure the child that he/she has done nothing wrong.

Do not make promises you cannot keep.

Write down the facts and words as stated by the child without your own assumptions or value judgments. Include descriptive words and note specifics about where, when and by whom if mentioned.

Protect the child from further abuse by reporting it immediately to a principal. Action will be taken to ensure his/her physical and emotional well being.

Respect the child's need for confidentiality; do not discuss the abuse with anyone other than those required by the school and the law.

Thank you for your role at Parkview Christian School in serving students and being aware of the Mandated Reporter requirements. Teachers build relationships with students and, as trust develops, may be the first to hear from a student about abuse. However, a volunteer may also become aware of something to report, which is why you have been asked to review this material.

If you suspect or become aware of abuse, inform the appropriate principal or administrator right away. Then complete a Confidential Incident Report Form (see link

above and use one from that site). In the event that a principal is not available, please communicate directly with the Office Manager or a school board member.

Thank you for taking the time to read this material. If you have questions, contact Geri Newhouse at Office@parkviewchristian.com or call (770) 279-8702.

Please sign the Acknowledgement of Understanding below. If an electronic signature panel does not appear below in your web browser, click [here](#) to access the form.