



Ethics in Education Act  
Child Abuse Reporting Procedures

**Child Abuse Reporting Obligations:** As educational professionals, we have a responsibility to provide the children we teach with the opportunity to obtain the best education possible. However, our responsibility does not end there. We also have a legal responsibility to protect the children we educate from child abuse, neglect, and abandonment and to report any information that we receive that leads to suspect that a child has been abused, neglected, or abandoned. Unfortunately, child abuse, neglect and abandonment are all too frequent occurrences in today's society. In our capacities as educators or employees at an educational institution, at some point in our careers we are likely to come into contact with child abuse, neglect or abandonment. This prompts the question, "how do I recognize and deal with such a situation when it occurs?" This policy is designed to provide guidelines for reporting suspected child abuse, neglect, and abandonment.

Florida Statutes require that all school personnel report situations involving potential child abuse, neglect, or abandonment. The statute contains these definitions:

**"Abuse":** any willful act or threatened act that results in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm that causes or is likely to cause the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired.

**"Neglect":** when a child is deprived of, or is allowed to be deprived of, necessary food, clothing, shelter, or medical treatment or a child is permitted to live in an environment when such deprivation or environment causes the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired or to be in danger of being significantly impaired.

**"Abandonment":** a situation in which the parent or legal custodian of a child, or in the absence of a parent or legal custodian, the caregiver responsible for the child's welfare, while being able, makes no provision for the child's support and makes no effort to communicate with the child, which situation is sufficient to evince a willful rejection of parental obligations.

If you have any belief, concern, or thought that you have witnessed, heard, or heard about a situation possibly involving abuse, neglect, or abandonment, by any person who is a custodian, is responsible for the child's welfare, or is in a supervisory capacity over the child (parent, uncle, pastor, physician, counselor, instructor, school administrator, babysitter, etc.), you must report your concern to the Director / Principal. The Director / Principal will then discuss the situation with you to ensure that the appropriate reports, if any, are completed. You can also report the situation directly to the state by calling the toll-free Abuse Hotline at (800) 962-2873.

Employees who report concerns of suspected abuse, abandonment, or neglect are expected to cooperate in any investigation by child protective services. In addition, under the provisions of Florida Stat. § 39.203, employees who, in good faith, report suspected child abuse, neglect, or abandonment are immune from civil or criminal liability for reporting such information and participating in any investigation. Other than the report itself and the communication of appropriate information to the Principal / Director (or designee), or as approved by the Principal / Director, the information about the suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect should remain confidential for the protection of the child.

You should also understand that the failure to promptly report suspected abuse, abandonment, or neglect can result in criminal charges for a first degree misdemeanor. In addition, an educator's

teaching certificate may be suspended from any person who knowingly failed to report child abuse, abandonment or neglect.

Finally, employees are reminded of their obligations to report employee misconduct that affects the health, safety, or welfare of children, in accordance with our **Conduct and Interaction Standards Required of All Employees**, which is contained in a separate reporting policy.

Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action and could result in the suspension of an educator's teaching certificate.

**Training Requirement:** All instructional personnel and administrators are required as a condition of employment to complete training on these standards of ethical conduct.

**Reporting Misconduct by Instructional Personnel and Administrators:** All employees and administrators have an obligation to report misconduct by instructional personnel and school administrators which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student. Examples of misconduct include obscene language, drug and alcohol use, disparaging comments, prejudice or bigotry, sexual innuendo, cheating or testing violations, physical aggression, and accepting or offering favors. Reports of misconduct of employees should be made to the employee's immediate supervisor on duty. Reports of misconduct committed by administrators should be made to the Human Resources Department of Family Church.

Legally sufficient allegations of misconduct by Florida certified educators will be reported to the Office of Professional Practices Services. Policies and procedures for reporting misconduct by instructional personnel or school administrators which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student are posted in the work room and on our Web site at [www.pbchristianacademy.org](http://www.pbchristianacademy.org).

**Reporting Child Abuse, Abandonment or Neglect:** All employees and agents have an affirmative duty to report all actual or suspected cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Call 1-800-96-ABUSE or report online at: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse/report/>.

**Signs of Physical Abuse:** The child may have unexplained bruises, welts, cuts, or other injuries; broken bones; or burns. A child experiencing physical abuse may seem withdrawn or depressed, seem afraid to go home or may run away, shy away from physical contact, be aggressive, or wear inappropriate clothing to hide injuries.

**Signs of Sexual Abuse:** The child may have torn, stained or bloody underwear, trouble walking or sitting, pain or itching in genital area, or a sexually transmitted disease. A child experiencing sexual abuse may have unusual knowledge of sex or act seductively, fear a particular person, seem withdrawn or depressed, gain or lose weight suddenly, shy away from physical contact, or run away from home.

**Signs of Neglect:** The child may have unattended medical needs, little or no supervision at home, poor hygiene, or appear underweight. A child experiencing neglect may be frequently tired or hungry, steal food, or appear overly needy for adult attention.

**Patterns of Abuse:** Serious abuse usually involves a combination of factors. While a single sign may not be significant, a pattern of physical or behavioral signs is a serious indicator and should be reported.

**Liability Protections:** Any person, official, or institution participating in good faith in any act authorized or required by law, or reporting in good faith any instance of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect to the department or any law enforcement agency, shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability which might otherwise result by reason of such action. (F.S. 39.203)

An employer who discloses information about a former or current employee to a prospective employer of the former or current employee upon request of the prospective employer or of the former or current employee is immune from civil liability for such disclosure or its consequences unless it is shown by clear and convincing evidence that the information disclosed by the former or current employer was knowingly false or violated any civil right of the former or current employee protected under F.S. Chapter 760. (F.S. 768.095)