



Van Alstyne ISD
Plan for Addressing Sexual Abuse & Other
Maltreatment of Children

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Methods for Increasing Awareness Regarding Sexual Abuse & Maltreatment of Children

Teachers: Teachers will be trained annually in all content areas addressed in the Van Alstyne ISD Plan for Addressing Sexual Abuse & Other Maltreatment of Children. Training may be provided through campus staff, district staff, on-line, or outside agencies as appropriate at the discretion of the campus administration. Training will include contents of the adopted board policy FFG (LEGAL) and FFG exhibit.

Students: District counseling staff will address issues to increase awareness regarding sexual abuse and maltreatment of children, utilizing anti-victimization programs with age appropriate conversations and materials, at least once per school year in classroom group lessons for grades PK-8. Awareness regarding sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children will be addressed with students in grades 9-12 in class meetings at least once per school year.

Parents: Information concerning the district Plan for Addressing Sexual Abuse & Other Maltreatment of Children will be posted on the district web site at: www.vanalstyneisd.org. Additionally, reference to the plan will be included in each of the campuses' student handbooks within the district. These handbooks are available to parents online at the campus websites, as well as in printed format from campus offices.

What is Sexual Abuse of a Child?

Sexual abuse in the Texas Family Code is defined as any sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare, as well as a failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct with a child. Sexual abuse includes fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or producing pornographic materials.

Suspect Sexual Abuse When You See:

- Physical signs of sexually transmitted diseases
- Evidence of injury to the genital area
- Pregnancy in a young girl
- Difficulty in sitting or walking
- Extreme fear of being alone with adults of a certain sex
- Sexual comments, behaviors or play
- Knowledge of sexual relations beyond what is expected for a child's age
- Sexual victimization of other children

Warning Signs in Children and Adolescents of Possible Child Sexual Abuse

Any one sign does not mean that a child has been or is being sexually abused, but the presence of several different signs suggests that one should begin asking questions and consider seeking help. Keep in mind that some of these signs can emerge at other times of stress such as: during a divorce, death of a family member or pet, problems at school or with friends, and other anxiety-inducing or traumatic events.

Possible Psychological and Behavioral Signs of Sexual Abuse of Children

- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Bedwetting
- Nightmares or bad dreams
- Depression, irritability or anger
- Low self-esteem, guilt or shame
- Avoidance of people or places
- Sexual advances of “touching” inappropriately
- Sexual drawings
- Changes in socialization (social withdrawal or social isolation)

Possible Physical Symptoms of Sexual Abuse of Children

- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under the age of 14
- Trauma to the mouth or genitals
- Rectal bleeding
- Pain around the genital area
- Poor appetite
- Weight loss or weight gain

Signs More Typical in Younger Children

- Using new words for private body parts
- Resisting the removal of clothes even at appropriate times when clothing should be removed; such as bath, bed, toileting, etc.
- Asking other children to behave sexually or play sexual games
- Copying adult-like sexual behavior with toys or stuffed animals
- Wetting and soiling accidents unrelated to toilet training
- Returning to habits previously broken; such as bed-wetting or thumb sucking

Signs More Typical in Early Adolescents

- Has nightmares or other sleep problems without an explanation
- Seems distracted or distant at odd times
- Has a sudden change in eating habits
- Refuses to eat
- Loses or drastically increases appetite
- Has trouble swallowing
- Sudden mood swings: rage, fear, insecurity or withdrawal
- Leaves “clues” that seem likely to provoke a discussion about sexual issues
- Writes, draws, plays or dreams of sexual or frightening images
- Refuses to talk about a secret shared with an adult or older child
- Talks about a new older friend
- Suddenly has money, toys or other gifts without reason
- Exhibits adult-like sexual behaviors, language and knowledge

Signs More Typical in Teens

- Self-injury (cutting, burning)
- Inadequate personal hygiene
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Sexual promiscuity
- Running away from home
- Depression, anxiety
- Suicide attempts
- Fear of intimacy or closeness
- Compulsive eating or dieting

Physical Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse

Physical warning signs of sexual abuse are rare. If one should notice any of these signs, the child should be seen by a doctor as soon as possible. The doctor can help you and your child understand what may be happening and test for sexually transmitted diseases.

- Pain, discoloration, bleeding or discharges in genitals, anus or mouth
- Persistent or recurring pain during urination and bowel movements
- Wetting and soiling accidents unrelated to toilet training

Consider the Possibility of Sexual Abuse when the Parent or Other Adult Caregiver

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
 - Is secretive and isolated
 - Is jealous or controlling with family members
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What is Maltreatment of a Child?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), child maltreatment is defined as "any act or series of acts of commission or omission by a parent or other caregiver (e.g., clergy, coach, teacher) that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child." Commission can be defined as child abuse with the following examples: physical abuse, sexual abuse and psychological abuse. Child neglect defines the term "omission" and includes the following examples: physical neglect, emotional neglect, medical/dental neglect, educational neglect, inadequate supervision and exposure to violent environments.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child. The physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) can result from punching, beating, shaking, kicking, biting, throwing, stabbing, hitting, burning, choking, or otherwise harming a child. Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caretaker intended to hurt the child.

Suspect Physical Abuse When You See...

- Frequent injuries such as bruises, cuts, black eyes or burns, especially when the child cannot adequately explain their causes

- Burns or bruises in an unusual pattern that may indicate the use of an instrument or a human bite; cigarette burns on any part of the body
- Frequent complaints of pain without obvious injury
- Aggressive, disruptive and destructive behavior
- Lack of reaction to pain
- Passive, withdrawn, emotionless behavior
- Fear of going home or seeing parents
- Injuries that appear after the child has not been seen for several days
- Unseasonable clothes that may hide injuries to arms or legs

Neglect

Neglect is failure to provide for a child's basic needs necessary to sustain the life or health of the child, excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services have been offered and refused.

Suspect Neglect When You See...

- Obvious malnourishment
- Lack of personal cleanliness
- Torn and/or dirty clothes
- Obvious fatigue and listlessness
- A child unattended for long periods of time
- Need for glasses, dental care or other medical attention
- Stealing or begging for food
- Frequent absence or tardiness from school

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in a child's growth, development, or psychological functioning. It includes forms of punishment such as confining a child in a dark closet, habitual scapegoating, belittling, and rejecting treatment for a child.

Suspect Emotional Abuse When You See...

- Over compliance
- Low self-esteem
- Severe depression, anxiety, or aggression
- Difficulty making friends or doing things with other children
- Lagging in physical, emotional, and intellectual development
- Caregiver who belittles the child, withholds love, and seems unconcerned about the child's problems

Parents/Guardians' Responsibilities Concerning Sexual Abuse and Other Maltreatment of Children

- As a parent, you are legally responsible for the care of your child. You must provide your child with safe and adequate food, clothing, shelter, protection, medical care and supervision, or you must arrange for someone else to provide these things. Failure to do so may be considered neglect.

- As a parent, it is important for you to be aware of the warning signs that could indicate a child may have been or is being abused or neglected. A child who has experienced sexual abuse should be encouraged to seek out a trusted adult.
 - As a parent, be aware that disclosures of sexual abuse may be more indirect than disclosures of physical abuse, and it is important to be calm and comforting if your child, or another child, confides in you. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing by telling you.
 - As a parent, if your child is a victim of sexual abuse, the campus counselor or principal will provide information regarding counseling options for you and your child available in your area. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services also manage early intervention counseling programs.
 - As a parent, if you permit your child to be in a situation where he or she may be injured, then you may be prosecuted for child abuse. The fact that the abuser is a parent or other family member does not remove your obligation to protect the child. If you are frightened for your own safety or that of your child, call 911 or the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400.
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Educational Personnel's Responsibilities Concerning Sexual Abuse and Other Maltreatment of Children

Legal Obligation:

Current law requires that professionals such as teachers, doctors, nurses or child daycare workers must make a verbal report within 48 hours of suspected abuse or neglect. Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect is a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment of up to 180 days and/or a fine of up to \$2000 (Texas Family Code, Chapter 261). Reporting suspected child abuse to your principal, school counselor or superintendent will NOT satisfy your obligation under this law. Van Alstyne ISD Board Policy FFG(EXHIBIT), found at the following link: [https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/530?filename=FFG\(XHIBIT\).pdf](https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/530?filename=FFG(XHIBIT).pdf), provides the **Notice of Employee Responsibilities for Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect**.

Legal Protection:

A report of child abuse or neglect is confidential and immune from civil or criminal liability as long as the report is made in "good faith" and "without malice". In good faith means that the person making the report took reasonable steps to learn facts that were readily available and at hand. Without malice means that the person did not intend to injure or violate the rights of another person. Provided these two conditions are met, one will also be immune from liability if asked to participate in any judicial proceedings that might result from a report.

If You Suspect Abuse:

- DON'T try to investigate
- DON'T confront the abuser
- DO report your reasonable suspicions

It is not necessary to determine if one's suspicions are true. A trained investigator will evaluate the child's situation. Even if a report does not bring decisive action, it may help establish a pattern that will eventually be clear enough to help the child.

A Disclosure:

If you are the first person the child tells about sexual abuse, your testimony as “outcry witness” may be especially important in future legal proceedings. What you say the child told you is not considered “hearsay” but is admissible evidence in a trial involving a sexual offense against a child. This exception applies only to the first person the child approaches.

Report to the Following:

Texas Abuse Hotline: 800-252-5400

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services: www.txabusehotline.org

Van Alstyne Police Department: 903-482-5251

Available Counseling Options and Other Resources

To find out what services may be available in your county, see:

[www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention and Early Intervention/Programs Available In Your County/default.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention%20and%20Early%20Intervention/Programs%20Available%20In%20Your%20County/default.asp)

The following websites might help you become more aware of child sexual abuse and neglect:

- Prevent Child Abuse America: www.preventchildabuse.org
 - Prevent Child Abuse Texas: www.preventchildabusetexas.org
 - Texas Association Against Sexual Assault: www.taasa.org
 - Child Welfare Information Gateway: www.childwelfare.gov
 - Texas Department of Family and Protective Services: www.dfps.state.tx.us
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Counseling Options:

Child Help: Includes programs designed to serve children who are abused including their “Good-Touch, Bad-Touch” program, which hopes to eliminate child abuse by bringing prevention education to children and adults everywhere.

Phone: 480-922-8212

Web site: www.childhelp.org

Stop It Now:

Provides a national helpline for supportive guidance, information, and resources. The Helpline is staffed by professionals who can provide assistance in how to deal with suspected child abuse situations. Additional resources are available on their web site.

Phone: 1-888-PREVENT

E-mail: helpline@stopitnow.org

Web site: www.stopitnow.org