

Recommended Procedures for Reporting Child Abuse

Sometimes children make disclosures of abuse to educators. Sometimes educators observe the behaviour and well-being of children and may suspect that the child is being abused. All schools should have child protection policies and educators do need to familiarize themselves with these. However it is important to remember that no matter what the policy of the school, or what another educator may tell you, educators have a statutory responsibility to report child abuse and the failure to do so is a crime.

To help educators report abuse or suspected abuse in such a way that the child can be helped, the following steps can be followed:

STEP 1: PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING

- Child's name, address and telephone number.
- Parent's or guardian's name and telephone numbers.
- Reasons for concern, any documentation of indicators and any relevant statements made by the child.

STEP 2:

- Follow the school protocol (NB Indemnity form) and inform the designated personnel at the school. However the reporting of abuse and neglect is mandated by law and this law supercedes school policy.
- No investigation should be carried out by the school personnel at this stage or any other time.

STEP 3:

The designated personnel should contact a Social Worker from a Child protection organization such as a Child Welfare Society or the Department of Social Development, or the Child Protection Officer of the South African Police Services. The following should be noted:

- the name of the person making the call;
- the name of the intake worker receiving the call;
- the date and time of the call; and
- the action proposed by the person to whom the abuse has been reported.

STEP 4:

- The social worker (and the police in some cases) will interview the child as soon as possible.

STEP 5:

- A Social Worker and/or the Police will interview the alleged abuser and sometimes family members as well.
- A decision concerning the child's safety will be made by the Social Worker at this time.
- If response up is slow and particularly if the child remains at risk, the referring person should follow up until the child is safe.

STEP 6:

- At the end of the investigation the school personnel, the family or the parents and the Social Worker should meet to discuss the steps the school could take to assist the child.