

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

The School Board recognizes that Maine law requires every school unit with a Pre-K through 5th grade program to adopt a policy for child sexual abuse prevention education and response. The School Board adopts this policy in the interest of promoting the well-being of students and providing a supportive learning environment as well as compliance with the law.

For the purpose of this policy, “child sexual abuse” means any sexual engagement either through “hands on” or “hands off” activities between an adult and a child. Sexual engagement between children can also be sexual abuse when there is a significant age difference between the children involved or if the children are very different in development, size, or other power differential.

Definitions

Child sexual abuse – All sexual engagement either through hands-on or hands-off activities between an adult and a child is sexual abuse. Sexual engagement between children can also be sexual abuse when there is a significant age difference between the children or if the children are very different in development, size, or other power differential.

Evidence-informed practice or program - Programs that use the best available knowledge and research to guide program design and implementation; the program has clearly identified intended outcomes and conducts evaluations to measure those outcomes.

Qualified instructor – An individual who has the knowledge, skills and comfort level necessary to professionally address child sexual abuse prevention education, aligned to research and best practices. A qualified instructor may be school personnel or from a community-based organization.

School personnel – Any individual required to be certified, authorized, or approved by the Department of Education under Chapter 501 or 502 of Title 20-A.

Procedures for Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Sexual Abuse

School personnel receiving a report of or suspecting child sexual abuse, including but not limited to school faculty, staff, coaches and advisors for extracurricular and co-curricular activities, are required to either report directly to Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) or to confirm in writing that a report was made on their behalf by a school’s designated reporter, pursuant to 22 MRS §4011-A Reporting of Suspected Abuse or Neglect and §4012 Reporting Procedures. Reports should be consistent with school board policy JLF, Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect, and reported on form in JLF-E.

School volunteers who are aware of incidents or suspect child sexual abuse must report to school personnel designated in the Vinhalhaven School policy or directly to DHHS as noted above.

Any individuals associated with the school who are not mandated reporters, but who know of or suspect child sexual abuse are encouraged to make a report directly to DHHS.

Individuals suspecting or knowing of child sexual abuse should not ask additional questions or engage in interviewing techniques with the child, and should limit written documentation to the information required by 22 MRS §4012. Training for unbiased documentation methods is recommended.

Acts of reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an incident of child sexual abuse are prohibited.

Child Sexual Abuse Awareness and Prevention Education for School Personnel

Child sexual abuse awareness and prevention education for all Vinhalhaven School personnel shall be:

1. Required for all school personnel;
2. Delivered by a qualified instructor(s);
3. A minimum of one hour;
4. Evidence-informed; Maine Department of Education Model Policy for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention and Response Revised 2/7/2018
5. Completed within 6 months of hire; and
6. Updated every four years pursuant to 22 MRS §4011-A, sub-§9.

The training will:

1. Increase awareness of developmentally appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviors in children, and
2. Increase ability to identify indicators of sexual abuse, including physical and psychosocial indicators on a spectrum (including lower to higher probability);
3. Increase ability to effectively respond to sexual behavior or disclosures or suspicions of child sexual abuse; and
4. Include contact info for the local resource center:

Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine
at <https://www.sassmm.org/> or call or text 1-800-871-7741

Training should also address confidentiality/disclosure concerns (beyond mandated reporting).

Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education Pre-K through Grade 5 Curriculum Programs

The school unit will provide child sexual abuse prevention programming to its Pre-K through grade 5 students. Such instruction will be aligned with the health education standards of Maine's system of Learning Results for this grade span, and incorporated into the written school health education curriculum.

Programming of appropriate scope and sequence will be delivered by qualified instructors, who may be from a local or regional agency/organization with experience and expertise in sexual assault and child sexual abuse by a school unit employee deemed competent by the Superintendent/designee to deliver such instruction. If the instructor is a school unit employee, the School Board anticipates that this will be a person with the knowledge, skills, sensitivity and "comfort level" necessary to deliver the curriculum in the classroom setting, i.e., school nurse, school social worker, guidance counselor, or teacher with experience in health education. Any instructor who is a school employee is expected to take full advantage of the evidence-informed educational resources available on websites hosted by the Maine Dept. of Education (DOE) and/or Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MECASA). Any instructor who is a school employee should be familiar with the local community-based agencies/organizations that provide assistance or services to children and families that are experiencing or have experienced sexual assault or child sexual abuse.

It is the intent that the curriculum, as delivered in the classroom, will:

- Include age-appropriate education regarding physical and personal boundaries; including biologically accurate body terminology;
- Help children identify unsafe or uncomfortable situations including a range of feelings, touches, or violations of physical boundaries;
- Help children identify safe adults with whom they can talk about unsafe or uncomfortable situations; and
- Help children identify and develop skills to support a friend who may be experiencing safe or uncomfortable situations.

Resources and Services

Service providers related to local and statewide child sexual abuse and sexual assault can be found at:

1. The Maine Department of Health and Human Services;
2. The Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (www.mecasa.org; statewide sexual assault support line: 1- 800-871-7741); and
3. **Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine (SASSMM).**

Prevention education resources related to child sexual abuse can be found at:

1. The Maine Department of Education Health Education website (www.maine.gov/doe/healthed/areas/index.html);
2. The Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (www.mecasa.org); and
3. <http://www.mecasapreventiontoolkit.org/>.

Resources related to mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse can be found at the Maine Department of Health and Human Services Office of Child and Family Services (<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/mandatedreporters.shtml>).

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA §§ 254(18), 4502(5-C) 22 MRSA §4011-A

20-A MRSA §§ 5051-A(1)(C); 5051-A(2)(C)

20 USC § 1232g, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Cross Reference: JLF – Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

JLF-E – Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect Report Form

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