



**THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PALM BEACH COUNTY, FL**

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Action By: September 30, 2013
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TO: All Principals and Department Heads

FROM: Cheryl C. Alligood, Chief Academic Officer *cca*

SUBJECT: ANNUAL NOTIFICATION TO THE CHANGES IN THE LAW FOR REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

Effective October 1, 2012, the Florida Legislature enacted several changes to Florida law relating to the reporting of child abuse. This bulletin serves as a reminder that all new teachers are to be notified of this reporting requirement, as well as a reminder to all other employees.

What does this mean at a school setting?

The Education Code requires teachers in grades 1 through 12 to participate in Department of Children and Families (DCF) provided educational training to identify and report child abuse and neglect. The website for the webinar is: www2.fl-dcf.org/RCAAN . All teachers for these grades must view this webinar promptly if they have not already done so.

It should be immediately reported if:

- any adult (including an employee or a student who is 18 years-of-age or older) abuses or is reasonably suspected of abusing a child
- there is a sexual encounter between an adult (including a student 18 years-of-age or older) and a child
- sexual activity occurs between students
- there is knowledge or reasonable suspicion that a student is the victim of a known or suspected juvenile sexual offender
- there is a fight and an 18 years-of-age or older student strikes a student who has not reached majority age

Further, under current DCF rules, *"Child protective investigators shall respond to all reports of child-on-child sexual abuse where the alleged juvenile sexual offender is age 12 or younger. "*

Once DCF has been notified, they decide whether or not to investigate. If prior reports of similar incidents have not been accepted by DCF because they have stated that there are no indicators of abuse, neglect, or abandonment, you may contact Bruce A. Harris, Esq. at PX 47377 or bruce.harris@palmbeachschools.org to determine if you should report the incident.

Changes and Reporting

It is now required that any person report known or reasonably suspected child abuse, **by any adult**, not only a parent or caregiver. Additionally, **“any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is the victim of childhood sexual abuse or the victim of a known or suspected juvenile sexual offender... shall report such knowledge or suspicion”** to DCF.

The District’s Professional Standards website provides guidance on how to report abuse to DCF: <http://www.palmbeachschools.org/ps/DCF.asp>.

The Legislature also increased the criminal penalties for knowingly and willfully failing to report child abuse.

The Statute defines abuse of a child as *“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.”* This includes acts or omissions. Corporal discipline of a child by a parent or legal custodian for disciplinary purposes does not constitute abuse when it does not result in harm to the child. A child is defined by the Statute as *“an unmarried person under the age of 18 years who has not been emancipated by order of the court.”*

Please share this bulletin with all of your employees.

EWG/CCA:fp

Approved: _____



E. Wayne Gent, Superintendent