

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Board of Education
Upper Marlboro, Maryland

0126
Policy No.

BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY

BASIC COMMITMENTS

Student Safety: Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse, and Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

I. POLICY STATEMENT

- A. The Prince George's County Board of Education (Board) is committed to providing for the safety of all students on Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) school property and to creating and maintaining safe, inclusive, and supportive schools where students can be successful at achieving excellence in education.
- B. The Board's goal is to promote a culture where employees and community members recognize and report any suspicious or improper behavior; where students and employees are not afraid to speak up and bring to the attention of responsible adults matters of concern; and where individuals are held accountable for ensuring the safety of students. Thus, the Board embraces a comprehensive approach to recognizing, reporting, and preventing abuse and neglect of students and vulnerable adults.
- C. This policy reaffirms the Board's commitment to cooperate with the appropriate agencies, to require PGCPS employees to comply with pertinent sections of the Annotated Code of Maryland in reporting suspected child abuse and neglect, and to comply with all state and local legal mandates to protect PGCPS students.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to develop and implement a systemic plan for:

- A. Ensuring that all employees understand and are held accountable for the highest ethical standards in their conduct, as well as adhering to legal mandates and the moral imperative to recognize, report, and prevent suspected child abuse and neglect;
- B. Cooperating fully with investigations of suspected abuse and/or neglect by Prince George's County (County) partner agencies, including the Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office, the Prince George's County Police Department (PGCPD), and Child Protective Services (CPS) in the Prince George's County Department of Social Services (PGCDSS) as well as other external agencies;
- C. Supporting children and vulnerable adults who are alleged victims of abuse and/or neglect,

in consultation with County partner agencies;

- D. Enhancing human resource management systems and processes for screening new and existing employees, as well as volunteers and outside contractors who have direct, unsupervised, and uncontrolled access to children on PGCPS property;
- E. Providing professional development for PGCPS employees in accordance with the most current practices for identifying, reporting, and preventing abuse and neglect;
- F. Offering robust, age-appropriate student learning opportunities across all grade levels in the prevention and reporting of abuse and neglect; and
- G. Providing opportunities for parents, outside contractors, volunteers, and the broader community to develop awareness on recognizing, reporting, and preventing abuse and neglect of children and vulnerable adults.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. *Abuse* –

1. The physical or mental injury of a child or vulnerable adult under circumstances that indicate that the child or vulnerable adult’s health or welfare is harmed or at substantial risk of being harmed by:
 - a. a parent;
 - b. a household member or family member;
 - c. a person who has permanent or temporary care or custody of the child or vulnerable adult;
 - d. a person who has responsibility for the supervision of the child or vulnerable adult; or
 - e. a person who, because of the person’s position or occupation, exercises authority over the child or vulnerable adult;
2. Sexual abuse of a child or vulnerable adult, whether physical injuries are sustained or not, or
3. Labor trafficking of a child by any individual.
4. *Abuse* does not include the physical injury of a child or vulnerable adult by accidental means.

B. *Child* – Any person under the age of 18 years.

- C. *Employee* – An employee under this policy is a Board member, an individual employed by the Board, including tenured and non-tenured teachers and licensed and non-licensed individuals, whether full-time, part-time, temporary, substitutes, or interns. In addition, vendors, consultants, contractors, vendors’ employees, contractors’ employees, volunteers, student teachers, and authorized agents who use PGCPs technology and communication systems are expected to comply with this policy and the accompanying administrative procedure.
- D. *Family member* – A relative by blood, adoption, or marriage of a child.
- E. *Good faith* – Means with honest intention.
- F. *Household* – The location:
1. In which the child resides;
 2. Where the abuse or neglect is alleged to have taken place; or
 3. Where the person suspected of abuse or neglect resides.
- G. *Household member* – A person who lives with, or is a regular presence in, the home of a child at the time of the alleged abuse or neglect.
- H. *Labor trafficking* – Knowingly:
1. Taking, placing, harboring, persuading, inducing, or enticing a child by force, fraud, or coercion to provide services or labor; or
 2. Receiving a benefit or thing of value from the provision of services or labor by a child that was induced by force, fraud, or coercion.
- I. *Parent* – Any one of the following individuals who is legally responsible for a student or vulnerable adult:
1. Biological parent – a natural parent whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 2. Adoptive parent – a person who has legally adopted the student or vulnerable adult and whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 3. Custodian – a person or agency appointed by a court as the legal custodian of the student or vulnerable adult and granted parental rights and privileges.
 4. Guardian – a person who has been placed by a court in charge of the affairs of the student or vulnerable adult and granted parental rights and privileges.
 5. Caregiver – an adult resident of Prince George’s County who exercises care, custody, or control over the student or vulnerable adult, but who is neither the biological parent nor legal guardian.

6. Foster parent – an adult approved to care for a child who has been placed in their home by a State agency or a licensed child placement as provided by Section 5-507 of the Family Law Article.
- J. *Neglected* - The leaving of a child or vulnerable adult unattended or other failure to give proper care and attention to a child or vulnerable adult, any parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of the child or vulnerable adult under circumstances that indicate:
1. That the child's or vulnerable adult's health or welfare is harmed or placed at substantial risk of harm: or
 2. Mental injury to the child or vulnerable adult, or a substantial risk of mental injury.
- K. *School property* – Any property owned or leased by the Board/PGCPS or used by the Board/PGCPS for school-related and/or school-sponsored activities. The concept of school property extends to school activities such as field trips, use of parks and recreation facilities, and school buses, etc. For the purposes of this policy, facilities scheduled by PGCPS for students' use are considered an extension of school property.
- L. *Sex trafficking* – The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a child for a commercial sex act.
- M. *Sexual abuse* – Any act that involves:
1. Sexual molestation or exploitation of a child or vulnerable adult by:
 - a. a parent;
 - b. a household member or family member;
 - c. a person who has permanent or temporary care or custody of the child or vulnerable adult;
 - d. a person who has responsibility for the supervision of the child or vulnerable adult; or
 - e. a person who, because of the person's position or occupation, exercises authority over the child or vulnerable adult; or
 2. sex trafficking of a child or vulnerable adult by any individual.
- N. *Sexual molestation or exploitation* – Includes:
1. allowing or encouraging a child to engage in:
 - a. obscene photography, films, poses, or similar activity;
 - b. pornographic photography, films, poses, or similar activity; or
 - c. prostitution;

2. incest;
 3. rape;
 4. sexual offense in any degree; and
 5. any other sexual conduct that is a crime.
- O. *Vulnerable adult* – A student aged 18 – 21 years old who is believed by the individual reporting abuse or neglect to lack the physical or mental capacity to care for their daily needs and is suspected to have been subject to abuse, exploitation, or neglect by the student’s parent.

IV. **STANDARDS**

A. *Prevention of Suspected Child Abuse, Child Sexual Abuse, and Neglect*

Consistent with the laws and regulations of the State of Maryland, the Superintendent/designee is responsible for executing the following student safety protocols:

1. Training of newly hired employees addressing: a comprehensive review of child abuse and neglect, and child sexual abuse, reporting of suspected abuse and neglect, and criminal history checks and fingerprinting, to include a check of Child Protective Services records.
2. Comprehensive inter-disciplinary training of all staff, on an annual basis, as to child abuse and neglect and child sexual abuse, procedures, reporting obligations, and consequences for failure to do so.
3. Comprehensive protocols to ensure that employees are:
 - a. Properly screened and qualified for their roles;
 - b. Trained on professional boundaries and communication with students;
 - c. Educated on identifying and reporting suspected child abuse or neglect;
 - d. Supervised effectively and granted appropriate physical access to the facility;
and
 - e. Permitted access only to necessary, non-confidential records.
4. Curriculum: An updated and regular review of the curricular content focused on preventing child sexual abuse, which is taught in pre-school through grade 12, is developmentally appropriate, engaging of parents, families, and community partners, delivered by well-trained teachers and counselors, and meets evidence-based criteria for effectiveness in mitigating instances of child sexual abuse.
5. Facilities: Annual safety assessments of school buildings to mitigate against opportunities for child abuse and criminal conduct to occur due to the physical properties of the building. Mitigation may include the installation of cameras or other technologies.

6. Visitors: Every school will require all visitors to sign in using the visitor management system (VMS). The VMS enables schools to instantly check all visitors against registered sexual offender databases in all 50 states, as well as monitor visitor and volunteer hours.

B. Reporting and Responding to Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

The Superintendent/designee shall be responsible for the implementation of the following:

1. Every Board member and PGCPs employee who has reason to suspect that a child or vulnerable adult has been subjected to abuse or neglect, on or off school property, shall report such abuse or neglect in accordance with applicable state law and regulation, as well as Board policies and PGCPs administrative procedures. Other persons are strongly encouraged to file a report if they have a reason to believe that a child or vulnerable adult has been subjected to abuse or neglect.
2. The failure of an employee to report suspected abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services (CPS) or the appropriate law enforcement agency in accordance with the law will result in disciplinary action, which may include written reprimand, suspension, or dismissal from PGCPs and a request to the State Superintendent of Schools to suspend or revoke a licensed employee's professional license, as appropriate. For contractors and volunteers failing to report suspected abuse or neglect, removal or disqualification from being selected for future contracts and school volunteering, respectively, may occur.
3. Any person who, in good faith, makes or participates in making a report of abuse or neglect or a report of substantial risk of sexual abuse, or participates in an investigation or a resulting judicial proceeding, is immune from any civil liability or criminal penalty.
4. An employee who makes a good-faith report of suspected abuse or neglect will be free from any form of harassment or administrative penalty resulting from the report.
5. Confidentiality and Retaliation
 - a. No individual may intentionally prevent, discourage, or interfere with the making of a good faith report of abuse or neglect.
 - b. Employees making good faith reports and/or participating in an investigation of suspected abuse or neglect shall not be disciplined or suffer other reprisals or retaliation as a result of such participation.
 - c. Students who come forward and make good faith reports of abuse or neglect, including those who are victims or witnesses, or who participate in an investigation of abuse or neglect, shall not be disciplined, intimidated, or harassed, or suffer reprisals or retaliation as a result of such participation.
 - d. All records and reports concerning abuse or neglect and the information contained in them are confidential. Except for enumerated exceptions allowing

for disclosure by a local department, the unauthorized disclosure of such records and reports and the information contained in them is a criminal offense.

V. IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The Superintendent is directed to develop or update the appropriate administrative procedures that address the standards of this policy.
- B. The Superintendent shall report to the Board publicly each year on system-wide efforts related to student safety.

VI. REFERENCES

- A. Legal
 - Md. Code Ann., Cts. & Jud. Proc. § 5-622
 - Md. Code Ann., Educ. § 6-202 and §-1510
 - Md. Code Ann., Fam. Law §§ 5-561, 5-701 – 5-708, and 14-301 – 14-309
 - Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. § 19-311
 - Md. Code Ann., Hum. Serv. § 1-202
 - COMAR 07.02.07 (Child Protective Services – Investigation of Child Abuse and Neglect)
 - COMAR 13A.12.06.02 (Causes of Disciplinary Actions or Denials)
- B. Other Board Policies
 - Board Policy 0106 – Volunteer Services
 - Board Policy 2801 – Safe and Supportive Schools
 - Board Policy 4126 – Employee Use of Social Media and Personal Electronic Devices
 - Board Policy 5141 – Student Registered Sexual Offender - Entry Onto School Property
- C. Superintendent’s Administrative Procedures
 - Administrative Procedure 0500 – Visitors
 - Administrative Procedure 4215 – Criminal History Checks, Employee Self-Reporting of Arrests, Criminal Charges, CPS Investigations and Findings, and Incarceration
 - Administrative Procedure 4216.6 – Volunteer Services
 - Administrative Procedure 4218 - Dating and Sexual Relationships Among Students and Employees, Independent Contractors, and Volunteers
 - Administrative Procedure 4219 – Inappropriate Interactions Among Students and Employees, Independent Contractors, and Volunteers
 - Administrative Procedure 5145 – Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect
- D. Other

VII. HISTORY

Policy Adopted	07/19/2016
Policy Revised	03/26/2026