

**ROUTT COUNTY CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT
INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES
Steamboat Springs School District RE-2**

I. General Information

An act of a teacher or other school official is not considered child abuse if:

1. The act was performed in good faith and in compliance with the school district's discipline code, or
2. The act was an appropriate expression of affection or emotional support.

II. Procedures For Reporting Suspected Child Abuse And Neglect

Any school employee having reasonable cause to suspect or know that any child has been subjected to abuse or neglect must immediately report such information. If the abuse is observed to be in progress, the appropriate law enforcement agency should be contacted. If the suspected abuse has occurred, the report should be made to Social Services.

A report to Social Services should normally be made through the Building Principal. However, when it is not possible to do so expeditiously, the employee should make such report directly and without delay. It should be stressed that the law places the responsibility on the employee who has reason for suspicion, and no circumstance relieves this person of the responsibility for reporting.

The name of any reporting party will not be released by school personnel of Social Services, except to authorized representatives of Social Services or law enforcement agencies.

A. The school official or employee:

1. Identifies a student who evidences abuse or neglect.
2. Asks sufficient, but not more than minimal, questions necessary to determine that a suspected or known case of abuse or neglect exists.
 - a) School personnel shall not contact the child's family or any other person suspected of causing the injury or abuse to determine the cause of the suspected abuse or neglect, but may inquire of the child how an injury occurred. Leading and/or suggestive questioning should be avoided.
 - b) A school employee's reasonable cause to suspect that the child has been subjected to abuse or neglect may arise from a child's vague or inconsistent response to such an inquiry, or from an explanation, which does not fit the injury.
 - c) Effort should be made to avoid duplicate or numerous interviews of the alleged victim.

3. Makes the report to the building principal as soon as injury is observed or suspected. If the building principal is unavailable at the time the situation arises, the report must still be made immediately. Subsequently, a follow-up report must be made to the building principal.

B. The Building Principal:

1. Takes the information from the reporting party.
2. Does not exercise judgment as to whether the report should be made. All reports of suspected abuse or neglect must be reported to Social Services or law enforcement.
3. The child should be questioned in such a way that the child feels non-threatened. In cases of younger children, the principal may wish to have the child's teacher present during the questioning.

C. Social Services and/or Law Enforcement

School personnel will cooperate with Social Services and law enforcement in the investigation of alleged abuse or neglect. Social Services and/or law enforcement will direct the course of the investigation including where the interview will be conducted, when the parents will be informed, and who will be present at the interview. Law enforcement may, under the laws of the State of Colorado, take custody of child and remove him/her from school. The principal will be present in "loco parentis" when the child is being questioned, except at the direct request of law enforcement.

D. Third Party Abuse

In cases where the suspected or known perpetrator is a school employee, or a student ten years of age or older, reports shall be made directly to law enforcement. In these cases the reporting party and/or Building Principal must also report this abuse to the Superintendent of Schools.

E. Follow-Up Information

1. All parties to the process are encouraged to provide continuing follow-up information regarding the case as is appropriate.
2. Information pertaining to what is being done for the child should be shared only with those school personnel directly involved with the child's educational program. School personnel receiving such information shall treat it as confidential.

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