

**Policy and Program
to Address Sexual
Abuse, Trafficking,
and Maltreatment**

A district shall provide child abuse antivictimization programs in elementary and secondary schools. *Education Code 38.004*

A district shall adopt and implement a policy addressing sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and other maltreatment of children, to be included in the district improvement plan [see BQ] and any information handbook provided to students and parents. *Education Code 38.0041(a)*

The policy included in any informational handbook provided to students and parents must address the following:

1. Methods for increasing staff, student, and parent awareness of issues regarding sexual abuse, trafficking, and other forms of maltreatment of children, including prevention techniques and knowledge of likely warning signs indicating that a child may be a victim;
2. Actions a child who is a victim of sexual abuse, trafficking, or other maltreatment should take to obtain assistance and intervention; and
3. Available counseling options for students affected by sexual abuse, trafficking, or other maltreatment.

19 TAC 103.1401(b)(3)

Definitions

Child Abuse

“Abuse” includes the following acts or omissions by a person:

1. Mental or emotional injury to a child that results in an observable and material impairment in the child’s growth, development, or psychological functioning;
2. Causing or permitting the child to be in a situation in which the child sustains a mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in the child’s growth, development, or psychological functioning;
3. Physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child, or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child, including an injury that is at variance with the history or explanation given and excluding an accident or reasonable discipline by a parent, guardian, or managing or possessory conservator that does not expose the child to a substantial risk of harm;
4. Failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent an action by another person that results in physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child;

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5. Sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare, including conduct that constitutes the offense of continuous sexual abuse of young child or disabled individual under Penal Code 21.02, indecency with a child under Penal Code 21.11, improper relationship between educator and student under Penal Code 21.12, sexual assault under Penal Code 22.011, or aggravated sexual assault under Penal Code 22.021;
6. Failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct harmful to a child;
7. Compelling or encouraging the child to engage in sexual conduct as defined by Penal Code 43.01, compelling or encouraging the child in a manner that constitutes an offense of trafficking of persons under Penal Code 20A.02(a)(7) or (8), solicitation of prostitution under Penal Code 43.021, or compelling prostitution under Penal Code 43.05(a)(2);
8. Causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing the photographing, filming, or depicting of the child if the person knew or should have known that the resulting photograph, film, or depiction of the child is obscene as defined by Penal Code or pornographic;
9. The current use by a person of a controlled substance as defined by Health and Safety Code Chapter 481, in a manner or to the extent that the use results in physical, mental, or emotional injury to a child;
10. Causing, expressly permitting, or encouraging a child to use a controlled substance as defined by Health and Safety Code Chapter 481;
11. Causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing a sexual performance by a child as defined by Penal Code 43.25;
12. Knowingly causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing a child to be trafficked in a manner punishable as an offense under Penal Code 20A.02(a)(5), (6), (7), or (8), or the failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent a child from being trafficked in a manner punishable as an offense under any of those sections; or
13. Forcing or coercing a child to enter into a marriage.

Abuse does not include the refusal by a person responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare to affirm a child's perception of the child's gender, including a refusal to use a child's preferred name

Neglect

or pronouns, regardless of whether the child's name has been legally changed or to affirm a child's expressed sexual orientation.

“Neglect” means an act or failure to act by a person responsible for a child’s care, custody, or welfare evidencing the person’s blatant disregard for the consequences of the act or failure to act that results in harm to the child or that creates an immediate danger to the child’s physical health or safety.

Neglect includes:

1. The leaving of a child in a situation where the child would be exposed to an immediate danger of physical or mental harm, without arranging for necessary care for the child, and the demonstration of an intent not to return by a parent, guardian, or managing or possessory conservator of the child;
2. The following acts or omissions by a person:
 - a. Placing a child in or failing to remove a child from a situation that a reasonable person would realize requires judgment or actions beyond the child’s level of maturity, physical condition, or mental abilities and that results in bodily injury or an immediate danger of harm to the child;
 - b. Failing to seek, obtain, or follow through with medical care for a child, with the failure resulting in or presenting an immediate danger of death, disfigurement, or bodily injury or with the failure resulting in an observable and material impairment to the growth, development, or functioning of the child;
 - c. The failure to provide a child with food, clothing, or shelter necessary to sustain the life or health of the child, excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services had been offered and refused;
 - d. Placing a child in or failing to remove the child from a situation in which the child would be exposed to an immediate danger of sexual conduct harmful to the child; or
 - e. Placing a child in or failing to remove the child from a situation in which the child would be exposed to acts or omissions that constitute abuse as defined above at items 5-9 committed against another child;
3. The failure by the person responsible for a child’s care, custody, or welfare to permit the child to return to the child’s home without arranging for the necessary care for the child after the child has been absent from the home for any reason,

including having been in residential placement or having run away; or

4. A negligent act or omission by an employee, volunteer, or other individual working under the auspices of a facility or program, including failure to comply with an individual treatment plan, plan of care, or individualized service plan, that causes or may cause substantial emotional harm or physical injury to, or the death of, a child served by the facility or program as further described by rule or policy.

Neglect does not include:

1. The refusal by a person responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare to permit the child to remain in or return to the child's home resulting in the placement of the child in the conservatorship of the department if:
 - a. The child has a severe emotional disturbance;
 - b. The person's refusal is based solely on the person's inability to obtain mental health services necessary to protect the safety and well-being of the child; and
 - c. The person has exhausted all reasonable means available to the person to obtain the mental health services described at item b, above;
2. Allowing the child to engage in independent activities that are appropriate and typical for the child's level of maturity, physical condition, developmental abilities, or culture; or
3. A decision by a person responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare to:
 - a. Obtain an opinion from more than one medical provider relating to the child's medical care;
 - b. Transfer the child's medical care to a new medical provider;
 - c. Transfer the child to another health care facility;
4. The refusal by a person responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare to administer or consent to the administration of a psychotropic medication to the child, or to consent to any other psychiatric or psychological treatment of the child, unless the refusal presents a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or bodily injury to the child or results in an observable and material impairment to the growth, development, or functioning of the child;

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5. Choosing a recognized alternative health-care treatment or therapy for the child that could be considered as new, emerging, or nonstandard, unless the treatment or therapy presents a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or bodily injury to the child or results in an observable and material impairment to the growth, development, or functioning of the child; or
6. The refusal by a person responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare to affirm a child's perception of the child's gender, including a refusal to use a child's preferred name or pronouns, regardless of whether the child's name has been legally changed or to affirm a child's expressed sexual orientation.

Family Code 261.001(1), (1-a), (4)

Other Maltreatment This term has the meaning assigned by Human Resources Code 42.002.

Trafficking of a Child The definition of child abuse or neglect includes the trafficking of a child in accordance with Education Code 38.004.

19 TAC 103.1401(a)

Duty to Report

Report by Any Person

Any person who has reasonable cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person shall immediately make a report as required by law. *Family Code 261.101(a)*

Report by Any Professional

Any professional who has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been or may be abused or neglected shall make a report as required by law. The report must be made within 24 hours after the professional first has reasonable cause to believe that the child has been or may be abused or neglected or is the victim of an offense of indecency with a child.

A professional may not delegate to or rely on another person to make the report.

A "professional" is a person who is licensed or certified by the state or who is an employee of a facility licensed, certified, or operated by the state and who, in the normal course of official duties or duties for which a license or certification is required, has direct contact with children. The term includes teachers, nurses, doctors, day-care employees, juvenile probation officers, and juvenile detention or correctional officers.

Family Code 261.101(b)

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Abuse of Persons
with Disabilities

A person having cause to believe that a person with a disability is in a state of abuse, neglect, or exploitation shall report the information immediately to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS).

A person commits a Class A misdemeanor if the person has cause to believe that a person with a disability has been abused, neglected, or exploited or is in a state of abuse, neglect, or exploitation and knowingly fails to report.

A person filing a report or testifying or otherwise participating in any judicial proceeding arising from a petition, report, or investigation is immune from civil or criminal liability on account of his or her petition, report, testimony, or participation, unless the person acted in bad faith or with a malicious purpose.

Human Resources Code 48.051, .052, .054

Adult Victims of
Abuse

A person or professional shall make a report in the manner required above if the person or professional has reasonable cause to believe that an adult was a victim of abuse or neglect as a child and the person or professional determines in good faith that disclosure of the information is necessary to protect the health and safety of another child or an elderly person or person with a disability. *Family Code 261.101(b-1)*

**Restrictions on
Reporting**

Psychotropic Drugs
and Psychological
Testing

An employee may not use or threaten to use the refusal of a parent, guardian, or managing or possessory conservator to administer or consent to the administration of a psychotropic drug to a child, or to consent to any other psychiatric or psychological testing or treatment of the child, as the sole basis for making a report of neglect, unless the employee has cause to believe that the refusal:

1. Presents a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or bodily injury to the child; or
2. Has resulted in an observable and material impairment to the growth, development, or functioning of the child.

Education Code 26.0091; Family Code 261.111(a) [See FFEB]

Contents of Report

The report should reflect the reporter's belief that a child has been or may be abused or neglected or has died of abuse or neglect. The individual making the report shall identify, if known:

1. The name and address of the child;
2. The name and address of the person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child;

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3. The facts that caused the individual to believe the child has been abused or neglected and the source of the information;
4. The individual's name and telephone number;
5. The individual's:
 - a. Home address; or
 - b. If the individual is a professional as defined by Family Code 261.101(b) [see Report by Any Professional, above], the individual's business address and profession; and
6. Any other pertinent information concerning the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect.

Family Code 261.102, .104

Confidentiality of Report

A report of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect and the identity of the person making the report is confidential and not subject to release under Government Code Chapter 552 (Public Information Act) and may be disclosed only for purposes consistent with the Family Code and applicable federal or state law or under rules adopted by an investigating agency. *Family Code 261.201(a)-(a)(1)*

Unless waived in writing by the person making the report, the identity of an individual making a report under this chapter is confidential and may be disclosed only to a law enforcement officer for the purposes of a criminal investigation of the report, or as ordered by a court under Family Code 261.201. *Family Code 261.101(d)*

Abuse and Neglect Involving School Personnel and Those Responsible for Care

If the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect involves a person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child, the report must be made to DFPS, unless the report is made to a state agency under item 4, below, or the report involves a juvenile justice program or facility [see JJAEPS, below].

All other reports shall be made to:

1. A law enforcement agency;
2. DFPS, Child Protective Services (CPS) Division;
3. A local office of CPS, where available; or
4. The state agency that operates, licenses, certifies, or registers the facility in which the alleged abuse or neglect occurred.

Family Code 261.103(a); 19 TAC 103.1401(b)(1)-(2)

"Law enforcement agency" means:

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1. The Department of Public Safety;
2. The police department of a municipality;
3. The sheriff's office of a county; or
4. A constable's office of a county.

Family Code 261.001(3-a)

"Person responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare" means a person who traditionally is responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare, including:

1. A parent, guardian, managing or possessory conservator, or foster parent of the child;
2. A member of the child's family or household as defined by Family Code Chapter 71;
3. A person with whom the child's parent cohabits;
4. School personnel or a volunteer at the child's school;
5. Personnel or a volunteer at a public or private child-care facility that provides services for the child or at a public or private residential institution or facility where the child resides; or
6. An employee, volunteer, or other person working under the supervision of a licensed or unlicensed child-care facility, including a family home, residential child-care facility, employer-based day-care facility, or shelter day-care facility, as those terms are defined in Human Resources Code Chapter 42.

Family Code 261.001(5)

**Reporting Abuse,
Neglect, or
Exploitation in a
JJAEP**

Any report of alleged abuse, neglect, or exploitation, as those terms are defined in Family Code 261.405, in a juvenile justice program or facility shall be made to the Texas Juvenile Justice Department and a local law enforcement agency for investigation. The term "juvenile justice program" includes a juvenile justice alternative education program. *Family Code 261.405(a)(4)(A), (b)*

**Immunity from
Liability**

A person acting in good faith who reports or assists in the investigation of a report of alleged child abuse or neglect or who testifies or otherwise participates in a judicial proceeding arising from a report, petition, or investigation of alleged child abuse or neglect is immune from any civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed. *Family Code 261.106*

A district may not suspend or terminate the employment of, or otherwise discriminate against, or take any other adverse employment

	action against a professional who makes a good faith report of abuse or neglect. <i>Family Code 261.110(b)</i> [See DG]
Criminal Offenses	
Failure to Report	A person commits a Class A misdemeanor if he or she is required to make a report under Family Code 261.101(a) [see Duty to Report, above] and knowingly fails to make a report as provided by law. A person who is a professional commits a Class A misdemeanor if the person is required to make a report under Family Code 261.101(b) [see Duty to Report] and knowingly fails to make a report as provided by law. The professional commits a state jail felony if he or she intended to conceal the abuse or neglect. <i>Family Code 261.109</i>
False Report	A person commits an offense if, with the intent to deceive, the person knowingly makes a report of abuse and neglect that is false. The offense is a state jail felony, except that it is a felony of the third degree if the person has previously been convicted of the offense. <i>Family Code 261.107(a)</i>
Coercion	A public servant, including as a school administrator, who coerces another into suppressing or failing to report child abuse or neglect to a law enforcement agency commits a Class C misdemeanor offense. <i>Penal Code 39.06</i>
Civil Liability	A school district that is grossly negligent or reckless, or engages in intentional misconduct, in hiring, supervising, or employing a professional school employee is liable for an act or omission that is committed by the employee against a student enrolled in the school and that is failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect under Family Code 261.101 [see Duty to Report, above]. <i>Civil Practice and Remedies Code 118.001</i>
SBEC Disciplinary Action	The State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) may take any of the actions listed in 19 Administrative Code 249.15(a) (impositions, including revocation of a certificate and administrative penalties) based on satisfactory evidence that the person has failed to report or has hindered the reporting of child abuse pursuant to Family Code 261.001, or has failed to notify the SBEC, the commissioner of education, or the school superintendent or director under the circumstances and in the manner required by Education Code 22A.051, 22A.052, 22A.301, and 19 Administrative Code 249.14(d)-(f). <i>19 TAC 249.15(b)(4)</i>

Note: The following legal provisions address child abuse and neglect investigations generally. See GRA for additional legal provisions addressing notification requirements and right of access to students when DFPS investigates reports of abuse and neglect at school. See 40 Administrative Code Chapter 707, Subchapter B for more information regarding investigations of abuse or neglect in a school setting.

Investigations

Reports to District

If DFPS initiates an investigation and determines that the abuse or neglect involves an employee of a public elementary or secondary school, and that the child is a student at the school, the department shall orally notify the superintendent of the district in which the employee is employed. *Family Code 261.105(d)*

On request, DFPS shall provide a copy of the completed report of its investigation to the board, the superintendent, and the school principal, unless the principal is alleged to have committed the abuse or neglect. The report shall be edited to protect the identity of the person who made the report. *Family Code 261.406(b)*

Interview of Student

The investigating agency shall be permitted to interview the child at any reasonable time and place, including at the child's school. *Family Code 261.302(b)* [See GRA]

Interference with
Investigation

A person may not interfere with an investigation of a report of child abuse or neglect conducted by DFPS. *Family Code 261.303(a)*

Confidentiality

A photograph, videotape, audiotape, or other audio or visual recording, depiction, or documentation of a child that is made by DFPS in the course of an inspection or investigation is confidential, is not subject to release under the Public Information Act, and may be released only as required by state or federal law or rules adopted by the DFPS. *Human Resources Code 42.004*

Reporting Policy

A board shall adopt and annually review policies for reporting child abuse and neglect. The policies shall follow the requirements of Family Code Chapter 261. *19 TAC 103.1401(b)*

The policies must require every school employee, agent, or contractor who suspects a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect to submit a written or oral report to at least one of the authorities listed above [see To Whom Reported, above] within 24 hours or less, as determined by the board, after learning of facts giving rise to the suspicion. *19 TAC 103.1401(b)(1)*

The policies must be consistent with the Family Code Chapter 261 and 40 Administrative Code Chapter 700 (CPS) regarding investigations by DFPS, including regulations governing investigation of abuse by school personnel and volunteers. [See GRA]

The policies must require a report to DFPS if the alleged abuse or neglect involves a person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child and must notify school personnel of the following:

1. Penalties under Penal Code 39.06 (misuse of official information), Family Code 261.109 (failure to report), and 19 Administrative Code Chapter 249 (actions against educator's certificate) for failure to submit a required report of child abuse or neglect;
2. Applicable prohibitions against interference with an investigation of a report of child abuse or neglect, including:
 - a. Family Code 261.302 and 261.303, prohibiting school officials from denying an investigator's request to interview a student at school; and
 - b. Family Code 261.302, prohibiting school officials from requiring the presence of a parent or school administrator during an interview by an investigator.
3. Immunity provisions applicable to a person who reports child abuse or neglect or otherwise assists an investigation in good faith;
4. Oral reports made to DFPS are recorded;
5. Confidentiality provisions relating to a report of suspected child abuse or neglect, including the following:
 - a. The requirement for the individual making the report to provide his or her name and telephone number;
 - b. The requirement for the individual making the report to provide his or her home address or, if the individual making the report is a school employee, agent, or contractor, provide his or her business address and profession; and
 - c. The limited circumstances under which the identity of the individual making a report may be disclosed;
6. Any disciplinary action that may result from noncompliance with a district's reporting policy; and

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7. The prohibition under Education Code 26.0091 [see Psychotropic Drugs and Psychological Testing, above].

19 TAC 103.1401(b)(2)

The policies may not require that school personnel report suspicions of child abuse or neglect to a school administrator before making a report to one of the agencies listed above.

The policies must:

1. Include the current toll-free number for DFPS;
2. Provide for cooperation with law enforcement child abuse investigations without the consent of the child's parent, if necessary, including investigations by DFPS; and
3. Include child abuse anti-victimization programs in elementary and secondary schools consisting of age-appropriate, research-based prevention designed to promote self-protection and prevent sexual abuse and trafficking.

19 TAC 103.1401(b)(5)-(8)

Annual Distribution
and Staff
Development

The policies required by these provisions and adopted by the board shall be distributed to all personnel at the beginning of each school year. The policies shall be addressed in staff development programs at regular intervals determined by a board. *19 TAC 103.1401(c)* [See also DH and GRA]

[For training requirements under these provisions, see DMA.]

Required Poster

Using a format and language that is clear, simple, and understandable to students, each public school shall post, in English and in Spanish:

1. The current toll-free DFPS Abuse Hotline telephone number;
2. Instructions to call 911 for emergencies; and
3. Directions for accessing the DFPS [Texas Abuse Hotline web-site](#)¹ for more information on reporting abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

A district shall post the information specified above at each school campus in at least one high-traffic, highly and clearly visible public area that is readily accessible to and widely used by students. The information must be on a poster (11x17 inches or larger) in large print and placed at eye-level to the student for easy viewing. Additionally, the current toll-free Texas Department of Family and Pro-

protective Services Abuse Hotline telephone number should be in bold print.

Education Code 38.0042; 19 TAC 103.1401(e)-(f)

¹ Texas Abuse Hotline website: <https://www.txabusehotline.org/>