

Considerations for School Response to Concerns of Abuse

Created by International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children based on ITFCP Allegation Protocol and statutory guidance for educational institutions in US and UK

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Concern Arises	School Ensures Safety & Preserves Evidence	School Gathers Information/Evidence	Evaluation of Evidence and Assessment	Prevention and Restorative Actions
<p>May be verbal or written</p> <p>All concerns are considered 'formal' complaint</p> <p>Concern may or may not have happened on school grounds</p> <p>Concern may be raised by multiple sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ image discovery ✓ rumors/gossip ✓ social media traffic ✓ victim or student disclosure ✓ staff suspicion or discomfort ✓ alumni or another school ✓ parents ✓ witness ✓ legal claim or law enforcement ✓ anonymously <p>NEVER view or share sexual images of children.</p> <p>Disclosure may be partial, or seek to protect offender</p> <p>False allegations are rare</p>	<p>Prevent contamination of possible crime scene, if applicable</p> <p>Risk minimization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ prevent contact between accused and victim (minimizing victim impact) ✓ Prioritize stopping spread of sexual images of children ✓ law enforcement or local reporting obligations fulfilled, if applicable and if child not at risk of further harm by this action ✓ Parents or non-offending parent informed if child not at risk of further harm by this action ✓ accused informed (in manner that preserves evidence, if applicable) ✓ documentation and justification of decision making <p>Note: work to maintain trust and cooperation with victim's family and accused</p>	<p>Physical evidence secured</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ assume digital evidence exists ✓ turn off devices ✓ prevent remote access ✓ NEVER view or share sexual images of children ✓ ask for a description of the image <p>Reconsider reporting obligations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ severity, malice, intent to harm and <i>any</i> sexual images of children are aggravating elements ✓ consider law, policies, extraterritoriality <p>External reporting may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ local hotline, cyber tip line, social media apps, child advocates and/or law enforcement ✓ involved embassies (extraterritoriality) ✓ employers <p>Note: lack of progression of criminal case does not mean victim lied, or incident did not occur.</p>	<p>Evaluation of suitability (adults accused)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ consider proportionality and patterns ✓ consider providing alternatives such as interview with forensic interviewer or psychologist ✓ maintain credibility in transparent process ✓ maintain confidentiality of all children and exonerated ✓ See risk assessment tools <p>Evaluation of ongoing safety program and treatment in cases of harmful sexual behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ disciplinary action ✓ mediation or restorative practices (depending on severity, only if agreed to by victim) ✓ ongoing risk assessment and mitigation ✓ accountability for those needing corrective action 	<p>Policies reviewed and updated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ full review in light of concern or allegation ✓ staff training ✓ student abuse prevention curriculum evaluated and updated in light of concern ✓ possible ongoing hotline publicized for additional victims <p>Support for victim/s</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ consult with victim/s and other's affected ✓ opportunity to share experience with senior leaders, if applicable ✓ opportunity to participate in external review or policy review ✓ review/withdrawal of honors given to offender ✓ accountability exhibited by senior leadership ✓ strong corrective action and protection from retaliation ✓ Safety planning to prevent contact by offender

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<p>Victim needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ informed of mandatory reporter requirements and confidentiality concerns addressed ✓ trauma informed care and cultural awareness prioritized ✓ need for immediate medical or mental health care determined including need for sexual assault exam ✓ immediate safety (next 24 hours) determined ✓ expectations of victim are age or developmentally appropriate ✓ if victim compliant with abuse, supervision provided and evidence secured <p>Location of accused and due process obligations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ if concern is criminal offense, care should be taken not to tip off accused prior to law enforcement involvement <p>Initial preservation of crime scene, and law enforcement interview, if applicable</p>	<p>Victim safety plan decided with victim and family:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ assist in delivery of trauma informed care/mental health services ✓ scheduling changes focus on offender, not victim ✓ safe space located ✓ check ins planned ✓ monitoring of social media ✓ educational accommodations as needed ✓ confidentiality maintained ✓ strong response to backlash or retaliation by community ✓ mitigate pressure to recant, if factor ✓ Parents informed of trauma informed care/support of victim <p>Community response considered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Holding statement drafted ✓ social media monitored ✓ social emotional interventions planned ✓ community letter planned ✓ prevention of retaliation planned ✓ talking points for staff working with students planned 	<p>Information gathering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ minimize times victim must tell story ✓ seek information from other sources ✓ use open-ended questions to determine what happened ✓ understand there may not be certainty about events <p>Urgent communication needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ lawyers, board, HQ, if applicable ✓ all staff, students, parents ✓ alumni ✓ embassies, if applicable ✓ media, only if already involved/requesting comment <p>Communication may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ students are top priority ✓ concern for and process of appropriate response ✓ request for information ✓ contact person/s, hotline numbers ✓ confidentiality of details of case, pending inquiry ✓ updates if process is extended 	<p>Communication needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ consult with legal advisers about what can be shared ✓ all staff, students, parents ✓ external agencies providing services ✓ recruitment firms if person deemed unsuitable to work with children ✓ previous or onward schools of accused <p>Communication may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ reiteration of student-centered response ✓ contacts and services available for support ✓ new prevention initiatives and policy changes ✓ restitution and reconciliation plans ✓ findings of internal review <p>Allegation determined to be malicious</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Determine if another person abused accuser ✓ Determine what disciplinary actions to pursue ✓ Determine any mental health needs of accuser 	<p>Ongoing staff and student support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ possible ongoing mental health and trauma-informed care offered ✓ student behavior viewed through trauma lens ✓ possible ongoing educational accommodations and safety plans ✓ Creation of trauma fund for future counseling needs for staff and students ✓ Deeper training for response team staff members, board members and parent community <p>Ongoing development of external relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Repair and development of relationships lacking prior to concern (for example, law enforcement, local child advocates, and physical and mental healthcare contacts, etc.) ✓ Development of provider partnerships ✓ Development of country and city school networks

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<p>Priorities and policy actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ initial determination of mandatory reporting obligations ✓ report to law enforcement if suspicion a crime occurred ✓ board and response team notified ✓ confidentiality upheld ✓ wishes of victim considered ✓ disclosure recorded in child’s words, dated and signed ✓ central record for documentation started ✓ seek legal advice (depending on severity of concern) ✓ act with compassion ✓ be aware there may be additional victims <p>In cases of non-recent abuse school may need to determine if accused still has contact with children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Contact with previous and onward school should be considered at some point depending on risk assessment 	<p>Actions for accused, depending upon severity of charge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ if applicable, parents informed if does not put accused at risk of harm and criminal investigation not expected ✓ exclusion, supervisory or scheduling changes made as needed or as matter of policy (do not convey guilt) ✓ statement made or interview planned with accused, if not a criminal matter ✓ expectations are age or developmentally appropriate ✓ inform any outside parties to protect children ✓ advised of process and right to due process including legal representation, if applicable (usually point at which supervision status changes) ✓ mental health support provided, if child, consider if accused might also be a victim of abuse 	<p>Internal review of case:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ proceeds during law enforcement investigation but doesn’t hamper ✓ use of outside entity with no school affiliation may be appropriate ✓ concern is ‘taken seriously’ or ‘victim is believed’ until abuse is ruled out ✓ focus on victim and possible additional victims ✓ standard of proof: abuse likely occurred on balance of probability or preponderance of evidence NOT criminal standard of ‘innocent until proven guilty ‘ ✓ may include written statement from victim, accused, and possible bystanders including staff and students. ✓ Keep victim and family updated on progress ✓ Understanding that in many abuse cases certainty about what happened may never be achieved <p>Links for further guidance:</p>	<p>Reinstatement, if applicable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ support, monitoring, and accountability if disciplinary action taken ✓ efforts to remove cloud of suspicion if allegations were unfounded ✓ monitoring of social media <p>Response to legal action, if applicable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ do not allow threat of claim to deter inquiry, action or external assessments ✓ know your insurance coverage and legal exposure at time of concern ✓ establish scope of legal advice needed (employment, family law, criminal and civil law, human rights or child protection law) ✓ ensure school has say in issues such as liability, limitation periods, apologies, and settlement agreements 	<p>Facility and program changes needed in light of concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Environmental audit conducted ✓ Situational and program risks assessed ✓ Evaluation of safer hiring protocol if applicable <p>Information gathered on accused is retained and shared, if applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ In cases where criminal charges did not occur, determine how substantiated concerns will be stored and shared ✓ Understand sharing options and actions which may include: revocation of letters of reference, notification of licensing boards, demographic data and results of inquiry shared with accreditation, recruitment and international law enforcement partners, previous and onward employers licensing boards, and others, in light or local employment and defamation laws