

# **MAYNARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



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**School Committee Policy:**

**#637**

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## **CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT AND REPORTING PROCEDURES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Maynard Public Schools acknowledges its responsibility to protect our students from child abuse and neglect and to respond effectively. Furthermore the Maynard Public Schools recognizes local, state, and national efforts to address problems associated with child abuse and neglect.

Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L) c. 119, § 51A, (Section 51A) requires that certain persons in their professional capacity are mandated to report child abuse and neglect when they have reasonable cause or suspicion to believe that a child under the age of 18 years is suffering physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse that causes harm or substantial risk of harm to the child's health or welfare, including sexual abuse, or from neglect, including malnutrition. All employees of the Maynard Public Schools are mandated reporters.

This policy with reporting procedures sets forth Maynard's commitment to meet its legal obligations to report child abuse and neglect and work cooperatively with the agencies responsible for addressing it outside of the school community. It establishes the responsibilities and roles for members of Maynard's Students Assistance Team and sets forth expectations for all Maynard employees to receive training in identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect.

Maynard employees are in a unique position to identify the abuse and neglect of children because of their sustained contact with school-age children. Responsible action by employees can be achieved through recognition and understanding of potential incidents of abuse, knowing and following established reporting procedures, and participating in available child abuse and neglect information/training programs.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS:**

- **Neglect** is the failure, either deliberately or through negligence or inability, to take those actions necessary to provide a child with minimally adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, emotional stability and growth, or other essential care. It is understood that such inability is not solely due to inadequate economic resources or solely due to the existence of a handicapping condition. Neglect can occur while the child is in an out-of-home or in-home setting. Permitting a child to be truant or failing to enroll a child in school without providing an alternative program can constitute neglect.
- **Physical Abuse** includes infliction, by other than accidental means, of physical harm upon the body of a child.
- **Emotional Abuse** refers to excessive, aggressive, or unreasonable behavior by an adult that places demands on a child that are above his/her capabilities. This may include verbal attacks, humiliation, degradation, and chronic rejection of the child, close confinement of the child, the child reporting domestic violence, or the permitting or abetting of delinquent behavior.
- **Sexual Abuse** refers to any sexual contact between a caretaker and a child or the commission of a sex offense against a child as defined by the criminal laws of the Commonwealth.
- **Verbal sexual harassment** of a child by anyone, including school district employees/volunteers, is recognized as a form of child abuse and a warning sign of actual physical or sexual abuse.

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