

MERIDIAN SCHOOL DISTRICT
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE NO. 3421
Date Adopted: December 16, 2002

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING/INTERVIEWING STUDENTS

Staff members are expected to report every instance of suspected child abuse or neglect. Since protection of children is the paramount concern, staff should discuss any suspected evidence with the principal or school counselor/nurse regardless of whether the condition is listed among the indicators of abuse or neglect.

Professional staff members are reminded of their legal obligation to make such reports and of their immunity from potential liability for doing so. The following procedures are to be used in reporting instances of suspected child abuse:

- A. When there is reasonable cause to believe that a student has suffered abuse or neglect, staff shall immediately contact the Central Intake office of the child protective services (CPS) of the department of social and health services (DSHS) at 1-800-794-9402. If this agency cannot be reached, the report shall be submitted to the police, sheriff, or prosecutor's office. Such contact must be made within forty-eight (48) hours. Staff shall also advise the principal regarding instances of suspected abuse or neglect. In his/her absence the report shall be made to the school counselor/nurse. A staff member may wish to discuss the circumstances with an employee of CPS locally at 647-6110 for assistance in determining if a report should be made. The Child Protective Service has the responsibility of determining the fact of child abuse or neglect. Any doubt about the child's condition shall be resolved in favor of making the report.
- B. A written report using the district report form shall be submitted promptly to the agency to which the phone report was made. The mailing address of the local office of CPS is shown on the report form. A copy of the report shall be provided to the principal for building records. The report shall include:
 1. the name, address and age of the child
 2. the name and address of the parent or person having custody of the child;
 3. the nature and extent of the abuse or neglect; and
 4. any evidence of previous abuse or any other information that may relate to the cause or extent of the abuse or neglect.

Meridian School District requires that a school employee be present during any interview of a student at school by CPS investigators. RCW 26.44 authorizes the interview of a child by CPS at school without informing the parent or having the parent present. The law also requires the CPS worker to ask the child if they want an adult present and to honor the child's request and choice of adult if possible. The child retains the right to refuse to speak with CPS workers. We have been informed that it may not be best to have the school adult that a child discloses alleged abuse or neglect to as the adult to be present during a CPS interview.

Police have authority to interview students at school with no adult present. However, we should insist that no police interview of a student at school take place until every effort has been made to contact and notify parents (unless police specifically request that parents not be notified because doing so would compromise the investigation).