



Rationale

Island Catholic Schools and the Diocese of Victoria are committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and the enhancement of the well-being and safety of the students entrusted to their care. Everyone shares the responsibility for keeping children and youth safe. The primary responsibility rests with parents. When parents are unwilling or unable to care for a child or youth – or to protect the child or youth from harm – the Ministry of Children and Family Development is legally authorized to intervene.

Employees, clergy, volunteers and contractors are expected to be aware of, and alert to, signs and symptoms of possible child abuse or neglect – and to respond appropriately if they have concerns about a child or youth’s safety or well-being. (B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect)

Policy

Congruent with the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (section 13)* and the *Diocese of Victoria Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment Policy* all Island Catholic Schools and Diocesan employees, clergy, volunteers and contractors who have a reason to believe that a child or youth needs protection from abuse or neglect must report the matter to a child welfare worker with the Ministry of Child and Family Development or to a Delegated Aboriginal Child and Family Services Agency. If a child is in immediate danger, Island Catholic Schools and Diocesan employees, clergy, volunteers and contractors must call 911 or the local police.

All schools must comply with the Diocesan Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment Policy.

If the concern is about an Island Catholic Schools or Diocesan employee, clergy, volunteer, or contractor, one must also contact the Coordinator Diocesan Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment office.

Any Island Catholic Schools and Diocesan employee, clergy, volunteer and contractor suspected of child abuse or neglect will be suspended from their duties in accordance with the Diocesan Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment Policy. Anyone found guilty of abuse will be permanently removed from their position.

If a report of abuse is about an Island Catholic Schools teacher or administrator, the Principal or Superintendent must also file a written and signed report about the allegation against the teacher or administrator to the B.C. Teacher Regulation Branch.

Definitions

Appointed School Official: Persons designated by the Diocese/School to take responsibility for child abuse or neglect cases on behalf of the school. This is usually the Principal, with the Vice-Principal or lead teacher as alternate and the Superintendent if an allegation is made against the Principal.

Child: Any person under the age of 19 in British Columbia. (See *Child, Family and Community Services Act (CFSA)*).

Child Welfare Worker: A person delegated under the *Child, Family and Community Services Act (CFSA)* to provide child welfare services, including responses to suspected child abuse or neglect.

Delegated Aboriginal and Family Services Agency: An organization that provides culturally-appropriate services to Aboriginal children and families and whose child welfare workers have delegated authority under the *Child, Family and Community Services Act (CFSA)* to provide child welfare services, including responses to suspected child abuse or neglect.

Regulations

1. Appointed School Officials

- a. Schools are required to nominate at least two “Appointed School Officials,” a primary and an alternate.
- b. Unless otherwise approved by the Superintendent, these shall be the Principal and Vice-Principal/Lead Teacher of the school.
- c. If the Principal is suspected of child abuse or neglect, it is the responsibility of the Superintendent to ensure the continuity of the reporting and investigation process on matters that fall under section 14 of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA)*

2. Reporting on a Person Suspected of Child Abuse or Neglect

- a. *The Child, Family and Community Services Act* requires that anyone who has reason to believe that a child or youth needs protection from abuse or neglect must promptly report the matter to a child welfare worker with the Ministry of Children and Family Development or to a Delegated Aboriginal Child and Family Services Agency;

- b. Following a report to the child welfare worker, Island Catholic Schools or Diocesan employees, clergy, volunteers or contractors must also inform the Appointed School Official for child abuse and neglect (the Principal).
- c. If the child is in immediate danger the person must also contact the police at 911 your local police department.
- d. The person will not contact the parents/guardians who may be involved in allegedly abusing the child; this is the responsibility of the child welfare worker.
- e. Parents must be informed by the Appointed School Official if a child is alleged to have been abused in the school setting.
- f. If one is uncertain about their duty to report, they are to consult with a child welfare worker who can discuss the options and appropriate course of action.

3. Additional Reporting if the Allegation is Against an Island Catholic Schools or Diocesan Employee, Clergy, Volunteer or Contractor

- a. If an employee, clergy, volunteer or contractor is suspected of child abuse or neglect, then an additional report must be filed with Diocese of Victoria Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment Office at 250-477-1331 ext. 223 or 1-877-237-7233.
- b. The Principal is to inform the Superintendent that such a report has been made.
- c. If a report of abuse is about an Island Catholic Schools teacher or administrator, the Principal and/or Superintendent must also file a written and signed report about the allegation against the teacher or administrator to the B.C. Teacher Regulation Branch.

4. Reporting to Police

- a. Call 911 or your local police department when:
 - i. A child or youth under 19 years of age is in immediate danger, and/or
 - ii. A criminal offence against a child or youth has been or is likely to be committed.
- b. Children and youth who are abused or neglected may be victims of criminal offences such as, but not limited to:
 - i. Criminal negligence causing bodily harm;
 - ii. Physical and sexual assault;
 - iii. Sexual interference or sexual invitation to touch a child under 14;
 - iv. Sexual exploitation of a child/youth; or
 - v. Failure to provide the necessities of life.

5. School/Diocesan Responsibilities

- a. School/Diocesan personnel will cooperate fully with any resulting investigation.
- b. The School/Diocese will protect personal information regarding the investigation, including the reporter's identity, against improper or unauthorized disclosure or use.
- c. School personnel will not share information with outside agencies about child abuse investigations, particularly if the police are involved.
- d. The Appointed School Official will ensure that the school environment is safe during any investigation.
- e. School/Diocesan personnel will support students who are victims of child abuse or neglect.
- f. When an allegation has been made against an Island Catholic Schools or Diocesan employee, clergy, volunteer or contractor, that individual will be suspended from working with children pending the result of the investigation. Anyone found guilty of abuse will be permanently removed from their position.

6. Relationships with Partner Agencies

- a. School/diocesan personnel will promote a working relationship with the local MCFD and Police on reporting suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect and will cooperate with these parties in their response to reports.
- b. The Principal will provide staff with the names and contact information with the local agencies that will provide assistance when dealing with child abuse and neglect.

A template for contact information is provided in Appendix A.

An up to date list of Delegated Aboriginal Child and Family Services

Agencies are at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/data-monitoring-quality-assurance/reporting-monitoring/accountability/delegated-aboriginal-agencies>

7. Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

- a. Teachers will ensure the *Family Life* Curriculum and the Physical Health and Education curriculum are taught each school year so as to provide students strategies to protect themselves and others from potential abuse, exploitation, and harm in a variety of settings.
- b. When there is reason to believe a child is in need of protection from any person the Principal has the authority to issue a "No Trespass Order" to any individual whose presence threatens the safety and welfare of students.

8. Personnel Training and Review

- a. The Principal will ensure that annual training is provided to all school personnel and volunteers who are working with children;
- b. Training will include recognizing child abuse or neglect, what actions are required, prevention measures, reporting child abuse or neglect and everyone's legal responsibility if they suspect the abuse or neglect of a child. (See *B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect* and *Diocese of Victoria Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment Policy*.)

Links

B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/public-safety/protecting-children/childabusepreventionhandbook_serviceprovider.pdf

Responding to Child Welfare Concerns: Your Role in Knowing When and What to Report

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/public-safety/protecting-children/childabusepreventionhandbook_generalpublicbooklet.pdf

Diocese of Victoria Office of Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment.

<https://www.rcdvictoria.org/responsible-ministry>

Resources

Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation and Transformation; printed by Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops; © 2018

Reference: <i>B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect</i> <i>Responding to Child Welfare Concerns: Your Role in Knowing When and What to Report</i> <i>Diocese of Victoria Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment Policy</i>	Approved
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Appendix A- Names and Contact Information

1. If a child or youth (19 and under) is in immediate danger:
CALL 911

2. If you need to contact a Child Welfare Officer any time day or night:
CALL 1 800 663 9122

3. If you need to contact a Delegated Aboriginal and Family Services Agency:
CALL 1 800 663 9122
and ask for your local Delegated Aboriginal and Family Services Agency

4. If a child or youth would like to talk with someone any time of the day or night:
CALL HELPLINE FOR CHILDREN 310 – 1235
No area code is needed and they can remain anonymous

5. Coordinator of the Diocese of Victoria Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment Office
CALL 250-477-1331 ext. 223
Or 1-877-237-7233.

6. My local police contact and phone number is:

7. My local Delegated Aboriginal and Family Services Agency contact and phone number is:

For more information www.mcf.gov.bc.ca