

Maine Department of Education

Model Policy for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention and Response

The Maine legislature requires schools to implement a policy to address the prevention, response, and reporting of child sexual abuse within the school setting (20-A MRS §254, sub-§18). The Board of [School Unit Name] is committed to implementing best practices to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse, and to ensure that all children attend a school which is a safe and secure learning environment. The policy herein is consistent with 20-A MRS §4502, sub-§5-C.

Definitions

Child sexual abuse – All sexual engagement either through hands-on or hands-off activities between an adult and a child is sexual abuse. Sexual engagement between children can also be sexual abuse when there is a significant age difference between the children or if the children are very different in development, size, or other power differential.

Evidence-informed practice or program - Programs that use the best available knowledge and research to guide program design and implementation; the program has clearly identified intended outcomes and conducts evaluations to measure those outcomes.

Qualified instructor – An individual who has the knowledge, skills and comfort level necessary to professionally address child sexual abuse prevention education, aligned to research and best practices. A qualified instructor may be school personnel or from a community-based organization.

School personnel – Any individual required to be certified, authorized, or approved by the Department of Education under Chapter 501 or 502 of Title 20-A.

Procedures for Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Sexual Abuse

School personnel receiving a report of or suspecting child sexual abuse, including but not limited to school faculty, staff, coaches and advisors for extracurricular and co-curricular activities, are required to either report directly to Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) or to confirm in writing that a report was made on their behalf by a school's designated reporter, pursuant to 22 MRS §4011-A Reporting of Suspected Abuse or Neglect and §4012 Reporting Procedures. Reports should be consistent with Maine School Management Association sample school board policy JLF, Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect.

School volunteers who are aware of incidents or suspect child sexual abuse must report to school personnel designated in the [School Unit Name] policy or directly to DHHS as noted above.

Any individuals associated with the school who are not mandated reporters, but who know of or suspect child sexual abuse are encouraged to make a report directly to DHHS.

Individuals suspecting or knowing of child sexual abuse should not ask additional questions or engage in interviewing techniques with the child, and should limit written documentation to the information required by 22 MRS §4012. Training for unbiased documentation methods is recommended.

Acts of reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an incident of child sexual abuse are prohibited.

Child Sexual Abuse Awareness and Prevention Education for School Personnel

Child sexual abuse awareness and prevention education for all [School Unit Name] personnel shall be:

1. Required for all school personnel;
2. Delivered by a qualified instructor(s);
3. A minimum of one hour;
4. Evidence-informed;

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5. Completed within 6 months of hire; and
6. Updated every four years pursuant to 22 MRS §4011-A, sub-§9.

The training will:

1. Increase awareness of developmentally appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviors in children, and
2. Increase ability to identify indicators of sexual abuse, including physical and psychosocial indicators on a spectrum (including lower to higher probability);
3. Increase ability to effectively respond to sexual behavior or disclosures or suspicions of child sexual abuse; and
4. Includes [Insert local child sexual abuse and sexual assault resources.]

Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education Pre-K through Grade 5 Curriculum Programs

Age-appropriate child sexual abuse prevention education curriculum programs shall be:

1. Delivered by qualified instructors;
2. Part of the written comprehensive school health education curriculum;
3. Aligned to the Maine Learning Results Health Education Standards for grades Pre-K through 5 (pursuant to 20-A MRS §6209); and
4. Follow an appropriate scope and sequence.

The classroom curriculum will be consistent with evidence-informed, age-appropriate child sexual abuse prevention education for students, and include:

1. Age-appropriate education regarding physical and personal boundaries, including biologically accurate body terminology;
2. Helps children identify unsafe or uncomfortable situations including a range of feelings, touches or violations of physical boundaries;
3. Helps children identify safe adults with whom they could discuss unsafe or uncomfortable situations; and
4. Helps children identify and develop skills to support a friend who may be experiencing unsafe or uncomfortable situations.

Resources and Services

Service providers related to local and statewide child sexual abuse and sexual assault can be found at:

1. The Maine Department of Health and Human Services;
2. The Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (www.mecasa.org; statewide sexual assault support line: 1-800-871-7741); and
3. [add local community-based child sexual abuse services or supports].

Prevention education resources related to child sexual abuse can be found at:

1. The Maine Department of Education Health Education website (www.maine.gov/doe/healthed/areas/index.html);
2. The Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (www.mecasa.org); and
3. [add local community-based prevention organizations and coalitions].

Resources related to mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse can be found at the Maine Department of Health and Human Services Office of Child and Family Services (<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/mandated-reporters.shtml>).