

## **CHILD ABUSE POLICY**

Because of their regular contact with school-age children, school employees are in an excellent position to identify abused or neglected children.

To comply with the law (SDCL 26-8A-2, 26-8A-7) it is the policy of the Howard School District 48-3 that any teacher or other school employee who suspects that a child under 18 years of age has been neglected or physically abused (including sexual or emotional abuse) by any person including parent or other person, other than an accidental means, shall report orally to the principal or superintendent who shall then immediately orally report to the states attorney or to the department of social services or to law enforcement officers. The principal or superintendent shall inform the school employee initiating the action within 24 hours and in writing that the report has been made. The employees shall make the report directly to the proper authorities if the principal or superintendent fails to do so.

A report made pursuant to SDCL 26-8A-8 to the department of social services shall include the name, address, date and place of birth of the child, the name and address of the child's parents, guardian, custodian or responsible persons, the date of the report and the suspected or proven instances of child abuse or neglect as defined in SDCL 26-8A-2.

School employees, including administrators, shall not contact the child's family or any other persons to determine the cause of the suspected abuse or neglect. It is not the responsibility of the school employees to prove that the child has been abused or neglected, or to determine whether the child is in need of protection, only to report his/her suspicions of abuse or neglect.

Any personal interview or physical inspection of the child should be conducted with school authority present and in a considerate, professional manner and information or records concerning reports of suspected abuse or neglect are confidential and the release to persons other than provided by law is punishable by \$1,000 fine, one year in jail or both (SDCL 26-8A-13). Failure to make a report where abuse or neglect is suspected is subject to the same punishment (SDCL 26-8A-3 and 26-8A-7).

Copies of this policy shall be distributed by the superintendent or his designee to all school employees at the beginning of each school term which is available through staff handbook and to new employees when they begin employment if at a different time than the beginning of the school term.

The board will support any employee making a report of suspected child abuse or neglect until it is determined that the employee was acting in bad faith in making the report.

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