

Argyle ISD
Plan for Addressing Sexual Abuse of Children
As Required by HB 1041

What is Sexual Abuse of a Child?

Sexual abuse in the Texas Family Code is defined as any sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as a failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct with a child.

Methods for Increasing Awareness Regarding Sexual Abuse of Children

Teachers : Teachers will be trained annually in all content areas addressed in the Argyle ISD Plan for Addressing Sexual Abuse of Children. Training may be provided through campus staff, district staff, on-line or outside agencies as appropriate at the discretion of the campus administration. Training will include contents of the adopted board policy FFG (LEGAL) and pertinent FFG exhibits.

Students : District counseling staff will address issues to increase awareness regarding sexual abuse of children and anti-victimization programs with age appropriate conversation and materials.

Parents : Information concerning the district Plan for Addressing Sexual Abuse of Children will be posted in school newsletters, on the Argyle ISD website, and in the student handbook. The student handbook (which is available both in printed format and online at the district website) will include the following information:

- The plan for addressing child sexual abuse, which may be accessed at the district website. As a parent, it is important for you to be aware of warning signs that could indicate a child may have been or is being sexually abused.
- A child who has experienced sexual abuse should be encouraged to seek out a trusted adult. Be aware as a parent or other trusted adult that disclosures of sexual abuse may be more indirect than disclosures of physical abuse, and it is important to be calm and comforting if your child, or another child, confides in you. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing by telling you.
- If you permit your child to be in a situation where he or she may be injured, then you may be prosecuted for child abuse. The fact that the abuser is a parent or other family member does not remove your obligation to protect the child. If you are frightened for your own safety or that of your child, call 911.

- You are legally responsible for the care of your child. You must provide your child with safe and adequate food, clothing, shelter, protection, medical care and supervision, or else you must arrange for someone else to provide these things. Failure to do so may be considered neglect.
- As a parent, if your child is a victim of sexual abuse, the campus counselor will provide information regarding counseling options for you and your child available in your area. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services also manage early intervention counseling programs. The Denton County location may be contacted at 1-940-384-6853.
- Anyone who suspects that a child has been or may be abused or neglected has a legal responsibility, under state law, for reporting the suspected abuse or neglect to law enforcement or to Child Protective Services (CPS). Reports may be made by contacting one of the following:
 - ◆ Texas Abuse Hotline, 1-800-252-5400, <http://www.txabusehotline.org>
 - ◆ Call 911 for emergency situations

The following websites might help you become more aware of child sexual abuse:

- ◆ Prevent Child Abuse America: www.preventchildabuse.org
- ◆ Prevent Child Abuse Texas: www.preventchildabusetexas.org
- ◆ Texas Association Against Sexual Assault: www.taasa.org
- ◆ Child Welfare Information Gateway: www.childwelfare.gov
- ◆ Texas Department of Family and Protective Services:
www.dfps.state.tx.us

Warning Signs in Children and Adolescents of Possible Child Abuse

There are four major types of child maltreatment: physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse.

Physical Abuse is physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child, or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child. The physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) can result from punching, beating, shaking, kicking, biting, throwing, stabbing, hitting, burning, choking, or otherwise harming a child. Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caretaker intended to hurt the child.

Suspect Physical Abuse When You See:

- Frequent injuries such as bruises, cuts, black eyes, or burns without adequate explanations
- Frequent complaints of pain without obvious injury
- Burns or bruises in unusual patterns that may indicate the use of an instrument or human bite; cigarette burns on any part of the body
- Lack of reaction to pain
- Aggressive, disruptive, and destructive behavior
- Passive, withdrawn, and emotionless behavior
- Fear of going home or seeing parents
- Injuries that appear after a child has not been seen for several days
- Unreasonable clothing that may hide injuries to arms or legs

Neglect is failure to provide for a child's basic needs necessary to sustain the life or health of the child, excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services have been offered and refused.

Suspect Neglect When You See:

- Obvious malnourishment
- Lack of personal cleanliness
- Torn or dirty clothing
- Stealing or begging for food
- Child unattended for long periods of time
- Need for glasses, dental care, or other medical attention
- Frequent tardiness or absence from school

Sexual Abuse includes fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or producing pornographic materials.

Suspect Sexual Abuse When You See:

- Physical signs of sexually transmitted diseases
- Evidence of injury to the genital area
- Pregnancy in a young girl
- Difficulty in sitting or walking
- Extreme fear of being alone with adults of a certain sex
- Sexual comments, behaviors or play
- Knowledge of sexual relations beyond what is expected for a child's age
- Sexual victimization of other children

Emotional Abuse is mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in a child's growth, development, or psychological functioning. It includes extreme forms of punishment such as confining a child in a dark closet, habitual scapegoating, belittling, and rejecting treatment for a child.

Suspect Emotional Abuse When You See:

- Over compliance
- Low self-esteem
- Severe depression, anxiety, or aggression
- Difficulty making friends or doing things with other children
- Lagging in physical, emotional, and intellectual development
- Caregiver who belittles the child, withholds love, and seems unconcerned about the child's problems

Signs More Typical in Adolescents

- ◆ Self-injury (cutting, burning)
- ◆ Inadequate personal hygiene
- ◆ Drug and alcohol abuse
- ◆ Sexual promiscuity
- ◆ Running away from home
- ◆ Depression, anxiety
- ◆ Suicide attempts
- ◆ Fear of intimacy or closeness
- ◆ Compulsive eating or dieting

Suspect Neglect When You See . . .

- ◆ Obvious malnourishment
- ◆ Lack of personal cleanliness
- ◆ Torn and/or dirty clothes
- ◆ Obvious fatigue and listlessness
- ◆ A child unattended for long periods of time
- ◆ Need for glasses, dental care or other medical attention
- ◆ Stealing or begging for food
- ◆ Frequent absence or tardiness from school

Available Counseling Options and Other Resources

Children's Advocacy Centers provides comprehensive services which protect, promote healing and enhance the quality of life for abused and neglected children in Central Texas. The Center is a centralized clearing house for investigation of suspected sexual and physical abuse and provides a safe nurturing place for children to tell their stories. An appointment is required to visit the center, Denton County contact number is 972-317 2818.

Sexual Assault Legal Hotline: 1-888-296-SAFE (Statewide)

Family Violence Legal Line: 1-800-374-HOPE (Statewide)

Stop It Now! provides a national helpline for supportive guidance, information, and resources. The Helpline is staffed by professionals who can provide assistance in how to deal with suspected child abuse situations. Additional resources are available on their website.

Helpline 1-888-PREVENT

Email helpline@stopitnow.org

Website www.stopitnow.org