

# Child Protection

“The provisions of this policy shall be applied in all public schools, and in all private schools in Abu Dhabi Emirate in a way that does not contradict the provisions of the Organizing Regulations of Private Schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi (2013). This Policy substitutes Policy no.3 concerning Student Protection in the Private Schools Policy and Guidance Manual”.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all schools have student protection measures in place to:

- (1) Protect them while in the school’s care from all acts and omissions constituting physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect, and bullying.
- (2) Identify and support those students who may have suffered such abuse or neglect, as strongly enforced by the UAE Federal Law No.3 of 2016 on Child Rights, Federal Law No. 3 of 1987 on Penal Code, and other relevant UAE laws.
- (3) Emphasize that all ADEC employees and school staff are mandated reporters of cases of abuse and/or suspected abuse inside and outside the school.
- (4) Define duties and responsibilities of School Principals and school staff for responding to suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect.

## POLICY STATEMENT

### 1. DEFINITIONS

- 1.1. A **Child** under this policy is a person who has not attained 18 years old.
- 1.2. **Child protection**, for the purpose of this policy, is defined as all measures, steps and actions that must be taken to protect students from risks that may cause harm or injury while they are in the school’s care, travelling to and from the school using school transport, and moving between, waiting for, and taking part in, all activities organized by the school inside or outside the school campus.
- 1.3. A **school day** is the time period spent by a student under school supervision. It includes the time spent by the student inside the school and includes the time spent by the student in school buses from and to the school and in extra-curricular school activities.

- 1.4. **Abuse** refers to physical abuse, corporal punishment, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and also includes bullying, exploitation, and neglect.
- **Physical abuse** is the deliberate physical injury to a student, or the intentional neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This involves actions including, but not limited to, hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement, or giving the student drugs not prescribed by a physician to control behavior or to cause harm. Refer to **APPENDIX 1** For common signs that indicate physical abuse.
  - **Corporal punishment**, a physical punishment inflicted on a child by a teacher or any adult in authority, such as the guardian, as a form of discipline, and is considered as **Physical abuse**.
  - **Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a student such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the student's emotional growth and development. It involves actions such as, but not limited to, conveying to students that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It involves causing students to feel bullied, frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of students. Some levels of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a student, though it may occur in isolation. Refer to **APPENDIX 2** For common signs that indicate emotional abuse.
  - **Sexual Abuse and Exploitation** involves but not limited to forcing or enticing a student to take part in sexual activities. The activities involve, actions including, but not limited to, physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They include non-contact activities such as involving students looking at or in the production of, pornographic material or, watching sexual activities, sexual hinting or encouraging students to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Refer to **APPENDIX 3** For common signs that indicate sexual abuse. **Bullying** is unwanted aggressive behavior(s) from a student or more to another student and involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated (or is highly likely to be) multiple times. Bullying, as a form of violence, includes physical (hitting, tripping), verbal (name calling, teasing), relational/social (spreading rumors, leaving out of group), and cyber-bullying aggression (occurs through e-mail, a chat room, instant messaging, a website, text messaging, or pictures or videos sent through cell phones or posted on websites). A student can be a perpetrator, a victim, or both.
- 1.5. **Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a student's basic physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. It involves failing of a parent or a guardian to take actions that are considered necessary to care for children including, but not limited to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter
- protect the child from physical harm or danger;
- provide adequate care (including the use of adequate caregivers)
- provide healthcare and appropriate medical treatment
- provide education and regular school attendance
- maintain personal hygiene
- ensure adequate stimulation.

Refer to **APPENDIX 4** for common signs of neglect.

## **2. POLICY:**

All public schools must comply with the provisions of this policy. Every private school shall publish a Child Protection policy to protect students from any abuse and neglect provided it meets the minimum requirements of what is included in this policy and does not contradict any of its provisions.

The school and the school principal are guardians of the right of students of not being exposed to abuse and neglect. The school principal agrees to act as the guardian of all students while they are under school's care and has to take responsibilities that fall under this role.

All students have equal rights for protection, safety, and security in all public and private schools. Schools are fully responsible for the care and protection of students, while students are in the school's care, travelling to and from the school using school transport, and moving between, waiting for, and taking part in all activities organized by the school inside and outside the school

The School must also ensure the supervision of students before the start of the school day and after school hours. For safety and life reasons, all school staff shall never leave children unattended at any time.

All ADEC employees and school staff – including any person who, in the performance of his/her duties, has regular or temporary contact with students and who provides services to students or school – are authorized and mandated by ADEC to report all cases of suspected abuse and/or neglect (conducted by any perpetrator inside or outside of the school) directly to the Ministry of Interior – Child Protection Center within 24 hours upon suspicion.

It is mandated to report using the telephone hotline (**116111**) and the electronic reporting link available on the ADEC website (<https://www.adec.ac.ae/ar/Pages/childabuserreportingabu-dhabiedusector.aspx>).

The information submitted electronically through the above mentioned link are directly transferred to the Ministry of Interior – Child Protection Center.

**If a child is in immediate danger (risk of serious harm), the police should be called using the 999 service, followed by reporting to the Ministry of Interior – Child Protection Center within one hour upon discovery.**

In addition, school staff must inform the School Principal immediately when they suspect the exposure of any student to any form of abuse and/or neglect.

No school principal or school staff shall impede or inhibit reporting or a suspected case of child abuse and/or neglect by a third party, nor shall they take any actions against the reporter or nor threaten of doing so.

The Ministry of Interior–Child Protection Center shall conduct the case intake, immediate communication with parents/guardians, investigation, and referral for treatment and rehabilitation of affected child and families, if required.

The ADEC Division in charge of Student Protection in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior – Child Protection Center shall provide guidance to school staff for further immediate actions, taking into account confidentiality and privacy of the students and families affected, and laws, regulations and procedures relevant to the incident.

The Article 272 of the UAE Law No. 3 (1987) “Federal Penal Code” states that: “Any public official or person in charge of detecting crimes and arrested the accused, who fails or defers to denounce a crime within his knowledge shall be punished by detention or a fine. A fine shall be imposed upon any official who is not in charge of detecting or seizing crimes, and who neglects or delays to notify the concerned authorities of a crime which becomes known to him, in the course of or in respect of his job performance”.

School staff must raise the awareness of students of the importance to report any suspected case of student abuse and/or neglect inside or outside the school that becomes known to them, as stated in this policy.

### **3. Data confidentiality:**

Case reports and student data are strictly confidential. The identities of the student subject to alleged abuse or neglect, the alleged perpetrator, and the person reporting the alleged case must be kept confidential by all parties involved in the case.

The data should be shared only with authorized individuals from the ADEC Division in charge of child protection and the Ministry of Interior – Child Protection Center and Social Support Center authorized staff.

School staff are strictly prohibited from discussing active or closed cases with the media, or any third parties or other staff, unauthorized ADEC staff, with the exception of investigative and judicial authorities and within the legal responsibilities.

#### **4. Training:**

Given the critical importance of understanding and complying with all aspects of this policy to ensure the protection of students, the Ministry of Interior – Child Protection Center in coordination and collaboration with ADEC shall conduct child protection training for school leaders and other specified staff for which attendance is mandatory.

#### **5. Failure to comply with this policy:**

***Failure to comply with this policy is subject to legal accountability and administrative penalties stipulated in accordance with ADEC's regulations, policies and requirements, in addition to the UAE Federal Law No.3 of 2016 on Child Rights, Federal Law No. 3 of 1987 on Penal Code, and any other local or Federal relevant laws effective at the time of the incident.***

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **Principals will:**

- Comply with the provisions of this policy.
- Every private school shall publish a Child Protection policy to protect students from any abuse and neglect provided it meets the minimum requirements of what is included in this policy and does not contradict any of its provisions.
- Ensure that procedures to prevent situations that could lead to the abuse or neglect of students are in place and understood by all school staff and leaders
- Ensure the supervision of students at all times while in school's care.
- Ensure that there is priority emphasis within the school on the protection of the students and for taking immediate actions when there is suspicion of cases of student abuse or neglect.
- Ensure that students can safely report their concerns about abuse and/or neglect without fear of retribution or punishment.
- Ensure that staff and others can safely report their concerns about the potential exposure of any student to abuse and/or neglect without fear of retribution or punishment.
- Gain views from students and parents regarding security and protection within the school.
- Immediately report any case of potential abuse and/or neglect of students as stated by this policy.

- Ensure that all staff and administrators targeted for student protection training are fully attend and participate in all training sessions.
- Conduct orientation sessions for parents/guardians upon student registration or enrollment and at the start of every school year to promote this policy and to inform them of their roles and responsibilities, and their rights and duties.
- Maintain students' records in compliance with Student Records policy, and ensure confidentiality of open and closed cases.
- Immediately suspend any staff member who is suspected of an offence involving student abuse and/or neglect on a temporary basis until the suspicion is adjudicated

**All School Staff will:**

- Report a suspected case of abuse and/or neglect upon immediate discovery
- Supervise students at all times while in school's care.
- Understand this policy to address suspected or alleged student abuse or neglect cases.
- Attend and participate in mandated student protection training.

**Parents/Legal Guardians will:**

- Cooperate with the school administration and staff, answer all inquiries related to the student's behavior, academic performance and respond to their feedback and guidance.
- Attend all scheduled school parent meetings.
- Communicate any concerns, observations, or changes in their child's behavior to the school administration or to the concerned school staff.

**REFERENCES**

- UAE Federal Law No.3 of 2016 on Child Rights
- ADEC-MOI CPC Memorandum of Understanding of 2015
- Ministry of Interior – Child Protection Center website ([www.moi-cpc.gov.ae](http://www.moi-cpc.gov.ae))
- UAE Federal Law No. 3 of 1987 on Penal Code

## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX 1**

Possible signs of physical abuse can include:

1. Unexplained bruises or injuries
2. Injuries which have not received medical attention
3. Repeated abdominal pain
4. With drawl from physical contact
5. Arms and legs covered in scalds
6. Fear of returning home
7. Fear of contacting caregivers/parents
8. Self-destructive tendencies
9. Displaying aggression towards others
10. Unusual passive behaviour
11. Repeated running away from home
12. Cigarette burns
13. Human bite marks
14. Broken bones
15. Multiple burns with a clearly demarcated edge

### **APPENDIX 2**

Possible signs of emotional abuse can include:

1. Regular tiredness
2. Fear of a new situation
3. Low self esteem
4. High levels of anxiety
5. Unusually passive or aggressive
6. Delayed speech
7. Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
8. Running away
9. Lying
10. Neurotic behaviour e.g. sulking, hair twisting, rocking
11. Fear of making mistakes
12. Self-harm
13. Developmental delay in terms of emotional progress

### **APPENDIX 3**

Possible signs of sexual abuse can include:

1. Unusual behaviour which could be general or sexual
2. Age inappropriate sexual behaviour
3. Sexually transmitted diseases
4. Physical indicators in the genital and anal areas
5. Pain or itching in the genital area
6. Bruising or bleeding near genital area

7. Vaginal discharge or infection
8. Discomfort when walking or sitting down
9. Pregnancy

#### **APPENDIX 4**

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF NEGLECT CAN INCLUDE:

1. STEALING
2. POOR SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS
3. FAILURE TO THRIVE
4. POOR PERSONAL HYGIENE
5. FREQUENT HUNGER
6. UNTREATED MEDICAL COMPLAINTS
7. FREQUENT LATENESS OR ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL
8. INAPPROPRIATE CLOTHING
9. SUBSTANCE OR ALCOHOL MISUSE

#### **APPENDIX 5**

Process to report a suspected case of abuse and/or neglect in Abu Dhabi schools:

