

Destinations Career Academy of Georgia (GADCA)
Mandated Reporter Policy

Adopted On: 3/28/2023 Last Reviewed On: 3/28/2023

Last Updated On: 3/28/2023

The Board of GADCA adopts the following policy, effective on the date of adoption by the Board.

(1) Purpose of Policy.

- i. The purpose of this policy is to provide for the protection of children. Mandatory reporting will prevent abuse.

(2) Georgia's Mandated Reporter Law

- a. Georgia law § 19-7-5(a) mandates reports of suspected child abuse by school employees. Mandatory reporting of abuse is intended "to cause the protective services of the state to be brought to bear on the situation." and the law "shall be liberally construed so as to carry out the[se] purposes."

(3) Who does this policy apply to?

- a. All Destinations Career Academy of Georgia Employees
 1. Head of School
 2. Academic Administrators
 3. Counselor
 4. Academic Accountability & Grants Management Specialist
 5. Career Engagement Specialist
 6. Teachers and Support Staff

(4) When does the report have to be made?

- a. A report of suspected abuse should be made immediately, "but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused to a child welfare agency providing protective services . . . or, in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority or district attorney." O.C.G.A. 19-7-5(e).
- b. In addition to professional repercussions, such as termination of employment, a person required to report a suspected case of child abuse who knowingly and willfully fails to do so shall be guilty of a criminal misdemeanor. (O.C.G.A. 19-7-5(h)).

(5) Mandated Reporting Procedure

- a.** Any suspected cases of child abuse shall be reported immediately, and at least within 24 hours to the DFCS Child Protective Center. The reporter may choose to consult with the school counselor, Academic Administrator and/or Head of School, so long as the report is still made within the required time. After making the report, the employee should notify the district personnel that a child abuse report has been made and provide documentation of the report. ALL suspected cases of child abuse will be reported to and processed by the DFCS Child Protective Center.
- b.** Sexual abuse is a common type of child abuse. However, it is important to remember that not all sexual activities of minors are reportable as child abuse. In particular, sexual abuse does not include (a) consensual sex acts involving persons of the opposite sex when the sex acts are between minors at least 14 years old, or (b) consensual sex act between a minor and an adult who is not more than four years older than the minor.
- c.** The statewide phone number for the DFCS Child Protective Center to make an oral report is 1-855-422-4453. Contact information for local county DFCS office can be found at <https://dfcs.georgia.gov/locations>. To access the online DFCS Mandated Reporter Form visit <https://cps.dhs.ga.gov/Main/Default.aspx>. Mandated reporters also have the following options to submit this form electronically (use only one option per report):
 - i.** Option One: E-mail to CPSIntake@dhs.ga.gov. The system may restrict you to receiving only one auto-reply per day per email stating that the CPS report has been received.
 - ii.** Option Two: Fax to 229-317-9663. Faxed reports convert to a PDF (Adobe) format and are automatically forwarded to the CPSIntake@dhs.ga.gov e-mail box. If you provide an e-mail address, you can receive a confirmation e-mail.
- d.** If the child is in a life-threatening situation or immediate danger, a report should be made immediately to law enforcement or the district attorney in the county where the child lives. Notify the Counselor, Academic Administrator and/or Head of School. The identifying employee should follow up with DFCS as soon as possible to make an official report in accordance with DFCS reporting forms and procedures. The reporter must follow up to assure that the report was received.
- e.** The obligation to report arises when there is “reasonable cause to believe that child abuse has occurred.” “Reasonable cause” means you have an objective, factual basis to believe that the child may have been abused. This does not mean you that are sure beyond a reasonable doubt that the child has been abused. It means that your belief is based on more than a hunch.
- f.** The responsibility of a mandated reporter is to ensure that a report is made whenever there is reason to believe that a child has been the victim of abuse. It is the responsibility of DFCS to review the report and decide whether further investigation is warranted. If the report is on a family that already has an open

case with DFCS, the current suspicions must still be made to the DFCS intake worker.

- g.** Mandated reporters may contact DFCS to find out whether their report was substantiated. Even if the report was not substantiated, it is the responsibility of the mandated reporter to report future concerns regarding the child.
- h.** **ALL** suspected cases of child abuse will be reported to and processed by the DFCS Child Protective Center.

(6) Mandated Reporter Policy

- a.** Any Destinations Career Academy of Georgia employee or unpaid volunteer who suspects child abuse or maltreatment is mandated to report and is authorized to report to DFCS and/or Law Enforcement as required by law pursuant to Code Section 19-7-5 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A). As mandated by Georgia law O.C.G.A 19-7-5, any staff or unpaid volunteer of Destinations Career Academy of Georgia (GADCA) having cause to believe that a child under the age of eighteen (18):
 - b.** has had physical injury or injuries inflicted upon the child other than by accidental means by a parent, caregiver or any person who attends to any child as an employee or volunteer of the school;
 - c.** has been neglected or exploited by a parent, caregiver or any person who attends to any child as an employee or volunteer of the school; or
 - d.** has been sexually assaulted, shall report their belief to District leadership and shall make a report of child abuse and neglect to the appropriate Department of Family and Children Services (“DFCS”) as soon as reasonably possible, but within the twenty-four (24) hour from the time there is reasonable cause to believe that suspected child abuse has occurred.

(7) GADCA will provide training annually for all school staff in the identification of children suspected of being neglected or abused. The training will include procedures for reporting such cases. Training may be provided through Pro Solutions Training online service.

a. REQUIREMENTS

1. If any employee has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse, sexual abuse, molestation, neglect or exploitation has occurred, the employee must report it or face criminal penalties and employment penalties, including but not limited to termination. When in doubt, the employee shall report the suspicion to protect the interest of the child and to fulfill their legal duty to report.
2. If any employee is aware of an allegation of child abuse of a student by a parent or caregiver (including an employee), the allegation shall be reported in accordance with this policy and as soon as possible within the twenty-four-hour required reporting time.
3. If any employee has reasonable cause to suspect the student is subject to child abuse, sexual abuse, molestation, neglect or exploitation, or that the

employee has received an allegation of child abuse by a parent or caregiver (including employees), the employee shall submit a complete and written report as soon as possible, but no later than the 24-hour requirement. Documentation must be provided to the Academic Administrator and/or Head of School that the report has been made.

a. Reporting Options

- i. Phone: 1-855-422-4453
- ii. Email: CPSIntake@dhs.ga.gov
- iii. Online: <https://cps.dhs.ga.gov/Main/Default.aspx>
- iv. Fax: 229-317-9663

4. If any employee is alleged to have committed child abuse or neglect, in addition to submitting a report to DFCS as required under Paragraph (3) above, the Head of School and/or Academic Administrator shall conduct a prompt investigation to determine whether any inappropriate or unprofessional conduct was taken by the employee. The Academic Administrator and/or Head of School should:
 - a. solicit the assistance of involved school employees to assist in their investigation.
 - b. contact DFCS and request all documents pertaining to the employees' case, as allowed by law,
 - c. and interview the employee, if possible. If an employee refuses to cooperate in the school system's investigation, the employee may be charged with insubordination.
5. At a minimum, the findings of the investigation may be submitted to the Board of Directors and should include:
 - a. the steps taken to investigate the allegation; unprofessional or inappropriate conduct;
 - b. the findings as to whether the employee engaged in the recommendation of what action should be taken, if any, as a result of the investigation; and,
 - c. the rationale for recommended action, if any, or rationale for lack of action
6. The requirement to report suspected child abuse or neglect is applicable to any adult school volunteer. Therefore, mandated reporter training will be required of all school volunteers. School volunteers will be notified of such reporting requirements and required training through the student handbook and on the school website.

References:

Mandated Reporter Law
O.C.G.A. §19-7-5 (2016)