

**Pataula Charter Academy and
Spring Creek Charter Academy
Child Abuse or Neglect Reporting Policy**

Mandated Reporting

Any school employee or 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 employee of Pataula Charter Academy and Spring Creek Charter Academy having cause to believe that a child under the age of eighteen (18):

- 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;
- 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
- has been sexually assaulted,

shall report their belief to the School Counselor, or in her absence the Principal.

The Counselor, Principal, or designee 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 no later than twenty-four (24) hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe that suspected child abuse has occurred.

The Counselor and/or Principal will provide training annually for professional staff in the identification of children suspected of being neglected or abused. The training will include procedures for reporting such cases. Initial training may be provided through Pro Solutions Training online service.

Mandated Reporter 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 immediately and in accordance with this policy and as soon as possible. Employees should not wait until the end of the day or the following day to make a report under any circumstances. If you are unable to reach an administrator after several reasonable attempts, the employee should make the report themselves by calling the Child Abuse hotline (1-855-GACHILD). If an employee is made aware of allegations after-hours and feels the child is in immediate danger, the employee should call the hotline as well.

3. If any employee reports to the Counselor or Principal that the 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 Counselor, Principal, or their designee shall submit a complete report to the Department of Family and Children Services as soon as possible, but no later than the 24 hour requirement.
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 Principal shall conduct a prompt investigation to determine whether any inappropriate or unprofessional conduct was taken by the employee. The Principal should:
 - solicit the assistance of involved school employees to assist in their investigation; and,
 - contact DFCS and request all documents pertaining to the employees' case, as allowed by law, and should interview the employee, if possible. If an employee refuses to cooperate in the school system's investigation, the employee may be charged with insubordination.

At a minimum, the findings of the investigation shall be submitted to the Superintendent and Board of Directors, if necessary, and should include:

- the steps taken to investigate the allegation;
 - the findings as to whether the employee engaged in unprofessional or inappropriate conduct;
 - the recommendation of what action should be taken, if any, as a result of the investigation; and,
 - the rationale for recommended action, if any, or rationale for lack of action, if any.
5. The legal 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 requirement and required training through the parent handbook and on the school website.
 6. Mandated reporters are legally required to report suspected child abuse regardless of whether it is based on a privileged/confidential communication.

Student Reporting of Alleged Sexually Inappropriate Behavior

Reporting

Any student (*or parent or friend of a student*) who has been the victim of an act of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct by a teacher, administrator, other school system employee, or volunteer affiliated with the school should make an oral report of the act to any teacher, counselor, school nurse, or administrator at his/her school.

Any teacher, counselor or administrator receiving a report of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct of a student by a teacher, administrator, other employee, or volunteer affiliated with the school shall make an oral report of the incident immediately by telephone or otherwise to the school principal or principal's designee, and shall submit a written report of the incident to the school principal or principal's designee within 24 hours. *If the principal is the person accused of the sexual abuse or sexual misconduct, the oral and written reports should be made to the superintendent or the superintendent's designee.*

Sexual Abuse

Any school principal or principal's designee receiving a report of sexual abuse as defined in O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5 shall make an oral report to a DHS child welfare agency providing protective services, appropriate law enforcement, or district attorney immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused. The report should be made by telephone and followed by a written report in writing, if requested, to a child welfare agency providing protective services, as designated by the Department of Human Resources, or, in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority or district attorney.

Sexual Misconduct

Reports of acts of sexual misconduct against a student by a teacher, administrator, other employee, or volunteer not covered by O.C.G.A. §§ 19-7-5 or 20-2-1184 shall be investigated immediately by school personnel. If the investigation of the allegation of sexual misconduct indicates a reasonable cause to believe that the report of sexual misconduct is valid, the school principal or principal's designee shall make an immediate written report to the superintendent and the Professional Standards Commission Ethics Division (if applicable).

**Adopted on January 11, 2016

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Amended 8-24-2020

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