

HOWARD GARDNER MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE CHARTER SCHOOL

	Students/Families	SF16-0801
	Child Abuse Reporting	ADOPTED DATE: August 16, 2016 REVIEWED DATE: REVISED DATE: August 18, 2026

Purpose and Authority

The Board of Trustees requires Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School (“HGMICS” or the “School”) employees, independent contractors, volunteers, student teachers, interns, and other persons affiliated with School programs to protect children and comply fully with all applicable child abuse recognition, reporting, training, cooperation, and nonretaliation requirements. This policy implements the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (“CPSL”), the Public School Code, the Educator Discipline Act, and related federal and state requirements.

The duty to report suspected child abuse is an individual legal duty. No person may delay or refrain from making a report while seeking supervisory approval, conducting an internal inquiry, determining whether another person will report, or attempting to verify the allegation.

Scope

This policy applies to all School employees, administrators, Board members, independent contractors and their employees, volunteers, student teachers, interns, coaches, activity sponsors, service providers, and any other person participating in a School-sponsored program, activity, or service. A person who is not a mandated reporter is nevertheless encouraged to report suspected child abuse and must comply with any separate reporting obligation imposed by law, contract, handbook, or School directive.

Definitions

Child – An individual under eighteen (18) years of age.

Child abuse – Intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly engaging in conduct identified as child abuse under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6303(b.1), including: causing bodily injury through a recent act or failure to act; fabricating, feigning, exaggerating, or inducing a medical symptom or disease resulting in potentially harmful evaluation or treatment; causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury; causing sexual abuse or exploitation; creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury or a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation; causing serious physical neglect; engaging in specified recent acts that endanger a child; causing the death of a child; or engaging a child in severe forms of trafficking in persons or sex trafficking. The statutory definition, including its exclusions and permitted uses of reasonable force, controls.

Direct contact with children – The care, supervision, guidance, or control of children, or routine interaction with children.

Independent contractor – An individual, and when applicable an employee of an entity, who provides a program, activity, or service and is responsible for the care, supervision, guidance, or control of children or has direct contact with children.

Mandated reporter – A person identified in 23 Pa.C.S. § 6311(a), including a school employee and an individual, paid or unpaid, who is an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity, or service and is responsible for a child's welfare or has direct contact with children.

Person responsible for the child's welfare – A person who provides permanent or temporary care, supervision, mental health diagnosis or treatment, training, or control of a child in lieu of parental care, supervision, and control.

Program, activity, or service – A School-sponsored or organization-sponsored program, activity, or service in which children participate, including camps, recreational or athletic programs, clubs, enrichment programs, and community or social outreach programs.

Reasonable cause to suspect – A good-faith basis, grounded in facts, observations, disclosures, or circumstances, to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse. Proof, certainty, investigation, identification of a perpetrator, and direct contact with the child are not required.

Recent act or failure to act – An act or failure to act committed within two (2) years of the date of the report to the Department of Human Services or county agency, except where the CPSL provides otherwise.

School employee – An individual employed by a school or who provides a School-sponsored program, activity, or service, including qualifying independent contractors and their employees, as defined by the CPSL.

Sexual misconduct – Any act, including verbal, nonverbal, written, electronic, or physical conduct, directed toward or with a child or student and designed to establish a romantic or sexual relationship, including sexual or romantic invitations, dating or soliciting dates, sexualized or romantic dialogue, sexually suggestive comments, sexual or romantic self-disclosure or exposure, or sexual, indecent, romantic, or erotic contact.

Volunteer – An unpaid adult who, based on the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity, or service, is responsible for a child's welfare or has direct volunteer contact with children. A volunteer may be a mandated reporter depending upon the volunteer's role and contact with children.

Persons Required to Report

A mandated reporter shall immediately report suspected child abuse when the mandated reporter has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse under any of the following circumstances:

- The mandated reporter comes into contact with the child in the course of employment, occupation, professional practice, or a regularly scheduled program, activity, or service.
- The mandated reporter is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance, or training of the child, or is affiliated with the School or another entity that is directly responsible for such care, supervision, guidance, or training.

- A person makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that an identifiable child is the victim of child abuse.
- An individual fourteen (14) years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that the individual has committed child abuse.

A child need not personally appear before the mandated reporter. The reporter need not identify the person responsible for the suspected abuse. The identity or relationship of the alleged perpetrator does not eliminate the reporting duty.

Immediate External Reporting Procedure

The mandated reporter must personally and immediately make the report directly to ChildLine by either:

- Calling the statewide ChildLine hotline at 1-800-932-0313; or
- Submitting an electronic report through Pennsylvania's Child Welfare Information Solution (CWIS) portal at <https://www.compass.dhs.pa.gov/cwis>.

If the initial report is made orally, the mandated reporter must submit a written report electronically or in the manner prescribed by the Department of Human Services within forty-eight (48) hours. The person who made the oral report is responsible for completing the follow-up written report.

Emergency circumstances. If a child appears to be in immediate danger or urgent medical attention is required, the reporter shall call 911 or local law enforcement in addition to making the required ChildLine report. A report to law enforcement, a supervisor, the CEO, the Principal, a counselor, or another School employee does not substitute for a report to ChildLine.

Information to Include

The reporter should provide as much of the following information as is known. Lack of complete information must not delay the report:

- The names and addresses of the child, the child's parents or guardians, and other persons responsible for the child's welfare;
- Where the suspected abuse occurred;
- The age and sex of each subject of the report;
- The nature and extent of the suspected abuse, including any evidence of prior abuse to the child or a sibling;
- The name and relationship of each person suspected of causing the abuse and any evidence of prior abuse by that person;
- Family composition;
- The source of the report and the basis for the suspicion;
- The reporter's name, telephone number, email address, and location;
- Actions already taken to protect or assist the child; and
- Any other information requested by ChildLine or required by law.

Immediate Internal Notification

Immediately after making the ChildLine report, the reporter shall notify the CEO or the administrator designated by the CEO. If the report was submitted electronically, the reporter shall provide the confirmation

or report identification information to the designated administrator. Internal notification is for coordination, safety planning, and cooperation with authorities and shall not delay or replace the reporter's direct report to ChildLine.

The CEO or designee shall maintain confidential administrative documentation sufficient to establish that the School received notice and took required responsive action. ChildLine reports and related records shall be stored securely and disclosed only as permitted or required by law.

No Independent Investigation or Notification of Family

Before reporting, School personnel shall not investigate the allegation, interview the alleged perpetrator, require the child to repeat the disclosure to multiple persons, confront any person, determine credibility, or attempt to substantiate the report. Personnel may ask only limited, open-ended questions reasonably necessary to determine immediate safety and whether a report should be made.

School personnel shall not notify a parent, guardian, alleged perpetrator, or other person of the report unless directed by ChildLine, the county agency, law enforcement, or the CEO in consultation with counsel. Nothing in this paragraph prevents emergency action necessary to protect a child.

Multiple Reporters and Knowledge of a Prior Report

When more than one mandated reporter has reasonable cause to suspect the same child abuse, the School is not required to submit duplicate reports if a mandated reporter knows that an initial report has already been made. The person who makes the initial oral report remains responsible for the written follow-up report. Any person who is uncertain whether a report was actually made should make a report rather than assume that another person did so.

Reports Involving School Personnel or School Programs

When the School receives notice that an investigation involves suspected child abuse by a School employee, administrator, service provider, independent contractor, volunteer, or other person affiliated with a School program, the CEO or designee shall immediately implement a plan of supervision or an alternative arrangement designed to ensure the safety of the child and other children. The plan shall be submitted to the county agency for approval when required by law.

The School may take lawful interim employment, assignment, access, supervision, or safety measures while an investigation is pending. Such action is administrative and protective unless otherwise designated and shall be implemented consistently with applicable law, contracts, and due process requirements.

Cooperation with Investigations

The CEO, Principal, and all School personnel shall cooperate fully with the Department of Human Services, county children and youth agency, law enforcement, and other authorized investigators. Cooperation includes preserving records and potential evidence, making relevant personnel and records available as legally required, and permitting authorized personnel to interview a child at School in accordance with law.

No School employee or representative may obstruct, intimidate, retaliate against, influence, or interfere with a report, investigation, assessment, or proceeding. Requests for School records or interviews shall be

coordinated through the CEO or designee, but coordination may not be used to delay or impede an investigation.

Photographs, Medical Care, and Protective Custody

Only persons authorized by law may take photographs, arrange medical examinations, or take a child into protective custody. When necessary to preserve potential evidence after a report has been made, a School employee may take or cause photographs to be taken only as permitted by 23 Pa.C.S. § 6314 and School administrative direction. Any photographs shall be handled and transmitted to the county agency as required by law. School personnel shall immediately obtain emergency medical assistance when needed.

Safe Schools and Other Reporting Duties

The ChildLine reporting obligation is separate from any duty to report an incident to law enforcement, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Professional Standards and Practices Commission, or another agency. When reported conduct may also constitute a crime, a reportable school safety incident, educator misconduct, sexual harassment, discrimination, or a violation of another School policy, the CEO or designee shall ensure that all additional legally required reports and procedures are completed. Completion of another reporting process does not replace the ChildLine report.

Educator Misconduct and Aiding or Abetting

Employees holding or subject to Pennsylvania educator certification shall comply with the Educator Discipline Act and all mandatory reporting obligations concerning educator misconduct. The CEO or designee shall make required reports to the Department of Education and Professional Standards and Practices Commission.

No School employee, contractor, or agent acting in an official capacity may assist another school employee, contractor, or agent in obtaining new employment when the person knows or has probable cause to believe that the individual engaged in sexual misconduct regarding a minor or student, except for routine transmission of personnel files or information and the limited circumstances permitted by federal and state law.

Confidentiality

Reports, confirmations, investigative information, photographs, records, and the identity of a reporter are confidential and shall be disclosed only to persons authorized by law or with a legitimate School need to know. Personnel shall not discuss a report or investigation with colleagues, students, families, media, or members of the public. All media or public inquiries shall be referred to the CEO or designee.

Immunity, Nonretaliation, and Good-Faith Reporting

A person who, in good faith, makes a report, cooperates with an investigation, testifies in a proceeding, or takes another action authorized by the CPSL is entitled to immunity to the extent provided by law. HGMICS prohibits discrimination, intimidation, obstruction, or retaliation against any person for making or assisting with a good-faith report or investigation. Concerns about retaliation shall be reported promptly to the CEO, Board Chair, or School counsel.

Prohibited Conduct and Consequences

A person who willfully fails to make a required report, intentionally or knowingly makes a false report, induces a child to make a false claim, obstructs an investigation, retaliates against a reporter, or improperly discloses confidential information may be subject to criminal penalties, civil liability, loss of certification or licensure, and School disciplinary action up to and including termination or removal from service, consistent with applicable law and contractual rights.

Training and Annual Notice

The CEO or designee shall ensure that:

- All School employees and employees of independent contractors who have direct contact with children complete at least three (3) hours of child abuse recognition and reporting training every five (5) years, as required by 24 P.S. § 12-1205.6 (Act 126).
- Training covers recognition of child abuse and sexual misconduct, reporting requirements under the CPSL and Educator Discipline Act, this policy and related procedures, and maintenance of professional and appropriate relationships with students.
- New personnel receive this policy and reporting instructions promptly upon hire or assignment, and the School maintains records documenting completion of required training.
- Volunteers, student teachers, interns, and other persons with direct contact receive orientation or training appropriate to their responsibilities and mandated-reporter status.
- Employees, independent contractors, and volunteers are reminded at least annually of their reporting duties and the prohibition against retaliation.
- The current ChildLine telephone number and reporting information are posted in a high-traffic public area readily accessible to students and adults.

Clearances and Continuing Disclosure

The School shall require criminal history reports, federal criminal history information, child abuse history certifications, and renewals at least every sixty (60) months for employees and other persons as required by the School Code and CPSL. Volunteers shall obtain clearances as required by 23 Pa.C.S. § 6344.2 and School procedures. Individuals shall provide written notice of arrests, convictions, or child abuse findings when required by law. Clearance requirements may be addressed in separate School policies and procedures, which remain in effect.

Administrative Responsibilities

The CEO or designee shall:

- Designate at least one administrator to receive internal notifications and coordinate the School's response;
 - Maintain current ChildLine and county agency contact information and make reporting instructions readily available;
 - Ensure appropriate safety planning when allegations involve School-affiliated persons;
 - Coordinate legally required reports to law enforcement, PDE, and other agencies;
 - Maintain confidential records of training, notices, reports, and School responsive actions;
 - Consult School counsel when legal or procedural issues arise, without delaying any mandated report;
- and

- Review this policy periodically and recommend revisions when laws or agency guidance change.

Related School Policies and Procedures

This policy should be read together with School policies and procedures addressing clearances, professional boundaries and educator conduct, Title IX and nondiscrimination, harassment, school safety and law enforcement reporting, student records, volunteers, personnel discipline, and retaliation.

TO THE EXTENT THAT ANYTHING IN THIS POLICY COULD BE CONSTRUED TO CONFLICT WITH THE SCHOOL'S CHARTER OR APPLICABLE STATE AND/OR FEDERAL LAWS, THE APPLICABLE STATE AND/OR FEDERAL LAWS AND/OR CHARTER CONTROL.

ADOPTED this day _____ of _____, 2026

President

Secretary