What is Child Abuse?
Child abuse includes any harm or threatened harm to a child's physical or mental well being by a parent, adult household member, any other person responsible for the child’s welfare, or, by any other person. Harm to a child’s health or welfare can occur when the parent or another person inflicts, or allows to be inflicted, physical, sexual or mental injury on the child that could or does in fact impair the child’s physical, mental or emotional health.

Who is required to report?
Every M-DCPS employee must report KNOWN or SUSPECTED abuse immediately. By law, “Any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child’s welfare, as defined in this chapter, or that a child is in need of supervision and care and has no parent, legal custodian, or responsible adult relative immediately known and available to provide supervision and care shall report such knowledge or suspicion to the department in the manner prescribed in subsection (2).”

Child Abuse Reporting Steps
1. Suspected or confirmed child abuse must be immediately reported to the Department of Children and Families Central Abuse Hotline. IT IS NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION; only that the basis to place the call is having, “reasonable cause to suspect”.
2. Immediately call 1-800-96-ABUSE.
3. To provide the operator with all the necessary information, if you do not have access to ISIS, you need to obtain a copy of the F8 screen from ISIS and confirm the address information with the student's emergency contact card. The operator will request your identity and pertinent information, including:
   - Name, date of birth or approximate age, race, gender, for all adults and children involved.
   - Addresses for all subjects, including current location.
   - Information regarding disabilities or limitations for vulnerable adult victims.
   - Relationship of the alleged perpetrator to the child or adult victims.
   - Specific descriptions of the incident(s) (who, what, when, where, why, the extent of any injuries, victim statements about what happened, and any potential risks).
4. Report the abuse to a school-site administrator.
5. Report the abuse to the Miami-Dade Schools Police Department (305-995-COPS).
6. NO SCHOOL-SITE EMPLOYEE SHOULD CONTACT THE CHILD'S PARENT OR GUARDIAN. The representative from the Department of Children and Families or law enforcement agency will contact the parent/guardian.

Frequently Asked Questions
- I became aware of an abuse situation after regular school hours. What do I do?
  Make your report immediately as delineated in Guideline #4 with the information you have available and contact your administrator should you have a phone number. If the suspected incident occurred on campus, contact Schools Police. If the incident occurred off campus, contact 911.
- What if I hear about a suspected case of abuse third hand, what is my obligation?
  You are required to report the incident.
- What if someone else tells me not to worry that they will make the report, am I still obligated to report?
  Yes. You are required to report.
- Do I need to get permission from my administrator to report the abuse?
  No. The appropriate steps are to make the report to the hotline and then inform your administrator.
- What if a parent accuses me of reporting abuse, what am I supposed to say?
  Every school board employee is required to report known or suspected abuse, and it is against school board policy for me to confirm or deny such information.
**Definitions**

**Physical abuse** includes slapping, hitting, kicking, pushing, or having objects thrown at a person which cause wounds, broken bones or other injuries. Severe physical abuse can cause major injury, permanent physical or emotional damage, or even death.

**Emotional abuse** involves humiliation, dishonoring or other acts carried out over time that terrorize or frighten the child.

**Neglect** means not feeding or caring for a child's basic needs or not adequately supervising a child.

**Sexual abuse** includes a wide range of sexual behavior, including fondling, masturbation, intercourse or involving children in pornography.

**Possible Signs of Neglect or Emotional Abuse: The Child...**
- Is underweight or small for age
- Is always hungry
- Is not kept clean
- Is inappropriately dressed for the weather
- Has not received needed medical care
- Is underweight or small for age
- Begs for or steals food
- Frequently arrives at school early and leaves later than expected
- Has frequent, unexplained absences
- Is overtired or listless

**Possible Signs of Physical Abuse: The Child...**
- Has unexplained bruises or welts in unusual places
- Has several bruises or welts in different stages of healing, in unusual shapes, or in clusters
- Has unexplained broken bones or dislocations
- Has unexplained bites or the child's explanation for his/her injury differs from that of a parent or caretaker
- Has unexplained burns
- Tells you he has been hurt by parents or others
- Becomes frightened when other children cry
- Says the parents or caretakers deserve to be punished
- Is afraid of certain people

**Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse: The Child...**
- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Is wearing torn, stained or bloody underwear
- Has pain, swelling or itching of genitals
- Has bruises, cuts or bleeding on genitals or anal area
- Feels pain when urinating or defecating
- Has a discharge from the vagina or penis, or a sexually transmitted disease
- Acts withdrawn, over-involved in fantasy, or much younger than his/her age
- Displays sophisticated or bizarre sexual knowledge or behavior
- Exhibits excessive or unusual touching of genitals
- Tells you that he/she has a secret he/she is not allowed to tell anyone
- Tries to hurt him/herself

**Possible Signs of Abuse that a Caregiver May Exhibit: The Parent/Caregiver...**
- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome
- Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of emotional needs
- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury
- Describes the child as "evil," or in some other very negative way
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs
- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child
- Refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems even in emergency situations
- Overtly rejects the child

Mental Health and Crisis Management Services
M-DCPS Crisis Line: 305-995-CARE http://mhcms.dadeschools.net/