



CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES

January 2006

1. INTRODUCTION

The Department operates high quality education services for young people and offers student placements. These include the visitor programmes run at our national parks and nature reserves, the awareness events operated by ENFO and the Department's various student schemes, including the Transition year student programme. We want to continue to deliver these innovative and worthwhile programmes. Given the wider societal concerns in relation to child protection we want to support the good work of the Department with guidelines to ensure protection of any children in our care.

Childcare legislation places an obligation on the Department to promote the welfare and protection of children under 18 years of age

The Department of Health and Children introduced National Guidelines entitled "Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children" in 1999, available at www.dohc.ie. The following local guidelines have been developed for this Department against this background.

These guidelines are offered to assist managers in having due regard for the rights and interests of the child on the one hand, and those of our employees on the other hand.

2. CHILD PROTECTION STATEMENT

Child protection is an issue of concern to all those working with young people today. We in the Department want to make sure that children are protected while they are with staff of this Department.

3. CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE

Staff in the Department will observe the following good work practices to ensure that every child remains safe and has a worthwhile work experience whether in work placement or in participation in our education programmes.

- All young people will be treated with dignity and respect.
- The child's welfare and safety will always be put first.
- All staff will give children enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Staff will keep a written record of any injury that occurs to a child, along with details of treatment given.

In addition, all staff will:

- never use any form of corporal punishment against a child.
- not take any body measurements of a child.
- not exert undue influence over a child in order to gain personal benefit or reward.
- not indulge in any inappropriate touching of a child.
- not engage in rough contact with a child, or in sexually provocative games or language.
- not undertake any form of therapy (such as hypnosis) with a child.
- not engage in a sexual activity with a child or young adult.

A breach of any of the above could give rise to both disciplinary and criminal proceedings.

4. GUIDELINES FOR PHOTOGRAPHING CHILDREN

There is some evidence that photographs of children can be used inappropriately. Therefore, the following guidelines will be observed in this regard.

- Permission will be sought from both the teacher/carer and the children if it is desired to take photographs. If the Department wishes to use the photograph of any child for promotional or publicity reasons, they will first contact the child's parents (via the school) and obtain written permission.
- Staff members will not take photographs of children for any reason other than specified official reasons.
- No child appearing in any promotional photograph will be named.

5. CHILD ABUSE

Possible indicators of abuse are set out as an Appendix 1.

6. REASONABLE GROUNDS FOR CONCERN

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds of concern:

1. A specific indication from a child that he/she was abused .
2. An account from a person who saw the child being abused .
3. Evidence such as injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way.
4. An injury which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there is corroborative indicators supporting the concern that this may be a case of abuse e.g. a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indicators of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour.

7. DEALING WITH DISCLOSURE

Here in the Department we are most likely to become aware of a case of abuse if a child should disclose it to us. In such a situation, we should strive to act as follows:

- Stay calm, and not panic or show distaste or shock.
- Listen to the child sympathetically.
- Reassure the child.
- Aim to ensure ‘observed confidentiality’, where we are witnessed speaking to the child, but cannot be overheard.
- Reassure the child that (s)he was right to tell and is not to blame.
- Not be judgmental.
- Not speculate or make assumptions.
- Not make negative comments about the alleged abuser.
- Not make promises to the child.
- Be honest with the child about what we can and cannot do. Tell them that we cannot keep secrets and inform them what will happen next.
- Not confront the individual who is alleged to be responsible.
- As soon as we have finished talking to the child, make a detailed written note of all that was said and pass the information on as soon as possible.

Where abuse is suspected or disclosed the one thing you must not do is nothing

8. REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE

In the Department abuse suspicions will be first reported to a **Designated Person**. The role of a Designated Person is to decide if there are sufficient grounds to formally report suspected abuse and, if so, to submit such a report. The Designated Person will be the Employee Assistance Officer. S/He in turn will formally report the incident to the Health Service Executive or An Garda Síochána if necessary.

The *Protection for Persons reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998*, provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse ‘reasonably and in good faith’ to designated officers of health boards or any member of An Garda Síochána.

Disclosure of suspected abuse



Staff Member



Designated Person
(Employee Assistance Officer)



Health Service Executive/ An Garda Síochána

9. STAFF ALLEGATION PROCEDURES

Where there is a complaint of abuse against a member of staff, procedures will take on two strands. The reporting of the abuse will be the same as above (staff member → designated person → Health Service Executive). However, there will also be an investigation into the alleged abuse. In fact, there may be three investigations – an internal investigation, a Health Service Executive investigation, and possibly a criminal investigation by the Gardaí.

A different staff member than the Designated Person responsible for reporting child abuse will handle the investigation into the alleged abuse by a staff member. This investigation will be put in place by the Personnel Officer.

It must be remembered that staff may be subjected to erroneous or malicious allegations. Therefore, any abuse allegation must be dealt with sensitively, and support and, if necessary, counselling should be provided. While the primary goal must be to protect the child, care will be taken to ensure that the employee is treated fairly.

As soon as an allegation against a staff member has been made, these steps will be followed:

- The reporting staff member will make a report in writing to the Designated Person.
- The Designated Person will decide whether there are sufficient grounds for a formal report to the Health Service Executive and if so, will contact them.
- The Designated Person will report the matter to the Personnel Officer. The Personnel Officer in taking action, will be guided by the agreed procedures, the applicable employment contract and the rules of natural justice.
- The Personnel Officer will, as a matter of urgency, take any necessary protective measures to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk. These measures will be proportionate to the level of risk and will not unreasonably penalise the employee financially or otherwise.
- The Personnel Officer will follow up the allegation of abuse against the employee in consultation with the Health Service Executive and/or An Garda Síochána and will ensure that any action taken does not undermine any investigations being conducted by these bodies.

The Health Service Executive work referral points are shown in Appendix 2. This contact information is for the benefit, not only of the Designated Person but also in situations where the Designated Person is unavailable.

10. RECOMMENDED PROCEDURES FOR PERSONS ALLEGED TO HAVE BREACHED GUIDELINES

If you are accused of abuse, and subject to the procedures above, it is recommended that you observe the following points:

- Make notes of all your contacts / actions with the child in question as soon as possible.
- Seek access to professional and legal advice.
- Ensure that you no longer have any contact with the child in question.

11. CONFIDENTIALITY

Considerations of confidentiality will not be allowed to over-ride the right of the child to protection. The welfare of the child will be paramount. It is not a breach of confidentiality to give information for the protection of a child.

However, information will only be given to people on a need to know basis.

12. ACCIDENT PROCEDURES

If an accident happens to a child (or adult) while in the care of the Department it is important not only to treat the situation competently, but also to report and record it correctly. The following steps should be observed:

- If at all possible, two adults should remain with the injured child. However, other children may need to be removed from the scene, and it may not always be possible to have two adults present.
- First Aid as appropriate should be administered if a competent person is available.
- If necessary, an ambulance should be requested. (Dial 999 or 112). The person dialling for help will need to stay beside the phone to await a return call confirming the request. Staff must be aware of the nearest phone at all times. If moving far from a phone, either a mobile phone or a radio should be carried.
- Once the casualty is stabilised and/or removed by ambulance, the parents / carers must be contacted. In practice, this will be via the school.
- Immediately after the incident, a detailed report must be filed in the Accident Report Book.

APPENDIX 1 – INDICATORS OF ABUSE

Physical Abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child.

<p><u>Physical Indicators</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scratches ▪ Bite marks or welts ▪ Bruises in difficult places (behind ears, groin, etc) ▪ Burns, especially cigarette burns ▪ Untreated injuries 	<p><u>Behavioural Indicators</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-mutilation tendencies ▪ Chronic runaway ▪ Aggressive or withdrawn ▪ Fear of returning home ▪ Undue fear of adults ▪ Fearful watchfulness
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Emotional Abuse is normally found in the relationship between a care-giver and a child. It occurs when a child's needs for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met.

<p><u>Physical Indicators</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sudden speech disorders ▪ Wetting or soiling ▪ Signs of mutilation ▪ Attention seeking behaviour ▪ Frequent vomiting 	<p><u>Behavioural Indicators</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rocking, thumb sucking ▪ Fear of change ▪ Chronic runaway ▪ Poor peer relationships
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Neglect is where a child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety.

<p><u>Physical Indicators</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Constant hunger ▪ Exposed to danger; lack of supervision ▪ Inadequate or inappropriate clothing ▪ Poor hygiene ▪ Untreated illness 	<p><u>Behavioural Indicators</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tiredness, listlessness ▪ Lack of peer relationships ▪ Low self esteem ▪ Compulsive stealing or begging
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Sexual Abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal.

<p><u>Physical Indicators</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Soreness or bleeding in genital or anal areas ▪ Itching in genital area ▪ Stained or bloody underwear ▪ Stomach pains or headaches ▪ Pain on urination ▪ Difficulty in walking or sitting ▪ Bruises on inner thighs or buttocks ▪ Anorexia or bulimia 	<p><u>Behavioural Indicators</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chronic depression ▪ Inappropriate language or sexual knowledge for age group ▪ Making sexual advances to adults or other children ▪ Low self esteem ▪ Afraid of dark ▪ Wariness of being approached by anyone ▪ Substance or drug abuse
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Note: A suspicion, which is not supported by any objective signs of abuse, would not constitute a reasonable suspicion, or reasonable grounds for concern. If in doubt, discuss with the Designated Person, who, in turn, may liaise with the Health Service Executive and/or Garda Síochána

APPENDIX 2 - CONTACT INFORMATION

Name	Address	Tel. & Fax
Ms Colette McAndrew	Child Care Manager Area 1 HSE East Coast Area Tivoli Road Dun Laoghaire Co. Dublin.	T: 01 2365208 F: 01 2808785
Ms Diane McHugh	Child Care Manager Area 2 HSE South Western Area Vergemont Hall Ranelagh Dublin 6.	T: 01 2680300 T: 01 2680336 F: 01 2830002
Ms Rachel Devlin	Child Care Manager Area 3 HSE South Western Area Unit 43 Maltings Business Park 54/55/ Marrowbone Lane Dublin 8	T: 01 4544733 T: 01 4544826 F: 01 4544827
Ms.Olga Garland	Child Care Manager Area 4 HSE South Western Area Old County Road Crumlin Dublin 12	T: 01 4154756 F: 01 4154896
Doreen McGowan	Child Care Manager Area 5 HSE South Western Area The Lodge Cherry Orchard Ballyfermot Dublin 10	T: 01 6206074 F: 01 6206265
Ms. Mary Hargaden	Child Care Manager Area 6 HSE Northern Area Rathdown Road Dublin 7	T: 01 8825117 F: 01 8680934
Mr.Colman Duggan	Child Care Manager Area 7 HSE Northern Area 1 st Floor Westward House Russell Street Dublin 1	T: 01 8014630 F: 01 8014602
Ms Suzanne Phelan	Child Care Manager Area 8 HSE Northern Area Cromcastle Road Coolock Dublin 5	T: 01 8164279 F: 01 8479944
Ms. Marie Faughan	Child Care Manager Area 9 HSE South Western Area Popular House Popular Square Naas Co. Kildare	T: 045 873241 F: 045 879225

Mr. John Quin	Child Care Manager Area 10 HSE East Coast Area Glenside Road Wicklow	T: 0404 60674 F: 0404 69044
Ms Maria Larkin	Child Care Manager Westmeath HSE Midland Area Health Centre Longford Road Mullingar Co. Westmeath	T: 044 39491 F: 044 31472
Mr. Pat Osborne	Child Care Manager Laois/Offaly HSE Midland Area Health Centre Tullamore Co. Offaly	T: 0506 46254 F: 0506 46117
Mr. Kevin O'Farrell	Child Care Manager Limerick HSE Mid-Western Area Vocational Training Services Dooradoyle Limerick	T: 061 482792 F: 061 482759
Ms Jacqui Deevy	Child Care Manager Clare HSE Mid-Western Area Tobartaoiscaín Clonroadmore Ennis Co. Clare	T: 065 6863632 F: 065 6863636
Mr. Bill Meagher	Child Care Manager North Tipperary HSE Mid-Western Area Annbrook Limerick Road Nenagh Co. Tipperary	T: 067 38300 F: 067 38301
Mr. Gerry Lowry	Child Care Manager Cavan/Monaghan HSE North Eastern Area Health Care Unit Monaghan	T: 047 30475 F: 047 30796
Mr. Jim McGuigan	Child Care Manager Louth HSE North Eastern Area Community Care Office Dublin Road Dundalk Co. Louth	T: 042 9385457 F: 042 9333814
Mr. Boyd Dodds	Child Care Manager Meath HSE North Eastern Area Family Resource Centre Commons Road Navan Co. Meath	T: 046 9078748 F: 046 9022761
Mr. Colin Harrison	Child Care Manager HSE North Western Area Sheil House College Street Ballyshannon Co. Donegal	T: 071 9822776 F: 071 9822779

Mr. Bernard Morrin	Child Care Manager HSE North Western Area Sheil House College Street Ballyshannon Co. Donegal	T: 071 9822776 F: 071 9822779
Dr. Aisling Gillen	Regional Director Child Care & Family Support Services Sheil House College Street Ballyshannon	T: 071 9822776 F: 071 9822779
Cathleen Callanan	Child Care Manager South Lee HSE Southern Area Abbeycourt House George's Quay Cork	T: 021 4923815 F: 021 4923953
Mr. Barry Murray	Child Care Manager North Lee HSE Southern Area Abbeycourt House Georges Quay Cork	T: 021 4923965 F: 021 4923953
Mr. Mike Van Aswegen	Child Care Manager North Cork HSE Southern Area Gouldshill House Mallow, Co. Cork	T: 022 30264 / 30200 F: 022 32011
Ms. Christine Tanner	Child Care Manager West Cork HSE Southern Area Hibernian Buildings 13/14/Main Street Coollnagarrane Skibbereen, Cork	T: 028 40582 / 1 F: 028 40522
Mr. Oliver Mawe	Child Care Manager Kerry HSE Southern Area 5 Denny Street Tralee Co. Kerry	T: 066 7124811 F: 066 7181480
Ms Marie Kennedy	Child Care Manager Carlow/Kilkenny HSE South Eastern Area Community Care Centre James Green Kilkenny	T: 056 7784642 F: 056 7764720
Ms Sandra Merity	Child Care Manager Waterford HSE South Eastern Area Community Care Centre Cork Road Waterford	T: 051 842914 T: 051 842882 F: 051 842811
Mr. John Martin	Child Care Manager Wexford HSE South Eastern Area Community Care Centre George's Street Wexford	T: 053 23522 Ext. 304 F: 053 21842

Mr. Jim Gibson	Child Care Manager South Tipperary HSE South Eastern Area Community Care Centre Western Road Clonmel Co. Tipperary	T: 052 70931 F: 052 29768
Mr. Alex MacLean	Child Care Manager Galway HSE Western Area Community Care Offices 25 Newcastle Road Galway	T: 091 546228 F: 091 524231
Mr. Paul Murphy	Child Care Manager Mayo HSE Western Area Community Services St. Mary's Hospital Castlebar Co. Mayo	T: 094 9042030 F: 094 9627106
Mr. Paddy Gannon	Child Care Manager Roscommon HSE Western Area Abbeytown House Abbey Street Roscommon	T: 090 6626732 F: 090 6626776