

SEXUAL ABUSE AND ASSAULT AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

Sexual violence is a multi-layered oppression that occurs at the societal and individual level and is connected to and influenced by other forms of oppression, in particular, sexism, racism and heterosexism. On the societal level, it is the preponderance of attitudes, actions, social norms that perpetuate and sustain environments and behaviors that promote a cultural tolerance, acceptance, and denial of sexual assault and abuse. On an individual level, sexual violence is a wide range of sexual acts and behaviors that are unwanted, coerced, committed without consent, or forced either by physical means or through threats.

Sexual abuse is coerced or forced sexual contact or activity that may be ongoing or occurs over time, often within a trusting relationship. Most victims know their perpetrators. Perpetrators are usually older than their victims and may trick or force them into gradually engaging in the sexual behavior. The sexual behavior may not be violent and may even be pleasurable to the child, who doesn't necessarily know it is wrong. Perpetrators of ongoing sexual abuse control the child through secrecy, shame, or threats. Children cannot consent to sexual contact with adults or older youth, and sexual contact is considered abuse, regardless of whether it includes touching or not.

Sexual assault is any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs by force or without consent of the recipient of the unwanted sexual activity. This includes sexual activity such as forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, child molestation, incest, fondling, and attempted rape. It includes sexual acts against people who are unable to consent either due to age or lack of capacity.

LEARN's Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program, in compliance with P.A. 14-196, shall include:

1. For all LEARN employees who work in settings with children or who regularly come into contact with children, mandatory training, which shall be repeated at least once every three years to ensure they are fully informed on:
 - a. The warning signs of sexual abuse and sexual misconduct involving a child, including recognizing and reporting child sexual abuse.
 - b. Mandatory reporting requirements.
 - c. LEARN policies pertaining to sexual abuse and sexual misconduct.
 - d. Establishing and maintaining appropriate interaction and professional relationships with students.
 - e. Available resources for children affected by sexual abuse or misconduct.
 - f. Appropriate follow-up and care for abused students as they return to the classroom setting.

- g. Engaging students, parents/guardians and school personnel in comprehensive prevention strategies and creating a climate that promotes positive peer relationships.
 - h. Bystander training.
2. For all LEARN students in grades kindergarten through twelve, age-appropriate educational materials regarding child sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention that include, but are not limited to:
- a. The skills to recognize:
 - i. Child sexual abuse and assault.
 - ii. Boundary violations and unwanted forms of touching and contact.
 - iii. Ways offenders groom or desensitize victims.
 - b. Strategies to promote disclosure, reduce self-blame and mobilize bystanders.
 - c. Actions that child victims of sexual abuse and assault may take to obtain assistance.
 - d. Intervention and counseling options for child victims of sexual abuse and assault.
 - e. Access to educational resources to enable child victims of sexual abuse and assault to succeed in school.
 - f. Uniform procedures for reporting instances of child sexual abuse and assault to school staff members.

The lessons should be evidence-informed, developmentally and age appropriate and informed by the required curricula standards and performance indicators contained in the Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program identified or developed, in compliance with C.G.S. 17a-101q, by the Department of Children and Families, in collaboration with the Department of Education and other assisting entities.

3. Implementing a child sexual abuse curriculum to provide age-appropriate information to teach students the difference between appropriate and inappropriate conduct in situations when child sexual abuse or sexual assault could occur, and to identify actions a child may take to prevent and report sexual abuse or sexual assault. Students will be provided with:
- a. Resources and referrals to handle these potentially dangerous situations.
 - b. Access to available counseling and educational support.
 - c. Knowledge, attitudes and skills for healthy relationships, modeling pro-social behavior and intervening as proactive bystanders for the prevention and intervention of abusive behavior and/or sexual assault at school.
 - d. Information about their rights under LEARN policy, including how to report and seek help if they have experienced or witnessed sexual abuse or sexual assault.

4. Distributing electronically to all employees, members of the Board of Directors, and parents/guardians of students, information regarding the state-wide sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention program.

A student shall be excused from participating in the sexual abuse, assault awareness and prevention program offered within the school, in its entirety or any part thereof, upon receipt by the principal or designee of a written request from the student's parent/guardian.

Any student excused from the sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention program shall be provided, during the period of time in which the student would otherwise be participating in such program, an opportunity for other study or academic work.

Principals or their designees are responsible for implementing this policy; reviewing the policy annually with all staff, and, if appropriate, provide recommendations and/or revisions to the policy; ensuring that all students and parents/guardians receive a summary of prohibited behaviors and a summary of this policy at the beginning of the school year.

Reporting

Students shall be encouraged to disclose abuse to a trusted adult member of the staff, including, but not limited to, teachers, administrators, nurses, coaches, and counselors. Principals/program directors shall establish and prominently publicize to students, staff, volunteers, and parents/guardians, how a report of sexual abuse and assault may be filed either in-person or anonymously and how this report will be acted upon. The victim of sexual abuse and assault or anyone who witnessed an act of sexual abuse or assault, and anyone who has reasonable suspicion that an act of sexual abuse or assault has taken place may file a report. Any written or oral reporting of an act of sexual abuse or assault shall be considered an official means of reporting such act.

The principal will first take steps to increase the safety and well-being of the student experiencing sexual abuse and/or sexual assault. This might include offering individual or support group counseling for the student, or referring the student to a local victim service organization.

Reporting, investigation, and recordkeeping procedures shall be followed for all acts of violence and sexual assault or abuse against children in accordance with Policy #5141.11, Child Abuse and Neglect, and its accompanying regulation.

Disciplinary Action for Failure to Follow Policy

Any employee who fails to comply with the requirements of this policy shall be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

17a-101q. State-wide sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention program

P.A. 22-87 An Act Concerning the Identification and Prevention of and Response to Adult Sexual
Misconduct Against Children (*effective July 1, 2023*)

DCF, SDE, and Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence
cf. 5007 – Bullying
5141.11 - Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect
5005 - Sexual Harassment

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LEARN