

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

approved December 4, 2024

Introduction

At Dallas International School (DIS), the safety, security, and wellbeing of every individual who is on campus is paramount to the health and success of our institution and each individual who works, learns, and plays here. In particular, the protection of students is at the heart of this, and all adult members of the community play an essential role in ensuring this. This policy outlines key elements that underpin our child protection measures and are non-negotiable in their application.

Background Checks

Dallas International School requires that all members who work or regularly volunteer at our school undergo background checks to see if a person has a criminal history or abuse and neglect history that might be a risk to the health and safety of children. The types of checks that we may use include—but are not limited to—the following:

- Texas Do Not Hire Registry
- Texas Criminal History check
- National Criminal History check
- Texas Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (TLETS) check
- Central Registry check
- DFPS History check
- Out-of-State Abuse/Neglect History check
- Out-of-State Criminal History check

Depending on the type of role the individual holds in the school (teacher, staff, volunteer, etc.), we may require additional fingerprint checks. No individual will be allowed to work and/or volunteer on campus without having first completed these checks.

Student Guidance and Discipline

Dallas International School adheres to minimum standards for child care as established by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Some of these standards include—but are not limited to—the following:

- **TAC§744.1201.** All employees, including persons not counted in the child/caregiver ratio, must:
 - Demonstrate competency, good judgment, and self-control in the presence of children and when performing assigned responsibilities;
 - Relate to children with courtesy, respect, acceptance, and patience;
 - Recognize and respect the uniqueness and potential of all children, their families, and their cultures;
 - Ensure that no child is abused, neglected, or exploited while in the care of the operation; and
 - Report suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation to DFPS or to law enforcement, as specified in the Texas Family Code v261.101.

- **TAC§744.2103.** Methods of discipline and guidance
 - Each disciplinary measure must:
 - Be consistent with your policies and procedures;
 - Not be physically or emotionally damaging to the child;
 - Be appropriate to the child's age and level of understanding; and
 - Be appropriate to the incident and severity of the behavior demonstrated.
 - A caregiver may only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, including the following:
 - Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior;
 - Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements;
 - Redirecting behavior using positive statements; and
 - Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.
- **TAC§744.2105.** There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:
 - Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;
 - Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training;
 - Pinching, shaking, or biting a child;
 - Hitting a child with a hand or instrument;
 - Putting anything in or on a child's mouth;
 - Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;
 - Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language;
 - Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet; and
 - Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

Any staff member or volunteer found to be in violation of these rules will face immediate corrective action, including and up to a termination of relationship with Dallas International School. Suspected or confirmed violations of these rules will be reported to the most appropriate state agency (i.e., Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Family and Protective Services, Child Protective Services, and/or the Dallas Police Department), depending on the nature of the incident.

Duty to Report

If any member of the Dallas International School community suspects that any other member of community may be violating any of the above-listed policies, then he or she has a duty to report this to the DIS Child Safety Committee. Reports may be made to the school in person, via email (childsafety@dallasinternationalschool.org), or telephone (+1 469 250 0001). Members of the Child Safety Committee include the Head of School, Deputy Head of School, Head of Primary, Head of Secondary, and the Director of Human Resources. Not reporting known or suspected incidents is itself a violation of this policy and Texas state law (TFC§261.101). Individuals not reporting known or suspected incidents may, themselves, face corrective action or legal prosecution. If any person is concerned to report an incident directly to the school, then he or she may also phone the Texas Abuse Hotline toll-free

24 hours a day, 7 days a week, nationwide, at 1-800-252-5400 or report online at txabusehotline.org and receive a response within 24-48 hours.

Child Protection Practices and Procedures

The following practices and procedures are in place to support the health, safety, and wellbeing of all children at Dallas International School.

- **Staff Recruitment.** Dallas International School requires that all staff members and volunteers not have any criminal or background matters that may impede their ability to work with children. For all new hires, a sworn and notarized affidavit must be kept on file to affirm, under penalty of perjury, that they do not have any past criminal behavior that may be of concern with regard to child protection matters. In certain instances, DIS may require copies of police clearance reports from jurisdictions outside of the United States of America. DIS employees must also sign and agree that periodic, unannounced background checks will take place during employment.
- **Staff Training.** Regular staff training is conducted to ensure staff feel confident about all aspects of child protection, including awareness, types, signs/symptoms, prevention, policies and laws, reporting process, and resources available. To achieve this objective:
 - New and returning staff receive annual child protection training on these aspects as part of the start-of-year in-service training. Documentation to support this training includes the following appendices included with this policy: Terminology; Signs that Should Alert Educators; Additional Guidance for Teachers; Toilet and Intimate Care Guidelines.
 - The Discipline and Guidance Policy is provided to all staff annually to give clear expectations and boundaries regarding child protection procedures. This document must be signed and kept on-file during employment. DIS may require individuals to re-sign this document at any time if there are concerns with regard to potential violations of policy.
- **Facilities and Security.** The following facilities and procedures are in place to ensure the security, respect, safety, and wellbeing of all children:
 - Only individuals having passed all required background checks may meet one-on-one with students. All rooms into which students are permitted must have a window in the door or wall. Staff members must maintain line-of-sight with this window if and when meeting one-on-one with students.
 - Students are not permitted on-campus before or after school operating hours.
 - Regular safety drills are held, including fire, severe weather, and shelter-in-place. The procedures for these drills are reviewed annually and shared in the family handbook.
 - Regular safety and security inspections are carried out at DIS by DIS's security company and the following agencies: Department of Health and Human Services; Department of Health; Dallas Fire-Rescue; Dallas Police Department.
 - Licensed armed security guards are posted at both DIS campuses.
- **Contractors and Service Providers.** No contractors, vendors, or service providers operating on-site during school operating hours will be left with unsupervised access to students.
- **Reporting of Incidents.** In the event of an allegation against a staff member or volunteer, the matter will initially be reported to the most appropriate state agency (i.e., Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Family and Protective Services, Child Protective Services, and/or the Dallas Police Department) and an investigation coordinated by the Child Safety Committee will take place.



Policy Review and Publication

This policy is reviewed regularly through collaborative planning, and final versions for publication are sent to and formally approved by the DIS Executive Leadership Team. The latest version of this policy is made available to the DIS community through the MyDIS platform.

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Appendix 1: Terminology

Child protection. This is a broad term used to describe philosophies, policies, standards, guidelines, and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In this document, the term “child protection” applies to protection of children at Dallas International School.

Child Protection Policy. This is a statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to protecting students from harm (to self and from others) and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of students. It serves to create a safe and positive environment for children and to demonstrate that the school is taking its duty and responsibility seriously.

Child protection concerns. These include suspected, alleged, self-disclosed, or witnessed abuse of a child by anyone associated within or outside the school which must be investigated and followed by appropriate action.

Child abuse. According to the World Health Organization, child abuse constitutes “all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.”

A person may abuse a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional (e.g., school) or community setting; children may be abused by individuals known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. Children may experience multiple forms of abuse simultaneously, further complicating the problem.

Most child abuse is inflicted by someone the child knows, respects or trusts. International school communities have unique characteristics of which school personnel must be aware in terms of the individuals who are around our children. School personnel should be knowledgeable of the potential reasons why children may not be able to talk about any victimization they might have experienced.

To increase the DIS community's awareness, this policy focuses on four main categories of abuse and provides basic information about the physical and behavioral signs associated with each type. These include:

1. **Physical abuse** (child in danger) may involve hitting, punching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, biting, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing intentional physical harm to a child. Harm to self, such as cutting and suicidal ideation, may also indicate physical abuse.
2. **Emotional abuse** (child in danger) is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child so as to cause severe and adverse effects on a child’s emotional development. It may involve any of the following: conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved; that they are inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person; age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children; causing children frequently to feel frightened; or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may also occur alone.

3. **Sexual abuse and violence** (child in danger) involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (i.e., rape) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production or viewing of pornographic material or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Children involved in commercial sex work are victims of sexual abuse, whether they perceive themselves as victims or not.
4. **Neglect** (child at risk) is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or physiological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development.

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Appendix 2: Signs that Should Alert Educators

The following is a list of possible signs of abuse and neglect which would be of concern. Children may exhibit one or more of these signs. While educators must not ignore these potential signs of abuse, they must also be mindful of the fact that many of them are exhibited in many other contexts. Ultimately, educators must all be vigilant about gradual or sudden changes in the behavior of the children in their care, such as:

- Changes in moods
- Severe or frequent anxiety
- Unexplained fears
- Attention-seeking behavior
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Withdrawal from physical or emotional contact (towards strangers as well as non-strangers)
- Mutism
- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Unexplained physical injuries (e.g., bruises, broken bones, burns, wounds, bites, scratches), which may have not received medical attention
- Improbable excuses or vagueness given by parents/guardians/students, or refusal to discuss injuries
- Patterns in absence from school
- Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather
- Physical, mental, and emotional development is delayed
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Persistent tiredness
- Physical ailments, such as pain or irritation to the genital area, that can't be explained medically
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Regressive behavior, including bed wetting
- Enuresis and encopresis
- Age-inappropriate sexualized behavior or language
- Drawings with developmentally inappropriate sexual content
- Stomach pains or discomfort walking or sitting
- Mentioning receiving special attention from an adult or a new "secret" friendship with an adult or young person
- Medical needs unattended
- Lack of supervision
- Consistent hunger
- Inappropriate dress
- Poor hygiene
- Inadequate nutrition
- Self-harm behavior and suicidal ideations and/or attempts

- Extreme need for affection
- Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school
- Poor social relationships
- Conduct disorder behavior (e.g., vandalism, stealing, aggressiveness towards others, etc.)
- Compulsive lying
- Drug or alcohol use

In addition to knowing the signs of victimization, below are some **early warning signs to look out for in potential offenders**:

- Signs of offenders (students)
 - Unusual interest in sex, sexualizing inanimate objects, and activities
 - Does not stop sexual misbehavior when told to stop
 - Uses force and coercion in social situations
 - Unusual intensity when discussing sex and sexuality
 - Socializes with children much younger
 - Gives gifts and/or requires secrecy in relationships
- Signs of offenders (adults)
 - Has a “favorite” student or child
 - Attempts to find ways to be alone with children
 - Inappropriate language, jokes, and discussions about students/children
 - Sexualized talk in the presence of students/children
 - Gives private gifts or has private chats on social media/internet

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Appendix 3: Additional Guidance for Teachers

These are procedures to protect children from abuse and neglect. Child protection concerns include suspected, alleged, self-disclosed, or witnessed abuse or neglect of a child, and must be followed up with appropriate action. Types of abuse include physical, psychological, and/or sexual.

Being Prepared

All educators have a responsibility to teach students about child protection in a developmentally appropriate way (e.g., through class meetings, the curriculum, etc.). They must learn strategies to recognize inappropriate behavior, how to respond assertively, and to report incidents to school personnel and/or family members.

If a child confides in you:

- Do not let a child swear you to secrecy before telling you something. You may need to report, which the child will view as breaking your trust with them.
- You can reassure the child that the information they give you will be treated sensitively and kept as confidential as necessary.
- You may want to suggest to the student that there are other people they can talk to, and who might be better placed to help them. However, it is important for the child to not feel dismissed.
- If a child asks to speak with you, try to find a neutral setting where you can have quiet and few interruptions.
- Do not lead the child in telling. Just listen, letting him or her explain in his or her own words.
- Don't pressure for a great amount of detail.
- Respond calmly and matter-of-factly. Even if the story that the child tells you is difficult to hear, it is important not to register disgust or alarm.
- Do not make judgmental or disparaging comments about the abuser; it is often someone the child loves or with whom he or she is close.
- Do not make promises to the child that things will get better.
- Do not confront the abuser.
- If the child does not want to go home, this should be considered an emergency. Report and handle immediately by contacting a member of DIS's Child Protection Team or Executive Leadership Team. Do not take the child home with you!
- Explain to the child that you must tell a member of the Child Protection Team to get help.
- Try to let the child know that someone else also will need to talk with him/her and explain why.
- Empower the student by as much as possible allowing the child a part in the process

If you have suspicions, yet the child does not confide in you, contact a member of the Child Safety Committee (Head of School, Deputy Head of School, Head of Primary, Head of Secondary, Head of Human Resources) in person, by telephone, or by email to childsafety@dallasinternationalschool.org.

Protecting yourself from vulnerability

Interactions between adults and students at DIS must always be appropriate, and to protect themselves from false allegations, adults should always ensure that they are seen to be so. To ensure this:

- Avoid situations in which you are alone with a child. This includes not transporting a child alone in your car. When it is necessary to speak privately with a child, find a space out of earshot, but within sight of others for your conference.
- The privacy of children in situations such as toileting, showering, and changing clothes should be respected.
- Minimal physical contact should be used only in the following situations: to prevent or treat injury; to ensure safety; as a means of instruction; to meet the requirements of a sport; to comfort a student in distress.
- Do not use corporal punishment in any form.
- Sexual jokes, comments of a personal sexual nature, inappropriate physical contact, sensual massages, or sexual gestures are not appropriate behavior for an adult staff member or volunteer.
- When volunteering to supervise overnight activities, adults should not share sleeping quarters with individual children (other than their own).
- Social media/online: Maintain your own strict privacy settings on personal online profiles and avoid contact with students on social media and in online forums, such as gaming.

It is always the adult's responsibility to set and respect boundaries. When a child attempts to involve an adult in inappropriate behavior, the adult must reject the overture and immediately inform their line manager (preferably in writing) of the incident.

Reporting Student Disclosures or Concerns

It is a legal obligation for volunteers, faculty, staff, and administrators—either as individuals or members of the institution—to report incidents of, or concerns about, physical or psychological violence, aggression, harassment, and physical or sexual abuse.

This should be done immediately—or if after hours, the next school day—to the school's Child Safety Committee. Contact may be made at any time and is not restricted to working hours.

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Appendix 4: Toilet and Intimate Care Guidelines

These guidelines are for any DIS staff member that finds him or herself in an intimate care situation with a student (e.g., early childhood teachers, first aiders, PE teachers, overnight field trip chaperones, etc.).

Intimate care can be defined as any care that involves washing, touching, or carrying out an agreed procedure to intimate personal areas in order to care for another person. Intimate care tasks are associated with bodily functions, body products, and personal hygiene that may involve direct or indirect contact with, or exposure of, the genitals. All intimate care is provided in a manner so as to maintain the child or young person's dignity and confidence. The child or young person is cared for in a way that avoids distress, embarrassment, or pain.

The following guidelines must be observed:

- For admission into EC3 and up, it is an expectation that all students be toilet trained and able to go to the toilet independently. In the case where a student is not toilet trained or has regressed, please inform the parents/guardians immediately. Staff need to work in partnership with the child or young person's parents or guardians to discuss their needs as to when the student can reintegrate into the regular school routine.
- When a child needs help toileting or has had an accident, alert another staff member that you are with the child.
- Always, where possible, keep the toilet doors open and remain visible.
- Encourage the student to be independent and to do as much as they can by themselves (e.g., "Can you take toilet paper and wipe your bottom?"). In the event that you must help a child clean him or herself, ensure that another member of staff remains with you at all times.
- If possible, especially in the case where a child has been sick or had an accident, use gloves and an apron when trying to clean the child. Ask for additional support (e.g., other first aider, cleaners, and/or other members of staff) if need be.
- Send the soiled clothes home in double plastic bags.
- In the case where a child is in a cubicle or bathroom with a closed or locked door, knock to inform the child that you are there. Ask the child to dress him or herself and to open the door. In the case that the child refuses, ask him or her to explain why. If the child is not speaking, explain that you will have to call someone to open the door to check on his or her wellbeing.
- If a student is using a cubicle/toilet, only one student permitted with a closed door.
- Cameras and recording devices may never be taken into bathroom areas.
- Wherever possible, staff should care for a child of the same gender.