



# High Rockies Community School & High Rockies Kids

## Abuse and Molestation Policy

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect students from any form of abuse or molestation, ensure a safe and supportive learning environment, and provide clear guidelines for the prevention, identification, and reporting of abuse or molestation involving students, staff, and families. The policy complies with Colorado state laws and reflects the school's commitment to the safety and well-being of all students.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all students, staff, volunteers, contractors, and families associated with High Rockies Community School and High Rockies Kids (HRCS/HRK). It covers interactions within the school, on school property, during school-sponsored events, and any other context where students, staff, and families interact.

### 3. Definitions

- **Abuse:** Any action that intentionally harms or injures another person. This includes physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.
- **Molestation:** Any sexual act or behavior that is inappropriate or unlawful involving a minor.
- **Mandatory Reporter:** Any school employee or volunteer who is required by law to report suspected abuse or neglect to law enforcement or child protection services.

### 4. Prevention Measures

HRCS/HRK implements the following preventive measures to ensure the safety of all students:

- **Screening and Background Checks:** All staff, volunteers, and contractors are subject to rigorous screening processes, including fingerprinting and comprehensive background checks, in compliance with Colorado Department of Education requirements.

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- **Training:** Mandatory annual training for staff, volunteers, and contractors on identifying and reporting signs of abuse, as well as proper conduct with students. This includes training on maintaining professional boundaries and respecting personal space.
- **Code of Conduct:** All staff and volunteers are expected to maintain professional and appropriate relationships with students and to follow the school's code of conduct, which prohibits inappropriate physical contact, personal relationships, or behavior that could be perceived as grooming.
- **Supervision of Activities:** All student activities are supervised by at least two adults whenever possible.

## 5. Reporting Procedures

- **Mandatory Reporting:** In accordance with Colorado law, all school employees are mandated reporters and must immediately report any suspected child maltreatment immediately when they have "reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect or who has observed the child being subjected to circumstances or conditions that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect.". Reports should be made directly to the County Department of Human Services or local law enforcement. Employees may also report through the statewide reporting hotline: 1-844-CO-4-Kids. Failure to report is subject to legal penalties. Staff will be trained annually on mandatory reporting.
- **Internal Reporting:** In addition to external mandatory reporting, staff must report any suspicions of abuse or molestation to the school's designated abuse prevention officer (typically the principal or a trained staff member) who will ensure that the appropriate steps are taken, including contacting authorities. Note that reporting to a supervisor or any other School official does NOT relieve you of your responsibility to report to child services or law enforcement. The law requires all concerns be reported as soon as possible upon knowledge of the concern, and criminal sanctions may be pursued by law enforcement for failures to report.
- **Anonymous Reporting:** Students, parents, or staff may also report abuse concerns anonymously through Safe2Tell.
- **Confidentiality:** All reports and investigations will be handled with the utmost confidentiality, ensuring the protection of both the victim and the accused until a thorough investigation is completed.

## 6. Response and Investigation

- **Immediate Action:** Upon receiving a report of abuse or molestation, the school will take immediate action to ensure the safety of the student(s) involved. This may include separating the alleged perpetrator from students, placing the staff member on administrative leave, or contacting law enforcement for immediate intervention.
- **Cooperation with Authorities:** The school will fully cooperate with law enforcement, CPS, and any other investigative authorities. Any internal investigation will not interfere with ongoing legal investigations.
- **Parental Notification:** Parents or guardians will be informed as soon as it is legally permissible, following appropriate steps to ensure the well-being and privacy of the student involved.

## **7. Disciplinary Action**

If a staff member, volunteer, or contractor is found to have violated this policy, HRCS/HRK will take appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination and criminal prosecution. Volunteers or family members found in violation will be barred from school activities and may face legal action.

## **8. Support for Victims**

HRCS/HRK is committed to providing support and resources for any student who is the victim of abuse or molestation. This includes counseling services, assistance in reporting to authorities, and ensuring the student's continued safety and well-being in the school environment.

## **9. Communication and Awareness**

- **Family Awareness:** Parents and guardians will be informed of this policy at the start of each school year and upon enrollment. Educational materials will be provided to help families recognize signs of abuse and understand reporting procedures.
- **Student Education:** Age-appropriate lessons and discussions on personal safety, boundaries, and recognizing inappropriate behavior will be included in the school's curriculum.

## **10. Review of Policy**

This policy will be reviewed annually by school leadership to ensure it remains effective and compliant with state laws and regulations. Any changes or updates will be communicated to staff, students, and families.