

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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Contact Person

Name: Marian Lambeth
Phone: 850/245-0438
SunCom: 205-0438
Email: marian.lambeth@fldoe.org
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MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents

FROM: Marian W. Lambeth

SUBJECT: Reporting of Abuse to the Department of Children and Families

On June 12, 2006, Governor Bush signed into law House Bill 7173, An Act Relating to the Welfare of Children. This legislation amends the purpose and intent of S. 39.01, Florida Statutes, in part by including the employee of any school into the definition of "other persons responsible."

Known or suspected abuse by employees of a public school must be reported to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) for investigation. **Abuse should be immediately reported by calling the Department of Children and Families Abuse Hotline at 1.800.96ABUSE or 1.800.962.2873.**

Upon receipt of a call to the DCF Hotline regarding abuse by a public school employee, DCF will orally notify the appropriate state attorney and local law enforcement agency. When the complaint is in response to a certified individual, DCF will also notify the Bureau of Professional Practices Services. DCF will notify the school principal of the findings of the investigation pursuant to S. 39.202(2)(q), Florida Statutes. This notification will enable the principal to transfer an alleged perpetrator to a position of non-student contact or notify the school district superintendent to initiate corrective action or termination proceedings as deemed appropriate.

Each public school district should create guidelines for all staff related to the reporting and investigation of abuse to the DCF hotline. Additionally, each administrator should be trained in the district's protocol for reporting the outcome of the DCF investigation to district staff and promptly making a decision to ensure the safety and well-being of the students and staff of the school. Each district should be prepared to conduct its own investigation for incidents that fail to be verified as abuse by DCF or for incidents of inappropriate conduct of school board employees that do not require reporting to DCF.

MARIAN W. LAMBETH, CHIEF
BUREAU OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES SERVICES

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Pursuant to Florida Statute 1012.796, each district is required to report legally sufficient allegations of misconduct by certified educators to the Bureau of Professional Practices Services within *30 days of knowledge*. Regardless of the incident being reported to DCF or not, districts should continue to timely report legally sufficient allegations of misconduct to the Bureau of Professional Practices Services.

ML/ml