**PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

**September 18, 2018**

Dear MCPS community:

Child abuse and neglect is a difficult topic. With the events in the news, we all need to know what we can do to keep children safe. The good news is that prevention is possible. The more we know about risks and resources, we can protect more children.

This information can be upsetting and may trigger reactions for survivors. Please know that help and support are available. We have included links to local and national resources that are free and provide 24-hour services.

**Child abuse and neglect in the United States**

Child abuse and neglect are more prevalent than we’d like to believe, affecting children of all ages, races, ethnicities, and economic backgrounds in areas where they should be safe, including communities of faith, youth sports teams, schools, and in their own homes. There are four common types of child abuse and neglect: Physical Abuse; Sexual Abuse; Emotional Abuse; and Neglect.[[1]](#endnote-1)

* According to data posted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there were 676,000 victims of child abuse and neglect reported to child protective services (CPS) in 2016.
* As many as 1 out of 4 girls and 1 out of 6 boys experience some form of sexual abuse before the age of 18. However, because child sexual abuse is by its very nature secretive, many of these cases are never reported.[[2]](#endnote-2)
* Approximately three quarters of reported cases of child sexual abuse are committed by family members or other individuals who are considered part of the victim’s “circle of trust.”[[3]](#endnote-3)
* Twenty-three percent of reported cases of child sexual abuse are perpetrated by individuals under the age of 18.[[4]](#endnote-4)
* 90 percent of child abuse victims know their abuser. Approximately 30 percent of children who are sexually abused are abused by family members.[[5]](#endnote-5)

[This fact sheet](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/childabuseandneglect/Child%20sexual%20abuse%20FAQ.pdf) provides further information about child sexual abuse.

**Prevalence of child sexual abuse in Montgomery County Public Schools**

During the 2017-2018 school year, 3,087 suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect were reported by MCPS staff, volunteers, or contractors to the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Child Welfare Services (commonly known as CPS), or Adult Protective Services. Of this number, 353 cases allegedly involved staff, and 4 allegedly involved volunteers. All other reported cases were alleged to have occurred outside of MCPS by members of the community.[[6]](#endnote-6) Of the reports alleging MCPS staff involvement, 10 were indicated, a finding that there is credible evidence that abuse or neglect occurred. As of August 10, 2018, 13 cases were still pending.

MCPS released [this update](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/childabuseandneglect/180829%20Update%20Implement%20Pol%20JHC%20FY2018.pdf) with further information to the Board of Education on August 29, 2018. The Superintendent also submitted [this update](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/childabuseandneglect/180912-RiceCraig-Update-ChildAbuse.pdf) to the Montgomery County Council Education Committee on September 12, 2008.

**What to do if you suspect any form of child abuse or neglect**

Local resources

* In the case of an emergency, call 911.
* To make a report of child abuse and neglect or mental injury, call Child Welfare Services (240) 777-4417 (open 24 hours).
* To make a report of child sexual abuse, call Child Welfare Services (240) 777-4417 and the Special Victims Investigation Division of the Montgomery County police Department (240) 773-5400 (open 24 hours).
* Parents or guardians who are employees, contractors or volunteers in schools **MUST** follow the MCPS reporting protocol, which includes immediately contacting Child Welfare Services. In addition, a written [Report of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/forms/pdf/335-44.pdf) should be submitted within 48 hours. This form is available in [multiple language](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/forms/detail.aspx?formID=159&formNumber=335-44&catID=1&subCatId=44) on the MCPS website. **All MCPS employees, contractors and volunteers are mandated reporters.**
* Those who **are not** employees, contractors or volunteers in schools should immediately report suspected child abuse and neglect directly to Child Welfare Services. Reports may also be made to a MCPS staff member. As mandatory reporters, all MCPS staff members must report immediately to Child Welfare Services without exception.
* Please contact the [MCPS Compliance Unit](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/compliance/) with any further questions regarding the process for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect: (240) 740-3214.

National resources

The [Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline](https://www.childhelp.org/hotline/)– 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453) – is dedicated to the prevention of child abuse. The hotline is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with professional crisis counselors who, through interpreters, can provide assistance in over 200 languages. The hotline offers crisis intervention, information, literature, and referrals to thousands of emergency, social service, and support resources. All calls are confidential.

[Darkness to Light](https://www.d2l.org/education/stewards-of-children/) – 1-866-FOR-LIGHT (866-367-5444) – provides a toll-free number for individuals living in the United States who need information and resources about sexual abuse. Any individual, child or adult who needs information about sexual abuse can call the Helpline.

**MCPS policies and procedures related to child abuse and neglect**

In June 2015, the Montgomery County Board of Education approved significant changes to [Policy JHC—Child Abuse and Neglect](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/policy/detail.aspx?recID=287&policyID=JHC&sectionID=10). The policy guides Montgomery County Public Schools procedures and protocols for recognizing, reporting, and preventing suspected child abuse and neglect of students. Further information on MCPS policy, regulations and reports related to child abuse and neglect are accessible in multiple languages [here](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/policy/detail.aspx?recID=287&policyID=JHC&sectionID=10) and include:

* [Regulation JHC-RA Reporting and Investigating Child Abuse and Neglect](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/policy/pdf/jhcra.pdf)
* [Memorandum of Understanding with Law Enforcement](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/parents/2015-08-10%20Signed-Child%20Abuse%20Investigations%20MOU%20%284%29.pdf)
* [Employee Code of Conduct](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/childabuseandneglect/1236%2018_EmployeeCodeofConduct_BOOKLET_ENG_8%205x11.pdf)
* [A Student’s Guide Rights and Responsibilities](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/childabuseandneglect/1201%2018_StudentRightsAndResponsibilities_WEB.pdf)
* [Vetting and Training of Employees, Contractors and Volunteers](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/childabuseandneglect/vetting.aspx)
* Reports to the Board of Education on Child Abuse and Neglect (multiple reports available [here](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/childabuseandneglect/#Policy))
* Reports to the Community (multiple reports available [here](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/childabuseandneglect/#Policy))
* Watch the Chief of the Special Victims Division of the Montgomery County State’s Attorney’s Office discuss how MCPS is [combatting child abuse and neglect.](https://youtu.be/7izLovm-uKE?t=12m36s)

**Child abuse prevention in the MCPS curriculum**

MCPS implements [Personal Body Safety Lessons (PBSLs)](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/childabuseandneglect/personal-body-safety-lessons.aspx) with grade-level, age appropriate content for students in every grade from Pre-K to 12. These lessons were developed with input from national stakeholders and County partners, and are designed to empower students to recognize and report suspected cases of abuse without fear of reprisal.

Parents and guardians may consider [these tips for talking to children about body safety](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/childabuseandneglect/Child%20Abuse%20Tips%20for%20Parents.pdf).

**Volunteer Training on Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect**

All volunteers who regularly support schools and students and those who attend field trips **MUST** complete the Child Abuse and Neglect volunteer training. [This online training module](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/childabuseandneglect/#Volunteer) provides guidance for volunteers to help keep students safe. Since the inception of the volunteer training in January 2016, nearly 63,000 volunteers have completed the online training. It is highly recommended for any adult who cares for, works or spends time with children.

For more information, see the [Frequently Asked Questions](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/childabuseandneglect/CAN%20Volunteer%20FAQs%20010518.pdf) regarding volunteer training.

**Other resources**

* [The Tree House of Montgomery County](http://treehousemd.org/) is dedicated to reducing trauma and promoting healing for child victims of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. Through an innovative collaborative process between the private and public sectors, key professionals come together on behalf of the best interests of victims. This effective early intervention is essential to ensure that an abused child or adolescent develops into a healthy and productive adult, capable of forming trusting and loving relationships. Underpinning the work of The Tree House is the belief that the cycle of child abuse can be broken and the knowledge that child abuse and neglect is preventable.
* [The Montgomery County Family Justice Center](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc/) is collaboration of public and private county agencies seeking to provide services to families impacted by domestic violence, in a family-friendly environment. Its mission is to promote safety, well-being, and healing for victims of family violence.
* [Darkness to Light](https://www.d2l.org/) empowers adults to prevent child sexual abuse. [5 Steps to Protecting Our Children](https://www.d2l.org/education/5-steps/) is an introductory guide for the prevention of child sexual abuse. They outline core principles for preventing, recognizing, and reacting responsibly to child sexual abuse and form the framework for the adult training program [Stewards of Children](https://www.d2l.org/education/stewards-of-children/).
* [SafeSport](https://safesport.org/) is committed to ending all forms of abuse in sport. This includes bullying, harassment, hazing, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual misconduct and abuse. Both the [SafeSport Trained](https://athletesafety.org/training/index) course and the [Parent Training](https://athletesafety.org/training/index) help you to recognize if an athlete is being abused.
1. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/index.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2005). Adverse Childhood Experiences Study: Data and Statistics. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Retrieved January 12, 2009 from: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/ace/prevalence.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. (2007). Child Maltreatment 2005. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved January 12, 2009 from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm05/cm05.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Snyder, H. N. (2000). Sexual assault of young children as reported to law enforcement: Victim, incident, and offender characteristics. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved January 12, 2009 from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/saycrle.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Finkelhor, D. (2012). Characteristics of crimes against juveniles. Durham, NH: Crimes against Children Research Center. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Howard, C. (2018). Briefing – MCPS Child Abuse and Neglect Policy. Montgomery County Council. April 25, 2018. Retrieved August 23, 2018 from <http://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=169&event_id=7718&meta_id=154472> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)