



AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL
OF ABU DHABI *SINCE 1972*

ACS Student Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures Handbook

*Learning in a Caring and
Connected Community*

Updated: August 2026

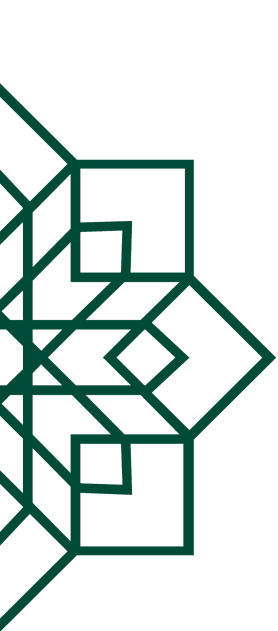
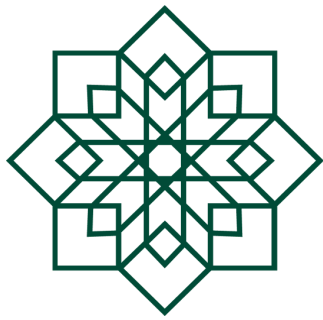


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AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

OF ABU DHABI *SINCE 1972*

Mission: *Our community empowers all students to define and shape their futures for learning, service, and global citizenship.*

Vision: *Together, we are a compassionate, student-centered community of learners that engages, prepares, and inspires.*

Core Values: *Courage. Curiosity. Compassion. Integrity.*

ACS Community Members,

I am writing a personal introduction to this policy document to increase your awareness of the importance of child protection and to highlight ACS's commitment to student safeguarding. I am required to communicate this important policy yearly and oversee the continual review of these critical processes and procedures.

This document is in alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which the United Arab Emirates is a signatory as of January 1997, on the UAE Federal Law number 3 of 2016 (Wadeema's Law), and the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) child protection policy.

By joining the American Community School of Abu Dhabi's community, you agree to work in partnership with the school and to abide by these policies and procedures. To ensure a safe environment where all our children can learn and grow, we must share responsibility between home and school.

Please take the time to review the contents of this handbook, and let your child's counselor, principal, or me know if you have any questions about our commitment to work in partnership to protect children.

Thank you for your support,

Monique Flickinger
Superintendent

THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL IS COMMITTED TO:

- Protecting students against any physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect, and/or peer-on-peer abuse.
- Identifying at-risk students and taking action to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm.
- Reporting when there is reasonable suspicion of harm or risk of harm to students.
- Applying Safer Recruitment and hiring practices, including staff training.
(as defined in this child protection handbook)

Any suspicion or disclosure of abuse, whether from within or outside the school, will be taken seriously. Action will be taken by members of the Child Protection team, and as appropriate, may include referral to an external agency.

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS AND WARNING SIGNS

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.” This also includes harm to oneself.

A person may abuse a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Most child abuse is inflicted by someone the child knows, respects, and/or trusts.

(Signs and Indicators may or may not be present and may or may not indicate abuse)

Physical Abuse: any intentional, unwanted contact with one’s body resulting in actual or potential harm. Examples may include hitting (with a hand or an item), punching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, kicking, burning, drowning, suffocating, sustained physical activity, etc.

Signs of Physical abuse that may or may not be present:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| ● Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts | ● Repeated urinary infections or unexplained stomach pain | ● Showing wariness or distrust of adults |
| ● Improbable excuses to explain injuries | ● Refusal to discuss injuries | ● Self-destructive tendencies |
| ● Injuries that have not received medical attention | ● Withdrawal from physical contact | ● Aggressiveness toward others |
| ● Injuries that occur to the body in places that are not typically exposed to falls or rough games | ● Arms and legs covered in hot weather | ● Overly passive and compliant |
| | ● Fear of going home or parents being contacted | ● Chronic running away |

Emotional Abuse: persistent emotional ill treatment such as threats, insults, constant monitoring, humiliation, intimidation, isolation, or stalking that result in actual or potential harm to an individual's health, physical, mental, and/or social development. Such behaviors may include restricting a child's movements, developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed, ridicule, threats and intimidation, conveying worthlessness, corruptions on a child's innocence, rejection and other non-physical forms of hostile treatment. *Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may also occur alone.*

Signs of Emotional abuse that may or may not be present:

- Physical, mental, and emotional development is delayed
- Highly anxious
- Delayed Speech or sudden speech disorder
- Fear of new situations
- Low Self-esteem
- Inappropriate emotional response to painful situations
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Compulsive Stealing
- Chronic running away
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Attention-seeking behavior
- Persistent tiredness
- Lying

Neglect: Persistent failure to provide for a child's basic needs in one or more of the following areas: physical, medical, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions. This is likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Some indicators of neglect that may or may not be present:

- Medical or dental needs unattended
- Lack of supervision
- Consistent hunger
- Inappropriate dress
- Poor hygiene
- Inadequate nutrition
- Fatigue or listlessness
- Self-destructive behaviors
- Extreme loneliness
- Extreme need for affection
- Failure to grow
- Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school
- Low self-esteem
- Poor social relationships
- Compulsive stealing
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Reluctance to return home

Sexual Abuse: Any action that pressures or coerces an individual to do something sexually that they do not want to do or cannot consent to doing (whether or not the child is aware of what is happening). This may involve physical contact that is penetrative or non-penetrative, such as kissing, rubbing, or touching inside or outside of clothing. Activities may also include non-contact activities, such as viewing sexually explicit material or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Signs of Sexual abuse that may or may not be present:

- Pain or irritation to the genital area
- Discharge from the genitals
- Difficulty with urination
- Infection, bleeding or sexually transmitted diseases
- Fear of people or places
- Aggression, unusual aggressiveness
- Regressive behavior (bed wetting, stranger anxiety)
- Excessive masturbation or sexually provocative
- Stomach pains or discomfort when walking or sitting
- Unusually quiet/withdrawn
- Physical ailments with no medical explanation
- Fear or distrust of a particular adult
- Mentioning special attention or a new "secret" friendship with an adult/young person
- Refusal to continue with school or usual activities
- Age-inappropriate sexualized behavior or language

Sexual Exploitation: Taking non-consensual, unjust, or abusive advantage of another in a sexual or intimate context. Children can be sexually exploited for money, power, or status. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection, or status. Consent cannot be given (even when a child believes they are voluntarily engaging in the sexual activity). This exploitation does not always involve physical contact and can happen online.

Signs of Sexual exploitation that may or may not be present:

- Signs of Sexual abuse (see above)
- Unexplained gifts or new possessions
- Associate with others involved in exploitation
- Have older girlfriends or boyfriends
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases or possible pregnancy
- Changes in emotional well-being
- Fear of people or places
- Drug and Alcohol abuse
- Missing for periods of time or regularly come home late
- Regularly miss school or education

Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation: Sexual abuse of children using digital technology. This commonly includes grooming children with a sexual motive, creating, viewing, and distributing child abuse material (child pornography and self-produced sexual images or 'sexts'), and coercing or blackmailing children for sexual purposes.

Signs of Sexual exploitation that may or may not be present:

- Secretive behavior
- Unexplained gifts or new possessions
- Late night or excessive internet use
- Anxiety
- Withdrawal from family, friends, or interests
- Suicide ideation or self-harm
- Poor educational achievement
- Increase in followers or contacts
- New devices and/or platforms
- New tech use patterns
- Avoidance of online use or certain online platforms or apps

Sexual Harassment: physical, verbal, written, or electronic conduct of a sexual nature that interferes with a person's academic or extracurricular activities, professional obligations, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Digital/Electronic abuse: the use of technology for digital communication to bully, harass, stalk, or intimidate another. Digital abuse is a form of verbal or emotional abuse perpetrated through online means of communication. Digital abuse may involve student-on-student or both students and adults.

Long-term impact of unmitigated child abuse: The impact of child abuse can persist for a lifetime after the abuse has been committed. Impacts are often academic, medical, physical, psychological, and emotional. Research has established the relationship between long-term child abuse and lifetime negative health and well-being impact, especially if the children do not get appropriate support to help them cope with trauma and build resiliency.

Long-term impacts of child abuse:

- Poor educational achievement
- Inability to complete responsibilities
- Inability to live according to plan/ability
- Inability to care of self
- Inability to coexist, cooperate or work with others
- Lack of self-confidence
- Prone to addiction/substance abuse
- Inability to express love or accept love
- Constant health problems
- Prone to mental health problems
- Low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Attachment difficulties
- Eating disorders
- Poor peer relations
- Rage disorders
- Self-harming behavior (cutting, suicide attempts)

Suicide: death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with intent to die as a result of the behavior.

Suicide Attempt: A self-injurious behavior for which there is evidence that the person had at least some intent to die. A Suicide attempt may result in death, injuries, or no injuries.

Suicidal Ideation: Thinking about, considering, or planning for self-injurious behavior that may result in death. A desire to be dead without a plan or the intent to end one's life is still considered suicidal ideation and shall be taken seriously.

Risk factors for suicide that may or may not be present:

- Mental health conditions
- Hopelessness
- Problems with alcohol or drugs
- Past suicide attempt(s)
- Family history of suicide or mental health problems
- Problems with impulse control and aggression
- Serious medical condition and/or pain
- Psychosis (marked change in behavior, unusual thoughts, confusion about reality)
- History of early childhood trauma, abuse, neglect, or loss
- Current high stress or transition
- History of head trauma

Child Protection: the safeguarding of children from abuse, neglect, or self-harm; those systems, beliefs, structures in place to guard children's rights and prevent and respond to the actual or suspected harm of children.

Child Protection Team (CPT): a group of ACS employees tasked with receiving and responding to more serious reports of child protection violations within the community. The core CPT will include individuals from administration, counseling, the Director of Student Services, the school psychologist, a school nurse, and a teacher representative. The core CPT will request the presence of other community members as deemed necessary.

Employee: for the purposes of this policy, the definition of "employee" includes all those at ACS who directly or indirectly work with students, all externally hired and internally hired coaches, volunteers, substitutes, and all outsourced employees.

(definitions adapted from: the Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention World Health Organization 1999 and the Association of International Schools in Africa ASIA Child Protection Handbook 2014)

REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

This policy mandates that all adults must report any suspicion of child abuse to a child protection liaison and follow the reporting pathway outlined in this policy, pages 9-10.

All Adults associated with the American Community School in Abu Dhabi have both a legal and ethical obligation to report incidents when there is reasonable suspicion of harm to a child. UAE Federal Law #3 of 2016, article 42 says, "The notification shall be mandatory for educators, physicians, social specialists, or others entrusted with the protection, care, or education of the child."

Adults who see, hear about, know about, or have suspicion of possible child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional) or neglect, or are at significant risk of being abused, must make a report. Reporting should occur as soon as possible and within 24 hours of any suspected violation of a child's rights. Verbal reports are accepted, but must be put into writing within a day of the verbal report. Reports can also be submitted directly via our secure digital Child Protection Online Monitoring System (CPOMS), ensuring confidential and rapid notification to the Child Protection Team. If an individual is uncertain whether a situation or incident requires reporting, they must consult a school counselor, school administrator, or educational psychologist.

The ACS Child Protection Team and the administration have a duty to examine, evaluate, and inquire into any disclosures or reports of suspicion. It is not the responsibility of a reporter to carry out any additional inquiry. By enrolling children at ACS, parents and/or guardians understand that school administration will follow up on any report of child protection violations. ACS will fully cooperate with any relevant authorities in any possible investigations of all reports of abuse or neglect.

Mandated reporters are entitled to immunity from any report of child abuse so long as the report has been made in good faith. There will be no retribution from ACS against any individual reporting or assisting with an inquiry into suspected child abuse. Any individuals engaged in retaliatory conduct against reporters or members of an inquiry team may be subject to disciplinary action.

CONFIDENTIALITY

ACS will fully respect the privacy of all those involved in child protection cases. The identities of those involved in both reporting and any suspected incidents will be kept confidential to the greatest extent possible. However, disclosing identities to certain individuals or entities may be necessary for both internal inquiry and compliance with mandatory reporting laws in the UAE. The school will report incident information to the extent necessary to maintain the safety of this and other communities.

All ACS employees are required to sign a code of conduct and confidentiality agreement that states they will maintain confidentiality and not discuss any student or family unless doing so in a professional situation and only with those individuals necessary to maintain the support and well-being of the student.

*These guidelines do not prevent anyone from sharing with a child protection liaison when something doesn't look right, sound right, or feel right.
"If you see something, say something"*

REACTING TO A DISCLOSURE

Please remember, teachers (or other employees/volunteers) are not investigators; it is not up to you to determine motivation for the disclosure or fact-finding. Your role is to listen and remember when a student tells you sensitive information.

An ACS employee should:

- Believe the student's disclosure.
- Listen carefully and remain objective.
- Do not 'swear' to secrecy or promise not to tell. You may need to report, and preserving your trusting relationship with the student will be important.
- Stay calm and neutral as much as possible; expressing shock, disbelief, or disgust can affect a child's report and their emotional state.
- Slow Down. Respect pauses and don't interrupt the child.
- Do not lead the child to tell or gather unnecessary details; counseling or administrative staff will follow up with the child to ask more open-ended questions.
- Acknowledge the child's courage for telling you their story and assure them they are not to blame for what has happened.
- Do not promise that 'everything will be ok'.
- Explain to the child that you must tell someone else to get help. Try to let them know that someone else will need to talk to them to hear their story again. Empower the student by giving some choice, if possible - "Would you be more comfortable if I talk to your counselor or your principal?"
- Keep the information confidential from other staff or parents who are not directly involved in the case or on the Child Protection Team.

** If the child does not want to go home, this should be considered an emergency. Report immediately; do not take the child home with you.*

***If the child is reporting suicidal ideation or suicidal behaviors, this should be considered an emergency. Report immediately; do not allow the child to be unsupervised, and escort them to the counseling or administration office. You can also call for a counselor to come to you.*

After the Disclosure:

- Write down or make notes as soon as possible after talking to the child. Record as many actual words/phrases the child used in their own voice as much as possible.
- Describe the child's observable behavior; do not interpret their demeanor. For example, *the student was pacing, talking quickly, their eyes were darting around the room, etc.*
- Indicate date, time, location of the disclosure, and names of those present for the conversation.
- Immediately follow the reporting pathway or report to your administrator, the child's counselor, or the educational psychologist. A written report is required afterward (at maximum within 24 hours).

REPORTING PROCEDURES

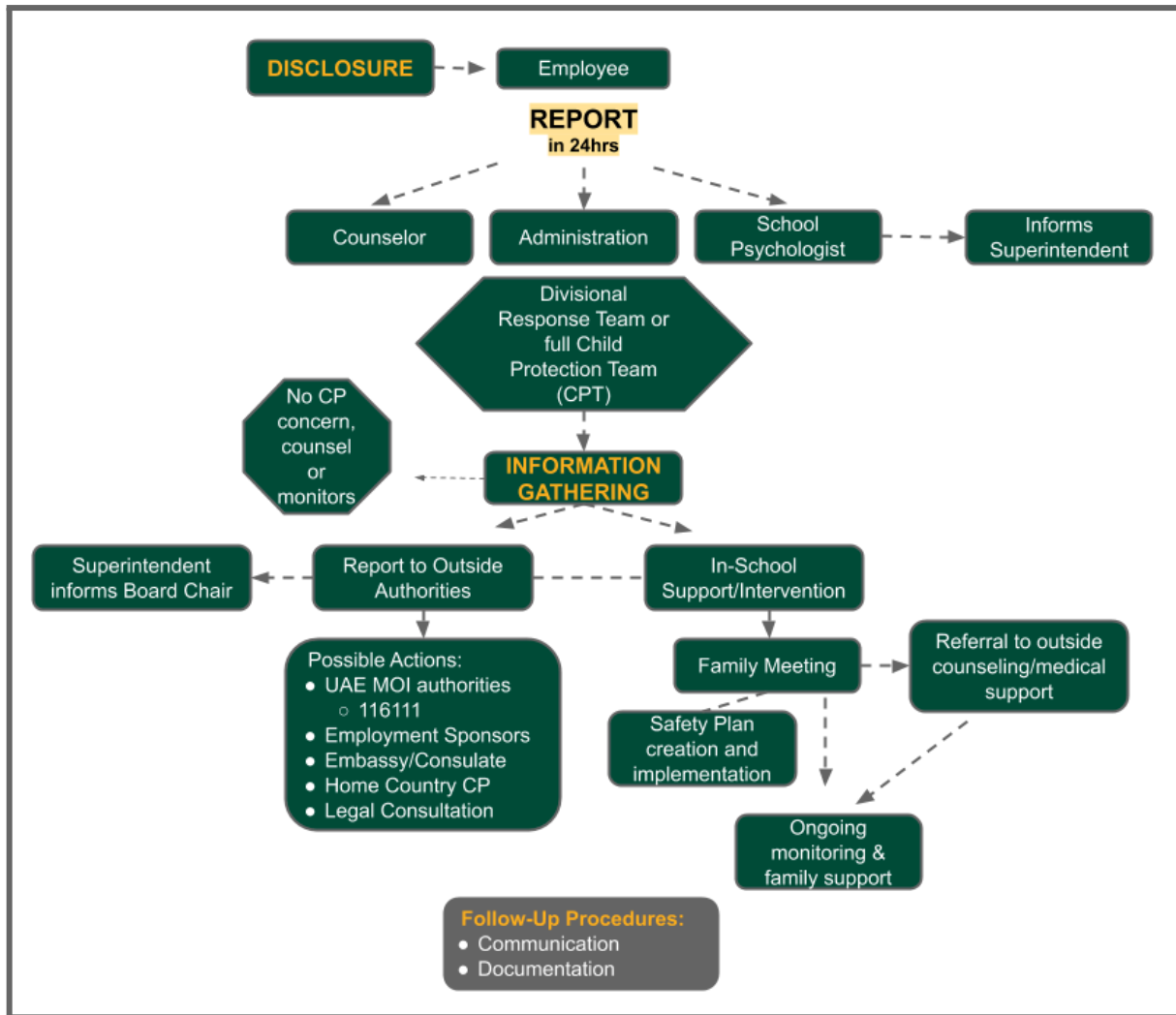
Adults who see, hear about, know about, or have suspicion of possible child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional), neglect, or is at significant risk of being abused, or have indicated suicidal ideation or suicidal behaviors, must make a report. Reporting should occur as soon as possible and within 24 hours of any suspected violation of a child's rights. If a verbal report is given, it must be put into writing within 24 hours.

- Reports should be made directly to the child's administrator, counselor, or school psychologist. If the child's counselor or administrator are unavailable, the report can be made to any division administrator. *In all cases, the child's counselor and principal will be notified.*
 - If an individual is uncertain whether a situation or incident requires reporting, they must consult a school counselor, school administrator, or school psychologist.
 - If a student is at risk for self-harm, take that child immediately to their school counselor or the school psychologist. Do not allow the student to be unsupervised.
 - Suicidal ideation comments, verbal, written, or drawn- **all** should be reported to a counselor.
- If any reporter has concerns regarding the conduct of a member of ACS administration (or counseling team), they should report their concern directly to the Superintendent or Associate Superintendent. The Core Child Protection team will be activated by the Superintendent.
- If the concern is regarding the Superintendent, the report goes directly to the Associate Superintendent, who will immediately share the information with the Board Chair of the ACS Board of Trustees. Likewise, if the concern is regarding the Associate Superintendent, the report is made directly to the Superintendent, who will immediately share it with the Board Chair. The Core Child Protection team will be activated by the board chair, and likely an external consultant will be contacted.

The Superintendent will be notified of any child protection case and can choose to convene the CPT to address the inquiry. If the CPT is convened and the case involves an ACS employee, the superintendent will chair the CPT and will notify the Chair of the ACS Board of Trustees. If the CPT is convened and the report does not involve an ACS employee, the school psychologist will chair the CPT. If the case does not necessitate a full inquiry by the CPT, the division principal and counselor will have the support of the educational psychologist to manage the case. Most cases of suspected abuse or neglect will fall under this last category, requiring the smaller divisional response team. These cases are often short-term in nature (but may require consistent monitoring), such as:

- Student relationships with peers
- Parenting skills related to disciplining children at home
- Student-parent relationships
- Mental health issues such as depression, low self-esteem, grieving, concerns with suicidal ideation, psychosis, eating disorders, anxiety, etc.
- Contextual safeguarding concerns (physical spaces, supervision, transportation, communication, etc.)

REPORTING FLOW CHART



Kalen Bruce, Lead Child Protection Officer
kbruce@acs.sch.ae; Ext. 754

High School

- Kathy Mackay, HS Principal
kmackay@acs.sch.ae; Ext. 832
- Claire Ruz, HS Counselor
cruz@acs.sch.ae; Ext. 821
- Phil Abraham, HS Counselor
pabraham@acs.sch.ae; Ext. 823
- Patrick Stenger, HS Counselor
pstenger@acs.sch.ae; Ext. 822
- Jasmine Elshear, HS Counselor
jelshear@acs.sch.ae; Ext. 852

Middle School

- Karl Poulin, MS Principal
kpoulin@acs.sch.ae; Ext. 801
- Belgica Crespo, MS Counselor
bcrespo@acs.sch.ae; Ext. 835
- Bernadette Brown, MS Counselor
bbrown@acs.sch.ae; Ext. 802

Elementary School

- Jonathan Mueller, ES Principal
jmueller@acs.sch.ae; Ext. 701
- Farwa Devji, ES Counselor
fdevji@acs.sch.ae; Ext. 706
- Ghinwa Masri, ES Counselor
gmasri@acs.sch.ae; Ext. 707

FOLLOWING A REPORT

Keeping children safe and acting in their best interest takes precedence in all tasks.

Information Gathering

The divisional response team or full CPT will assign a member(s), usually the child's counselor, to gather additional information regarding the reported incident or disclosure. All follow-up inquiries will be conducted in a manner that ensures information is documented factually and that strict confidentiality is maintained. Follow-up actions for information gathering may include:

- Interview the student
- Meet with any other students or employees directly involved or pertinent to the case, including other professionals (school nurses, outside therapists, etc.)
- Review any history or previous incidents (including checking current safeguarding files for previous reports located with the school psychologist)
- Review any physical injuries or suspicions of intentional and unintentional injuries with the school nurses and document these injuries using body maps as appropriate.
- Gathering Contextual Information about the Incident
- Conduct a Suicide Risk Assessment

ACS reserves the right to confiscate any student or employee's computer as part of the inquiry process into possible child protection violations.

Action Steps

Based on the acquired information, a plan of action will be developed to assist the child and family. These action steps may include:

- Family meeting or meetings with the response team or members of the CPT
- Referrals to outside psychological/counseling support
- Referrals to outside medical professionals
- Safety Plan creation with the student
- Ongoing monitoring and support for student and/or family
- Changes in physical spaces, increased supervision, intervention with peer groups, etc.

**In cases of moderate to high risk for suicide, families will be encouraged to take their child directly to Sheikh Khalifa Medical City (Tel: 02 819 0000)*

Cases that require continuous services and ongoing support may be referred to outside counselors or resources. Parents would be responsible for these services such as:

- Family counseling or parenting skill building in relation to disciplining children at home
- Student-Parent relationships requiring family counseling
- Mental health issues such as depression, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, psychosis, anxiety disorders, etc.

In cases of severe abuse, sexual abuse, and/or those cases being managed by the full CPT, reporting to outside authorities may be deemed necessary and may result in further inquiry and possible actions. Outside authorities could be defined as the Social Support Centre (branch of Abu Dhabi Police 999), UAE MOI child protection centre (116 111), employment sponsors, embassies/consulates, and/or the child protection entity in the home country of the family. Some cases may require a discussion with

ACS legal counsel or consultation from an external agency. The Superintendent may authorize police officers or other government officials to interview students with their counselor or administrator present in the role of student advocate. Whenever possible, parents will be notified by telephone of such interviews or actions. The Superintendent will inform the Board of Trustees as soon as possible when/if reporting to an outside authority is deemed necessary.

Follow-Up Procedures

The response team or CPT will manage communication with the reporting employee and others involved in any inquiry. The child's counselor will oversee any safety plans, communication with teachers, and ongoing contact with outside professionals or organizations working with the family or child.

All documentation (meeting minutes, emails, initial reports, etc.) of any inquiry and any action or safety plans will be kept in a confidential records file located with the school psychologist. In the case of a more severe and ongoing case, a more formal summary document will be created, especially if the case requires outside reporting or consultation.

If the case involves an ACS employee, a final report will be kept in that employee's confidential file in Human Resources. If the employee leaves ACS, this document and/or its contents may be shared with any institution requesting employment information on that individual

ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY MEASURES

ACS maintains an extensive CCTV camera system, implemented and maintained per ADEK regulations. The intent and purpose of the CCTV system are the preservation of life and to assist in the accusations of serious criminal activity.

Security personnel are on duty for all school-sponsored activities, both during school hours and in the afternoon and evenings. The Health Office is open during school hours; Nurses cover some after-school activities and other events as identified and requested by the Senior Leadership Team.

School access is controlled via limited entrance options. Community members are required to use their badges to enter and exit the ACS campus and visibly wear their badges while on campus. Lanyards are color-coded to designate parents from employees. Visitors must register their ID with security and wear a visitor badge on campus. *More information on visitors and volunteers can be found in the Faculty Handbook, which is available on the HR Intranet portal and each divisional website.*

Students are supervised by ACS faculty or staff during the school day. Recess and lunch duties are shared by faculty and staff. Students are often greeted in the morning at school entrances, and entrances and dismissals are supervised. After-school activities are supervised by adults.

School buildings, play equipment, and educational materials and apparatus are routinely assessed for security and safety.

SCHOOL PERSONNEL

All ACS personnel are required to have criminal clearance before finalizing employment at the school and receiving sponsorship.

The American Community School Abu Dhabi recognizes the importance of recruiting and retaining employees who have been vetted through a student safeguarding lens, who are committed to upholding safe practices, and who are willing to participate in additional training regarding the safety of children.

Safer Hiring Practices

All employees, including external coaching staff, hired by ACS will undergo a thorough reference-checking process. The school shall require all employees to undergo:

- criminal five-year history background check
- personal interview, including: *"Have you ever been accused or involved in a child protection inquiry or investigation?"*
- confidential reference checks
- sign a code of conduct, confidentiality agreement, and technology responsible use policy and agreement
- participate in a child protection/safeguarding training(s)

School Staff Training

All school staff will have access to these policies and procedures for reporting incidents involving student protection and safeguarding. Mandatory training for all staff will take place at the beginning of each school year. Additional training will take place, as needed.

PARENT EXPECTATIONS

Student Safeguarding at school only happens with parent partnership. Parents are expected to support this policy and adhere to these guidelines as members of the ACS community. It is expected that parents keep all contact information, including emergency contacts on Veracross up to date. It is also expected that at least one parent is present in the Abu Dhabi region with your child/children. If both parents must travel, please designate a caretaker for your child (ren) and inform your division office of the arrangement. This caretaker must be able to serve with full authority to make parental decisions, ensure appropriate supervision, and respond to any emergencies.

OVERNIGHT TRIP GUIDELINES FOR ADMINISTRATORS, TRIP LEADERS AND CHAPERONES

Pre-Trip Considerations

General

- Administrators and Trip Leaders conduct a comprehensive [Risk Assessment](#) for all new trip locations, including factors related to supervision, environment, medical needs, and safeguarding hazards.
- Evaluate the geopolitical context of the destination to ensure safety and stability. The ACS Travel Coordinator, or Asst. Superintendent will contact the US Embassy Regional Security Officer to confirm that there are no concerns about the chosen destination.
- Determine any vaccinations required or recommended for the destination, using US CDC guidelines.
- Review accommodation details, including hotel amenities and room configurations (e.g., adjoining rooms, twin beds, shared or separate arrangements).
- Verify the credibility, qualifications, and safeguarding practices of any external or third-party providers supporting the trip.
- Even for long-standing trips with minimal changes, a full ground-up reassessment should be conducted every 3-5 years to ensure that documentation, control measures, and risk ratings still reflect current best practices and legal standards.

Chaperones

- When selecting chaperones, consideration should be given to student gender to ensure an equitable balance of male and female supervision where possible.
- Adult-to-student ratios:
 - Elementary - 1:5
 - Middle School/High School - 1:10
 - Ratios should always correspond to participants' ages, group size, and the level of risk associated with trip activities.
- Minimum supervision requirements:
 - Each trip must include a minimum of 2 chaperones, except in exceptional circumstances approved by school administration.

Attending students

- Parent consent:
 - For all overnight trips, parents and guardians must provide consent by completing and signing the official trip permission form. This form includes details such as trip purpose, destination, itinerary, costs, and emergency contact information. It also provides space for parents and guardians to note any medical conditions, allergies, or dietary needs that the school should be aware of.
- Pre-trip meeting:
 - Before departure, a pre-trip briefing must be held with an administrator, the trip leader, and at least one chaperone or coach. This meeting ensures all parties are aligned on safety, supervision, and behavioral expectations.
- Student expectations and conduct:

- Students are required to sign an overnight trip agreement outlining trip-specific rules, behavioral expectations, and consequences. These agreements are to be reviewed and signed in the weeks preceding the trip.
- Parent information session:
 - For all international trips, a parent meeting will be organized to review trip logistics, supervision arrangements, health and safety protocols, and student expectations.
- Students of concern and safeguarding review:
 - For Viper Venture trips, the divisional principal will meet with the safeguarding team and any relevant counseling staff to review any students of concern and clarify roles and responsibilities related to child protection and risk management.
 - Any students of concerns must be determined before families are asked to express interest or register for a trip, in order to avoid disappointment.
 - Individual risk assessments will be completed where appropriate, and key decisions will be communicated with parents before trip information is distributed.
 - For other trips (athletics/arts), the Athletics & Activities Office will share a list of participating students with the safeguarding team and divisional principals to identify any additional considerations or supports needed to mitigate risk.
 - Where necessary, pre-departure meetings will be held with chaperones to discuss students requiring additional supervision or support.

Trip Information Folder

For every school-sponsored trip, a Trip Information Folder must be compiled by the trip organizer or designated administrator. This folder serves as a critical reference document in case of emergency and must include:

- Student and parent contact information
- Any relevant health or allergy detail, which must also be communicated to trip leaders by school nurses in a face-to-face meeting.
- Transportation arrangements and itineraries.
- Hotel and accommodation details, including room assignments and contact numbers.
- Copies of relevant travel documents, if applicable.
- A per diem will be paid to chaperones post-trip, following these [guidelines](#). The document outlines what the per diem payment covers, and possible additional costs which will be reimbursed to chaperones.
- If the school requires a staff member to have an active mobile roaming plan for communication during the trip, the staff member will be informed in advance, and the school will reimburse the cost of an agreed-upon plan (use of an e-sim or a local sim card).
- For international trips, the trip leader will be given \$200 in cash, as emergency funds, to be used for unexpected expenses, such as medical costs. The cash should not be converted into local currency unless necessary in case of an emergency.
- Any additional information to support safety, communication, and supervision.

A complete copy of the Trip Information Folder must be provided to all chaperones before departure, and a digital or backup copy should be retained by the school office.

The contact information of the designated administrator-on-call must also be clearly listed in the folder, and all chaperones must be informed of who that administrator is and how to reach them in the event of an emergency.

During Trip Considerations

During the trip, all chaperones are expected to uphold the ACS Code of Conduct and adhere to all trip guidelines, supervision expectations, and safeguarding procedures outlined in this protocol. Chaperones serve as representatives of the school and are responsible for modeling professionalism, maintaining student safety, and supporting the trip leader in enforcing all behavioral and safety standards as outlined by school administration prior to the trip.

Accommodation Arrangements / Travel Documents

- **Passports / Emirates IDs:** All travel documents must be collected by the lead chaperone at the meeting point at the start of the trip. Chaperones must hold on to travel documents at all times during the trip, and only pass documents to students during check-in / security at the airport as required (collect passports right away after these checks).
- **Room Groupings:** All students will be roomed in pairs or larger groups whenever possible. Assigning a student to a single room will only occur under exceptional and approved circumstances, ensuring appropriate supervision is maintained. Students must be reminded that room assignments may not be changed.
- **Check-in/arrival:** Ensure passports/Emirates IDs are ready for check-in (if staying in a hotel). Chaperones must ensure students know which rooms coaches/chaperones are in for emergencies, and chaperones must have a list of all students' room numbers. Students should have at least one chaperone's phone number, and designated chaperones must have their phones on loud throughout each night. Chaperones must remind students to deadbolt their doors before going to sleep.
- **Chaperone proximity and supervision:** During the booking and room allocation process, every effort should be made to ensure intentional placement of rooms. Chaperone rooms should be located in close proximity to student rooms to facilitate effective supervision and ensure accessibility in case of an emergency.
- **Accommodation risk assessment:** A risk assessment of all accommodations must be completed prior to booking confirmation. This assessment should identify and address any potential health, safety, or safeguarding risks, including access to rooms, emergency exits, and general environmental conditions.

Chaperones Conduct

All ACS Faculty Code of Conduct & ACS Child Protection Guidelines remain in effect during overnight and off-campus trips. While some situational flexibility may be required, professional standards and safeguarding expectations must always be upheld. The following guidelines apply to all faculty, staff, and volunteers serving as chaperones:

- **Professional boundaries:** Chaperones must refrain from any unnecessary physical contact with students. Interactions should always be professional, respectful, and appropriate to the context.
- **One-on-one interactions:** Any one-on-one conversation or meeting with a student

must occur in a public or observable setting, such as a lobby, restaurant, or open common area. Another chaperone must be informed in advance of the interaction.

- Substance Use: Faculty, employees, and volunteers must not consume alcohol, drugs or use illegal substances at any time during the trip, regardless of whether they are considered “on duty” or not. Tobacco or nicotine products cannot be consumed in the sight of students.
- Electronic communication: Google Chat will be the only communication tool used between chaperones and students on trips. All trip-related communication should occur in group messages that include students and at least two chaperones, unless there are extenuating circumstances related to confidential or personal information.
- Child Protection Reporting: Any safeguarding or child protection concern that arises during a trip must be reported immediately to the trip leader, who will contact the relevant school administrator (divisional Principal or Athletics & Activities Director).
- Professional Appearance and Conduct: Chaperones serve as representatives of ACS. Professional behavior and modest, appropriate dress are expected at all times.

Free Time and Supervision

- Designated areas: Specific, clearly defined areas must be defined where students are allowed to spend their free time. These areas should be closely monitored and easily accessible to staff. Students should never leave the accommodation premises unless under direct supervision of a chaperone.
- Time limits: Clear time restrictions must be established to ensure students return to the group promptly. This helps maintain accountability, supervision, structure, and safety.
- Staying together: Students must stick together while traveling, in the accommodation or during free time. Students should be with at least one peer at all times.
- Age and maturity considerations: Free time policies should be adapted to the age and maturity of the students.
 - Younger students will require more structured activities and closer supervision.
 - Older students may have more flexibility, provided they demonstrate responsible behavior.
- Safety briefing: Before each free-time session, a safety briefing must be conducted to remind students of behavioral expectations, designated areas, buddy systems, and procedures on how to seek help and contact chaperone if needed.
- Socializing in hotel: Students should only socialize in the lobby of the hotel if supervised by a coach or chaperone.
- Swimming Pools: Students may swim only under active supervision of an ACS chaperone, and use must be approved by an ACS chaperone.
- Balconies: The use of balconies is discouraged, and chaperones must speak to students about the safe use of balconies.
- General conduct: Students are expected to maintain a clean and tidy room, and show respect for the accommodation, as well as for all other venues visited, by being courteous, polite and calm guests.
- Student phone use: Chaperones must establish clear and reasonable rules regarding phone use during the trip. Rules will depend on the students’ ages and the nature of the trip. Generally, student phone use on school trips should be minimal, with the goal being to encourage students to fully engage in the trip experience.

- Curfew: When possible, 10:00 p.m. should be the latest curfew set for students. Chaperones are able to set an earlier curfew time. The time must be clearly communicated to all students. At this time, all students must be in their assigned rooms, and may not, for any reason, leave their room until the morning. Chaperones must check that all students are accounted for and in their rooms before curfew. Chaperones should also check that students know what the plan is for the morning, and ask them if they are doing well. A further hallway check should be done right after curfew. Any curfew violations must be reported right away to the relevant administrator.

Emergency procedure

- Administering medicine:
 - o Before the trip, chaperones must review each student's medical information and consent details included in the Trip Permission Form.
 - o Parents may provide written consent allowing chaperones to administer over-the-counter medication such as ibuprofen (Advil), paracetamol (Panadol or Tylenol) for minor ailments (e.g., sprains, headaches, or menstrual cramps).
 - o Unless otherwise stated on the student's medical record, chaperones may administer this medicine from the school-issued medical kit
 - o No other medication can be administered without the authorization from a qualified nurse or medical professional.
- Serious medical emergencies:
 - o In the event of an accident or serious injury -
 - ◆ The nearest chaperone must remain with the student and immediately seek medical assistance.
 - ◆ If hospital care is necessary, the student will be transported to the nearest designated medical facility, preferably using school transport, unless contraindicated due to a possible neck or back injury.
 - ◆ A nurse or another chaperone will accompany the student and remain with them until a parent or guardian arrives.
 - ◆ The trip leader and administrator on call must be informed as soon as possible. The administrator responsible for the trip will be established prior to departure, and contact details will be shared. Other instances when the administrator must be contacted right away include students sneaking out of accommodation at nighttime, use of drugs or alcohol, major behavioral infractions such as fighting, bullying, vandalism, and theft.
 - ◆ The chaperone accompanying the student will contact the parents and guardians while en route to the hospital to provide an update.
 - ◆ Upon return, a school medical form must be completed and submitted to the health office and the divisional principal's office.
- Athletic trips: During athletic trips, a nurse or other healthcare provider is always available at the event venue. The host school is responsible for organizing transportation to the nearest local hospital, in coordination with ACS staff and the Athletics Director.

Duty of care

- Supervision during travel: During all travel segments, students must remain in pairs or groups under active supervision. A headcount must be completed each time the group

boards or exits a bus, train, or flight (including after security checks and at boarding gates).

- **Group Cohesion:** Students are required to remain with the designated group and chaperones at all times throughout the trip. No student may travel separately or leave the group unless prior arrangements have been made for them to travel with a parent or guardian, with written approval from school administration.
- **Duty of care:** The school's duty of care begins at the official departure point (e.g., school campus, airport, or meeting location) and concludes only when there is a physical handover of the student to a parent or guardian at the designated drop-off point.
- If a student cannot travel back to the UAE with the group, one ACS chaperone (preferably, same gender as student) must remain with the student until a parent arrives, or until the student is able to return to the UAE with the ACS chaperone. If a student must depart from the trip early, generally a parent will be asked to meet the student and travel back with the student. In exceptional circumstances, the ACS administrator in charge of the trip may request that an ACS chaperone accompanies the student back to the UAE.
- **End-of-trip supervision:** Students must never be left unsupervised at an off-campus drop-off location. If a parent or guardian is delayed or fails to collect their child, the student must return to campus under the supervision of a trip chaperone or administrator until proper handover can occur.

Post Trip

Incident and Emergency Reporting:

All chaperones must report any incident, accident, or emergency to the Director of Athletics & Activities or the relevant Divisional Principal as soon as possible upon return (or immediately during the trip, if urgent).

Trip Debrief:

A formal trip debrief meeting must be conducted in a timely manner following the trip. The Trip Leader will facilitate this meeting with all participating chaperones and, where appropriate, an administrator.

The purpose of the debrief is to reflect on and document in a provided trip debrief Google Form:

- Overall successes and highlights of the trip
- Logistical and procedural strengths and challenges
- Student behavior, engagement, and responsibility
- Major student concerns regarding participation on overnight school trips
- Communication effectiveness among staff, students, and families
- Suitability and performance of the venue, provider, or tour company
- Action points or recommendations for improving future trips

RELATED LINKS

[ACS Emergency Procedures and Crisis Response Manual.](#)
[Code of Conduct & Confidentiality](#)