

This document is intended to provide information to those who contract with Connections Education LLC dba Pearson Virtual Schools USA , Connections Academy, Connections Learning, or an affiliated program or school (collectively referred to as “PVS”) in regards to the reporting of abuse, neglect, or any safety issue of students within the program(s). If a Contractor is made aware, or suspects a student may be a victim of abuse or neglect, or sees signs of threats to a student’s physical or emotional safety, they should bring this to the attention of the Special Education Manager at the school and their point of contact or project manager within PVS. Each Contractor is expected to review this document, regardless of whether their contractual obligations require interaction with students.

## IDENTIFYING SUSPECTED ABUSE

Below are different types of abuse and signs or symptoms that may accompany each type.

- Cyberbullying-The Cyberbullying Research Center defines cyberbullying as “deliberate and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (from *Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard: Preventing and Responding to Cyberbullying*). Signs and symptoms of cyberbullying may be: unexpectedly stops using their device(s); appears nervous or jumpy when using their device(s) ; appears uneasy about going to school or outside in general ; appears to be angry, depressed, or frustrated after going online (including gaming); becomes abnormally withdrawn from usual friends and family members; shows increase or decrease in eating; seems regularly depressed ; makes passing statements about suicide or the meaninglessness of life; avoids discussions about what they are doing online; becomes unusually secretive, especially when it comes to online activities.
- Depression-Mental Health America describes depression as "a serious health problem that affects feelings, thoughts, and actions, and can appear as a physical illness. Depression is a mental disorder." Signs or symptoms of depression may be: feelings of sadness or emptiness; irritable or withdrawal from friends and activities; Sadness and hopelessness; Lack of enthusiasm, energy, or motivation; Anger and rage or overreaction to criticism; Poor self-esteem or guilt ; Indecision, lack of concentration, or forgetfulness; Restlessness and/or agitation.
- Emotional Abuse/Mental Injury-The Child Welfare Information Gateway defines emotional abuse as "a pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth." Signs or symptoms of emotional abuse/mental injury: Consistently talks poorly about themselves, putting themselves down, and questioning and not taking credit for their work; Displays perfectionist traits and/or expresses that their work is never good enough; Doesn't seem interested or eager to reveal accomplishments to their parents; Finds a way to speak negatively about others around them; Isn't receptive to praise; Is verbally abusive to others; Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile; Has attempted suicide.
- Neglect-According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway, neglect is the failure of a parent, guardian, or other caregiver to provide for a child’s basic needs. Symptoms or signs of neglect can be: Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance; Communicates frequent hunger or

lack of supplies; Lack of adult supervision; Discloses maltreatment; Shares having a lack of friends, possibly due to frequent moves, or being bullied for lack of hygiene; Communicates about not having clothes or basic needs met; Often shares being left home alone and with the responsibility to care for siblings; Complains of being tired all the time; Is frequently absent from school; Reports of medical needs not being met; Is habitually dirty and has severe body odor.

- Physical Abuse-The Child Welfare Information Gateway describes physical abuse as non-accidental physical injury, which can range from bruises to severe fractures or death. Physical abuse can be inflicted by a parent, caregiver, other person, or even self-inflicted. Signs of physical abuse may be: Reports frequent injuries or trips to the doctor and/or hospital; Has ongoing absences without proper documentation; Turns in writing samples or pictures depicting violence ; Comments about not wanting to be home alone; Directly communicates injury from caretaker/parent; Seems frightened of caretaker/parent; Behaves extremely in the following manners: hyperactive, disruptive, and aggressive, OR complacent, compliant, shy, withdrawn, or uncommunicative; Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes.
- Sexual Abuse-The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act defines sexual abuse as “the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation.” Signs or symptoms of sexual abuse could be: Expresses or displays difficulty in walking or sitting; Expresses verbally, or in writing, having nightmares or bedwetting; Uses more explicit language, usually sexually in nature; Reports she is pregnant or has contracted a venereal disease, especially if under the age of 14; Display change in behavior by becoming more withdrawn, bragging about aggressive interaction with family or friends, increased anxiety, or depression; Directly communicates sexual abuse; Writes, draw, plays, or dreams of sexual or frightening images.
- Suicide-According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide is "the death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of this behavior." Signs or symptoms include: Drastic changes in the way the student performs or behaves; Displays a persistent negative attitude or talks poorly about himself and everything going on; Makes statements such as “Nothing seems to matter”; Writings or artwork portray ideas of suicide or persistently negative events; Doesn’t respond to praise for accomplishments; Constantly talks about death; Speaks of being a bad person or feeling rotten inside; Gives away favorite or prized possessions; Direct and indirect suicide threats; Talks about being sad all the time and feels like there is no escape; Appears depressed, sullen, or sad most of the time; Experiences sudden happiness following depression; Withdraws from multiple friendships.

## UNDERSTANDING IMMINENT AND NON-IMMINENT DANGER

Once you understand the type of abuse or neglect a child may be suffering from, you then need to determine the seriousness of the situation in order to follow the proper protocol.

- Imminent Danger-PVS Contractors should follow reporting protocols for imminent danger if a student(s) or family member has an immediate risk to their personal safety.
- Non-Imminent Danger-PVS Contractors should follow reporting protocols for non-imminent danger if a student(s) or family member is not in immediate risk to their personal safety.

## REPORTING PROCEDURE

In the event that you recognize a sign or symptom of abuse or neglect, you should report your interaction and any additional information to your point of contact at the School and send a copy to the PVS contact in this contract on the communication.

If the student is in imminent danger, or is putting others in imminent danger:

- If the interaction is digital, keep the caller/student engaged in conversation (if applicable). The Contractor should attempt to keep the person calm and obtain the following information:
  - a. Phone number,
  - b. Address,
  - c. And any other information that will assist emergency services in locating them.
- If you are still engaged with the caller/student and cannot make an additional phone call simultaneously, text your Point of Contact (POC) at the school level. Text your POC the initials and student ID of the student you are working with and let them know you have a safety issue to report and you need emergency services contacted.
- If the Contractor faces the imminent danger in person, the Contractor should:
  - Call 911 either locally or in the city and state in which the situation is occurring.
  - Inform your point of contact, school principal, school counselor, assistant principal, or contact the local administrative assistant of the school/location to find a leadership team member.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> party provider should still call Child Protective Services if applicable to ensure the incident is reported firsthand.

If there is not a threat of imminent danger to the student or others:

- Contact your Point of Contact (POC). Due to the sensitive content, the communication should be marked “Confidential.”

*If you have concerns that an PVS employee or an employee at one of the partner or program schools is acting unethically or inappropriately toward a student, contact your point of contact, or HR Services immediately. If you are presented with a situation in which you are unsure of what actions to take, please reach out to your point of contact for further instruction.*