



TEXAS SCHOOL LEADERS GUIDE TO CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT, MISCONDUCT, AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION AND MANDATORY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS



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Introduction to Guide

School-aged children are vulnerable to various forms of abuse and neglect, including human trafficking and inappropriate conduct by school staff. Educators are among the most frequent professional reporters of child abuse, making their role critical in protecting students. It is essential for educators to identify, and report suspected child abuse, neglect, misconduct, and trafficking promptly and accurately.

This guide is designed to help school leaders implement state statutes related to child protection. It provides practical support for school boards, administrators, educators, and other school personnel in understanding their legal responsibilities.

Inside, you will find an overview of training requirements, reporting procedures, and policy and protocol obligations mandated by Texas law. By following these guidelines, school leaders can ensure compliance and foster a safe, supportive environment for all students.

Required Signage Posting on Campuses

Internal Sign Requirements:

[TEC §38.0042](#) and [19 TAC §103.1401 \(e-f\)](#) requires all public school campuses to post in at least one high-traffic area, in both English and Spanish, an 11x17 inch poster, at student eye-level, with information that includes the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Abuse hotline telephone number, instructions to call 911, and directions to use the www.txabusehotline.org. Signs should be placed in high traffic areas such as above water fountains, hallways, the cafeteria, counselor's office, library, gym, etc.)



TEA and CACTX have partnered to develop posters that districts may print and post accordingly:

- ◆ [TEA No Go Tell Poster- English](#)
- ◆ [TEA No Go Tell Poster- Spanish](#)

External Sign Requirements:

"No Human Trafficking" signage per [TEC §37.086](#), [19 TAC §103.1403](#) pertaining to the criminal offenses of human trafficking are available. TEA has three sample signs below that the LEA may use directly or as a template for local development.

No Human Trafficking Signage Sample Signs:

Each public school shall post warning signs in a conspicuous place reasonably likely to be viewed by all school employees and visitors.





Mandatory Reporting:

Important Update: New Child Abuse Reporting Timeline

As a result of Senate Bill 571, passed during the 89th Texas Legislative Session, there has been a critical amendment to Texas Family Code §261.101(b). This change directly impacts the timeline for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect. The required timeframe to report suspected child abuse has been reduced from 48 hours to 24 hours after first suspecting that a child has been abused or neglected.

How to report suspected child abuse, neglect or human trafficking:

- Emergency Situations** — Call 911 or local law enforcement immediately. Note: Local Education Agency (LEA) police departments are not considered local law enforcement for this purpose.
- Principal Reporting Requirement** — If a principal becomes aware of misconduct, they must report it to their superintendent within 48 hours of becoming aware.
- Superintendent Reporting Requirement** — If a superintendent becomes aware of misconduct, must submit a report through the TEA Misconduct Reporting Portal within 48 hours.
- Heightened Concern** — Call the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400.
- Suspicion of Abuse (No Imminent Danger)** — Submit an online report at Texas Abuse Hotline.
- Human Trafficking** — Report suspected human trafficking to DFPS at 1-800-252-5400 and local law enforcement, which includes the Department of Public Safety (DPS).

Important Note: Due to [Texas Family Code §261.104\(b\)\(1\)](#), DFPS can no longer accept anonymous child abuse reports; however, all reports remain confidential. Anonymous reports can still be made to local or state law enforcement.

Parent Notification Requirements:

Under Texas Education Code (TEC) § 22A.053, school boards and governing bodies must adopt a policy requiring written notification to the parent or guardian of a student who is alleged to have been involved in certain types of misconduct by an employee or service provider.

The written notice must include:

1. Confirmation that the alleged misconduct involved their child.
2. Whether the employee or service provider was terminated or resigned before the investigation was completed.
3. Whether a report was submitted to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) or the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC).

This requirement ensures transparency and builds trust. Parents have the right to know when their child may have been affected and what actions the school has taken. It reinforces the school's responsibility to communicate promptly and appropriately, especially when student safety is at stake.

Additionally, SB 12 (89(R)) amended §26.008(a)(2) to require school districts to notify a parent within **one school business day** after a school employee first suspects that a criminal offense has been committed against a student.

Important Exception:

School personnel **must not notify** a parent or guardian if that parent or guardian is suspected of being the perpetrator of the abuse, neglect, trafficking, or maltreatment. This safeguard is in place to protect the student and prevent any additional risk or harm that could result from informing the suspected individual.

TIP: When reporting child abuse to DFPS, the reporter must provide their name, telephone number, home or business address and profession.

State and National Hotlines and Reporting Resources

The hotlines listed below are not mandated, but helpful for reporting and acquiring resources to support LEAs and communities in addressing child abuse neglect, and human trafficking. These do not replace the mandatory reporting process noted above.

- ◆ **iWatchTexas** (DPS resource where you can report suspicious activities or behaviors)
 - ◊ Phone: 844-643-2251
 - ◊ Website: <http://www.iwatchtexas.org/> or download the free iWatchTexas app
- ◆ **National Human Trafficking Hotline:** (National hotline to help with identifying local resources)
 - ◊ Phone: 1-888-373-7888
 - ◊ Website: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/report-trafficking>
- ◆ **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children** (NCMEC) (National hotline to report missing children, online explicit content supports, and prevention and awareness education resources)
 - ◊ Phone: 1-800-843-5678
 - ◊ Website: Cyber Tipline at www.cybertipline.com

Mandatory Reporting: Educator Misconduct - [More information](#)



LEA Policies on Addressing Sexual Abuse, Maltreatment, and Child Abuse Reporting & Programs

IDENTIFYING AND REPORTING ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND OTHER MALTREATMENT

Sexual Abuse and Other Maltreatment of Children Policy

[TEC §38.0041](#) & [19 TAC §103.1401](#)

Each school district and open-enrollment charter school must establish a policy addressing sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and other maltreatment of children, which is to be incorporated into the district improvement plan. The policy must focus on raising awareness among staff, students, and parents, recognizing warning signs, implementing prevention techniques, providing guidance for victims seeking help, and outlining available counseling options. Additionally, this policy must be included in any handbook distributed to students and parents.

Child Abuse Reporting & Programs Policy

[TEC §38.004 & 19 TAC §103.1401](#)

Each school system must establish a policy for child abuse reporting and programs, requiring school employees, agents, or contractors to report suspected abuse or neglect within 48 hours to appropriate authorities such as law enforcement or child protective services. The policy must comply with [Texas Family Code §261](#) and [40 TAC §700](#), ensuring confidentiality, immunity provisions, cooperation with investigations, and prohibitions against interference. Additionally, policies must be distributed to school personnel at the start of each school year and incorporated into staff development sessions as determined by the board of trustees. ([19 TAC §103.1401 \(b\) \(1\)](#))

Annual Professional Development Policy

[TEC §21.4515](#)

School boards and charter school governing bodies must annually review clearinghouse training recommendations and adopt a policy that aligns with them. The policy must include the frequency of training and who will be trained. Any differences in the policy from the clearinghouse must be noted.

School Visitors Identified as Sex Offenders Policy

[TEC §38.022](#)

The board of trustees of a school district must establish a policy outlining the actions school administrators should take when a visitor is identified as a sex offender.

Electronic Communication Policy

[TEC §38.027](#)

A school district must establish a written policy governing electronic communications between school employees and students enrolled in the district.

Notice to Parent or Guardian about Educator Misconduct Policy

[TEC §21.0061](#)

School governing bodies must notify parents or guardians if an educator is alleged to have engaged in certain misconduct. This notice must include details about the allegation, the educator's employment status following the investigation, and whether a report was filed with the State Board for Educator Certification.

*For additional information on these policies, see "District Improvement Plan Guidance" <hyperlink to page>
For additional policies requirements see Appendix*



School Systems Training Requirements

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) have specific training requirements mandated in statute for child abuse, neglect, and human trafficking. These requirements are dependent upon the role a person has in the school system. These requirements ensure educators, school personnel, and educational leaders receive the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfill their responsibilities effectively. The following sections outline the training expectations based on different roles within the LEA (School Board Members, Superintendent, School Staff).

School Board Members

Every school board member must take training to learn how to recognize and report signs of child abuse, human trafficking, and other maltreatment. This training ensures they understand how to protect students and respond appropriately when they see warning signs. [TEC §11.159\(c\)\(2\)](#).

- ◆ **New Board Members:** Must take the one-hour training within the first 120 days in office
- ◆ **Existing Board Members:** Must receive one hour of training every two years.

Training can only be provided by the following:

- ◆ [Registered provider](#)
- ◆ [Authorized provider](#)
- ◆ [Lone Star Governance \(LSG\) coach](#)

Required Training Components:

- ▲ Overview of legal requirements for reporting
- ▲ Effective methods for recognizing signs
- ▲ Information on resources and organizations that offer victim assistance

Online training is allowed if a delivered by a registered provider, includes interactive learning activities with feedback, and allows interaction with the instructor.

For additional information on School Board Member training visit <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/school-boards/school-board-member-training>

Superintendent

Superintendents must complete at least 2.5 hours of training every five years on recognizing and reporting potential victims of sexual abuse, human trafficking, and other forms of child maltreatment as part of their continuing education requirements. [TEC §21.054 \(h\)](#)

Required Training Components:

- ▲ Identification of potential victims of sexual abuse, human trafficking, and other maltreatment of children
- ▲ Reporting of potential victims of sexual abuse, human trafficking, and other maltreatment of children

To find the list of approved providers, search [TEA-Approved CPE Providers List](#). Enter "Human Trafficking" on the search bar to find available trainings.

All Employees of School District or Open-Enrollment Charter School

Teachers, administrators, support staff and all others who are employed with a school district or open-enrollment charter school must receive training regarding child abuse, sex trafficking, and other forms of maltreatment. For new staff, training must be provided at the new employee orientation. ([TEC §38.0041](#) & [19 TAC §103.1401](#))

Required Training Components:

- ▲ Risk Factors
- ▲ Warning signs

- ▲ Internal procedures for seeking help for a child at risk
 - △ Referral process for mental health professional
- ▲ Techniques for reducing a child's risk
- ▲ Community organizations offering research-based programs for training and education of school staff, students, and parents

Information regarding this training must be included in the policy for reporting child abuse or neglect, including trafficking of a child.

The [Clearinghouse](#) recommends that this training be held annually or be job embedded or as part of a professional learning community. ([TEC §21.4515](#)) Statute does not provide a required minimum or maximum time of instruction for the training. However, all required components in [19 TAC §103.1401](#) must be addressed.

If a school district or charter school lacks the resources to provide the required training, it must collaborate with a community organization to offer the training at no cost.

School districts and open-enrollment charter schools must maintain the records of the training that includes the name of each staff member who participated in the training. [19 TAC §103.1401 \(d\) \(2\)](#)



Student Education:

Child Abuse Anti-Victimization (Prevention Education) Programs for Students:

According to [TEC §38.004 \(b\)](#) school districts shall provide child abuse anti-victimization programs in elementary and secondary schools (K-12) consisting of age-appropriate, research-based prevention designed to promote self-protection and prevent sexual abuse and trafficking.

Districts should refer back to their policy created for [TEC §38.0041\(b\) \(1\)](#) that addresses methods for increasing student awareness of issues regarding sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and other maltreatment of children.

- ◆ Schools are required to teach the [Health TEKS](#) relating to child abuse and sex trafficking. The content of the TEKS are dependent upon the grade level taught. For further information on these Health TEKS, visit: [Elementary](#), [Middle School](#), or [High School](#).
- ◆ Per [TEC §28.004 \(q-3\)\(q-4\)](#) the board approved curriculum related to the prevention of child abuse, family violence, dating violence, and sex trafficking must be:
 - △ Recommended by the [local school health advisory council](#),
 - △ Suitable for the subject and grade level of instruction, and
 - △ Reviewed by academic experts in the subject and grade level.
- ◆ Child Abuse, Dating Violence, Family Violence, and Sex Trafficking [FAQ](#) provides guidance on instruction and parental consent related to health education.



Reporting and Policy Training Requirements:

The chart below provides an overview of child abuse mandatory reporting requirements and related training topics for Superintendents, School Board members and Educators. Many of the requirements are the same; however, there are certain distinctions depending on the role, which are noted in the chart below.

REQUIREMENT	SUPERINTENDENTS	SCHOOL BOARDS	EDUCATORS
Require every school employee, agent, or contractor who has reasonable cause to believe child abuse or neglect to submit a written or oral report to Local Enforcement or Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) within 24 hours or less, as determined by the board, after learning of facts giving rise to the suspicion.			
Educators and other school employees may not delegate to or rely on another person to make the report.			
Educators and other school employees who have cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person shall immediately make a report as required by law.			
Educators and other school employees who have cause to believe the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect involves a person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child are required to report to the DFPS.			
Educators and other school employees have the right and responsibility to report suspected child abuse or neglect free of fear of retaliation.			
Educators and other school employees' report of child abuse or neglect is confidential and immune from civil or criminal liability as long as the report is made in good faith and without malice.			
A person having cause to believe that a person with a disability is in a state of abuse, neglect, or exploitation shall report the information immediately to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services DFPS.			
Local policies must include the current toll-free telephone number of DFPS, 1-800-252-5400.			
LEA policies may not require school personnel to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect to a school administrator prior to making a report to DFPS or law enforcement.			
LEA policies must provide for cooperation with law enforcement child abuse investigations without the consent of the child's parent, if necessary, including investigations by the DFPS.			<p>Educators may not create the policy but have a duty to implement the policy.</p>



Key Tips and Considerations:

Administrators and School Boards:

- ◆ Develop and clearly articulate LEA or school-wide policies.
- ◆ Ensure LEA policies incorporate trafficking of a child into the definition of child abuse.
- ◆ Develop protocols for identifying and reporting suspected abuse for school-aged children.
- ◆ Develop a procedure for reporting cases of sexual assault child abuse for suspected victims of human trafficking.
- ◆ DFPS or law enforcement may visit your campus during the course of an investigation. Avoid the use of public media, such as intercoms, to notify the appropriate staff or students.
- ◆ Establish a known, private location within your campus where both reporters and/or students can confidentially meet with DFPS or law enforcement.
- ◆ Ensure District Improvement Plan addresses sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children per [TEC §252\(9\)](#).

Educators:

Do:

- Remain calm.
- Believe the child.
- Allow the child to talk.
- Show interest and concern.
- Reassure and support the child's feelings.
- Act! It could save a child's life.

Do not:

- Panic or overreact.
- Press the child to talk.
- Promise anything you cannot control.
- Confront the offender.
- Blame or minimize the child's feelings.
- Overwhelm the child with questions or ask the child to repeat their outcry over and over to additional school personnel.



Additional Resources and Materials Available for School Staff Regarding Prevention and Awareness of Child Abuse including Trafficking of School-Aged Children

The TEA Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness website provides resources for educators and families related to child abuse including human trafficking of school-age children. The programs listed in this section are not a complete or exhaustive list of all programs available that LEAs could access.

- ◆ [Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas](#) (CACTX) and their network of children's advocacy centers (CACs) provide a safe, child-friendly environment that facilitates access to safety, justice, and healing for children impacted by crime. While access to a CAC response and services requires a referral from an investigatory partner, most CACs also provide community-based prevention education that is available to schools. For questions about available resources in your area, [contact your local CAC](#). CACTX also offers [community collateral](#) for parents and others that are available in English and Spanish.
- ◆ [LOVE146](#) provides [Internet Safety Tips](#) materials and resources available for educator use when discussing internet safety with students.
- ◆ [UnboundNow](#) provides free training resources for parents and caregivers, school nurses, educators, bus drivers, and students in English and Spanish. Additional resources about Human Trafficking can also be accessed at [Unbound: Human Trafficking 101](#) webpage.
- ◆ [Attorney General of Texas Human Trafficking](#) provides state training and resources. [Be the One in the Fight Against Human Trafficking](#) is a training video that uses actual cases prosecuted in Texas to educate viewers about the realities of this heinous crime and equip them with the tools to recognize red flags and respond appropriately.
- ◆ [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Human Trafficking](#) - general information on Human Trafficking and how to report.
- ◆ [US Department of Homeland Security: The Blue Campaign](#) is a national public awareness campaign designed to educate the public, law enforcement, and other industry partners to recognize the [indicators](#) of human trafficking, and how to appropriately respond to possible cases. [Awareness Videos | Homeland Security](#) including [Tools That Teach: What is Human Trafficking?](#) And [Youth Human Trafficking Scenario Animated Series](#)
- ◆ Awareness of signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect can be found on the [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services \(DFPS\) Recognizing the Signs of Child Abuse Webpage](#).
- ◆ DFPS offers guidance on [Reporting Suspected Abuse or Neglect of a Child: A Guide for Professionals](#) to assist professional reporters through online/hotline reporting and how to identify abuse and neglect. Videos and other resources are provided to assist professionals in navigating the DFPS system. For further training or questions, please contact the [CPS Community Engagement Specialist](#) in your area.
- ◆ [Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas](#) (CACTX) and their network of children's advocacy centers (CACs) provide a safe, child-friendly environment that facilitates access to safety, justice, and healing for children impacted by crime. While access to a CAC response and services requires a referral from an investigatory partner, most CACs also provide community-based prevention education that is available to schools. For questions about available resources in your area, [contact your local CAC](#). CACTX also offers [community collateral](#) for parents and others that are available in English and Spanish.
- ◆ [Monique Burk Foundation for Children](#) delivers programs dedicated to educating and protecting children and teens from bullying, abuse, and other forms of victimization. Their evidence-based and

evidence-informed prevention education initiatives serve children from Pre-K through grade 12, including after-school safety programming and resources tailored for youth athletes of all skill levels, from beginners to elite competitors.

- ◆ [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children - Child Sex Trafficking](#) works to prevent, identify, and respond to trafficking cases, encouraging survivor-informed, child-centered, and trauma-informed approaches. This resource provides an overview of child sex trafficking, along with risk factors, statistics and resources.
- ◆ [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children - Take It Down](#) is a service that offers a way to request the removal of online nude, partially nude, or sexually explicit images and videos that were taken before the age of 18. This initiative helps individuals regain control over their digital presence and protect their privacy.
- ◆ [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children-NetSmartz](#) is an online safety education program that provides age-appropriate resources to help children learn how to stay safe on the internet and in real life.
- ◆ [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children-KidSmartz](#) empowers children with practical strategies to recognize unsafe situations, make safe choices, and respond effectively to potential threats in both online and offline environments.
- ◆ [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) provides 24/7 confidential support and resources for victims and survivors of human trafficking when the hotline is called at 1-88-373-7888 or by text at *233733. One resource provided is the National Human Trafficking Referral Directory which is an online referral directory composed of anti-trafficking organizations and programs that offer emergency, transitional, or long-term services to victims and survivors of human trafficking as well as those that provide resources and opportunities in the anti-trafficking field.
- ◆ [A21Education](#) offers a comprehensive range of prevention and education resources, including guides and short coursework for children ages 3-12, a full K-12 curriculum, and supportive materials for parents and teachers. Additionally, it provides a specialized toolkit designed to equip frontline professionals across various sectors with the knowledge and skills to identify and assist victims of trafficking.
- ◆ [Project Protect Our Children](#) aims to stop child sex trafficking, exploitation, and abuse by engaging communities and offering prevention education, awareness, and empowerment. Training covers youth prevention, professional development, community outreach, and corporate responsibility.
- ◆ [Staff and Superintendent Abuse and Misconduct Reporting Requirements – TEA Learn](#)

District Leadership Implementation Checklist

This tool is to assist school personnel in the documentation and review of local policies and procedures in the implementation of the law and rule pertaining to child abuse and neglect including human trafficking. This tool will help identify the points of contact, required posting, and records retention in order to be compliant.

I. MANDATORY TRAINING

- ◆ New School Employee Training ([TEC §38.0041\(c\); 19 TAC §103.1401\(d\)](#))
 - ◊ When does it occur? July August January Other: _____
 - ◊ Where are the certificates retained?: _____
- ◆ Staff Development – Policy Review
 - ◊ When does it occur? (SBEC) _____

- ◆ School Board Training ([TEC §11.159\(c\)](#); [TAC §61.1\(b\)\(7\) -\(c\)\(4\)](#))
 - ◊ Who maintains this documentation? _____
- ◆ Superintendent Training ([TEC §21.054\(h\)](#); [TAC §232.11\(g\)\(2\)](#))
 - ◊ Who maintains this documentation? _____

II. PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE

- ◆ Annual review of district Child Abuse Policies and Procedures ([TEC §38.0041\(a\)](#); [19 TAC §103.1401](#))
 - ◊ Who brings the policies before the Board of Trustees reviews the reporting procedures?

 - ◊ When is this occurring? _____
 - ◊ Who is conducting the policy review? _____
 - ◊ Are there district and campus procedures for each policy?
 - District: yes no
 - Campus: yes no
- ◆ Include policy addressing sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and other maltreatment of children in Student and Parent Handbook ([TEC §38.0041\(a\)](#); [19 TAC §103.1401](#))
 - ◊ Are we using TASB document? yes no
 - ◊ Did we update it to reflect our district information? yes no
 - ◊ What were the updates to the handbook? _____
- ◆ Include information for how the district addresses child abuse in the District Improvement Plan (DIP) ([TEC §38.0041\(a\)](#))
 - ◊ Where is the information in the DIP? _____
- ◆ Referring high risk students? (Definition of high-risk students) ([TEC §38.0041\(a-1\)](#))
 - ◊ Do you have a referral process in place? yes no
 - ◊ Is it highlighted in the student and parent handbook? yes no
- ◆ Counseling options for impacted students ([TEC §38.0041](#))
 - ◊ What is the internal referral process?
 - ◊ What are the internal counseling supports?

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

- ◊ How does the district refer to external counseling supports?

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- ◊ Who are the external counseling options?

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- ◊ Provide age-appropriate student facing prevention education programs ([19 TAC §103.1401](#))

- What are the district approved programs?

K-2	
3-5	
6-8	
9-12	

- Who is providing it?

K-2	
3-5	
6-8	
9-12	

- When is the program delivered? How?

K-2	
3-5	
6-8	
9-12	

- Who has reviewed the materials and curriculum? _____
 - Has the School Health Advisory Committee reviewed them? yes no
 - Is the program aligned with requirements in the health TEKS? yes no
 - What is the parent notification and opt-in process?

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III. MISCONDUCT REPORTING PORTAL (MRP) ACCESS

- ◆ The superintendent of a school district or the director of an open-enrollment charter school must have access to the Misconduct Reporting Portal (MRP) to report educator misconduct to TEA and SBEC.
- ◆ It may take up to five (5) days to obtain access to the MRP and it's highly recommended to have at least two (2) individuals with access to the MRP.
- ◆ To request access, visit: [TEA Help Desk—Fingerprinting and Do Not Hire Registry](#)

IV. REQUIRED SIGN POSTING

- ◆ Child Abuse Hotline in High Traffic Areas (inside) [TEC §38.004\(a\); TEC §38.0042\(a\); 19 TAC §103.1401](#) - No Go Tell Posters [[English](#) or [Spanish](#)] or district approved poster.
 - ◊ Is it available in English and Spanish? yes no
 - ◊ Does it meet the size and posting requirements? yes no
 - ◊ Is the district using a TEA designed poster? yes no
 - ◊ Who is monitoring the posting of signage? _____
- ◆ Criminal Offenses of Human Trafficking (outside) ([TEC §37.086; 19 TAC §103.1401](#))
 - ◊ Is it available in English and Spanish? yes no
 - ◊ Does it meet the size and posting requirements? yes no
 - ◊ Is the district using a TEA designed poster? yes no
 - ◊ Who is monitoring the posting of signage? _____

Name of Completer: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

This should be kept on file with the district safety director/coordinator or compliance officer.

District Improvement Plan Guidance – Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness

Each school district and open-enrollment charter school must adopt and implement a policy addressing sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and other maltreatment of children, to be included in the district improvement plan. Annually, superintendents, with the assistance of the district-level committee, must evaluate and review the district improvement plan.

The goal of this guidance document is to support district staff and committees with understanding the requirements and providing planning support for addressing sexual abuse and other maltreatment in the LEA District Improvement Plan. The resource contains an overview of Legal Requirements, Required Components, Key Practices for Implementation and Questions for Consideration to spur district improvement planning related to child abuse prevention, awareness, and related requirements.

Legal Requirements	Required Components	Key Practices for Implementation	Questions for Consideration
<u>TEC §38.0041</u> <u>TAC §103.1401</u> LEA must have a policy in place addressing 'Sexual Abuse and Other Maltreatment of Children'	<p>The policy must address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Methods for increasing staff, student, and parent awareness of issues regarding sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and other maltreatment of children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include prevention techniques and knowledge of likely warning signs indicating that a child may be a victim of sexual abuse, sex trafficking, or other maltreatment » Actions that a child who is a victim of sexual abuse, sex trafficking, or other maltreatment should take to obtain assistance and intervention » Available counseling options for students affected by sexual abuse, sex trafficking, or other maltreatment <p>Must be included in any handbook that is given to students and parents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Outline the frequency of the required training per SBEC Clearinghouse » Provide for training for new employee orientation » Address how to communicate to students the process of asking/getting help » Provide for current and relevant information for referral processes/agency information for counseling and other treatment options (review and update annually) » Clarify, expectations for how employees make reports and how they are supported in the process. » Have clear processes for your LEA and campus staff on how communication and support for child welfare related matters are addressed. » Address, how concerns are handled for students in different grade levels, who may also be impacted (neighbor, family, friend, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » What prevention techniques have been shown to be effective? » Which prevention strategy is best for the district? » Who will be appointed to answer questions about the policy? » Is there an MOU with an outside agency that could provide services to students? » What is the referral process for students who are victims of abuse? » How is the referral process within your LEA communicated to parents/caregivers? » Is there a regular/annual planning process within your LEA and campuses to review and refine child welfare and mandatory reporting expectations and related protocols. » Does the policy align with the latest legislation and best practices?

Legal Requirements	Required Components	Key Practices for Implementation	Questions for Consideration
TEC §38.022 LEA must have policy for school visitors who are identified as sex offenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The board of trustees of a school district shall adopt a policy regarding the action to be taken by the administration of a school campus when a visitor is identified as a sex offender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Ensure access to database that stores information regarding visitors to the campus that can verify whether or not a visitor is a registered sex offender. Train front office staff on procedures for identifying and checking visitors before they enter areas of the school buildings accessible to students » Have a process to handle the situation of a visitor being a registered sex offender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Does each campus have a policy for visitors? » Is the office staff and any substitute staff familiar with the policy? » Is the policy reflected in practice that is understood and implemented by all staff?
TEC §38.027 LEA must have an Electronic Communication Policy concerning school employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » A school district shall adopt a written policy concerning electronic communications between a school employee and a student enrolled in the district. 	<p>Does the policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Clarify appropriate and inappropriate communication between school employees and students? » Include provisions designed to prevent improper electronic communications between a school employee and a student » Allow a school employee to elect to not disclose to students the employee's personal telephone number or email address » Include provisions instructing a school employee about the proper method for notifying appropriate local administrators about an incident in which a student engages in improper communications with the school employee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » What communication platforms can be used to facilitate appropriate communication between staff and students? » What procedures are in place for staff or students who improperly communicate? » How will communication standards be communicated to parents? » How will staff be informed and trained on communication policy?

Legal Requirements	Required Components	Key Practices for Implementation	Questions for Consideration
TEC §38.004 TAC §103.1401 LEA must adopt a policy regarding Child Abuse Reporting & Programs	<p>Every school employee, agent, or contractor who suspects a child has experienced abuse or neglect must submit a written or oral report to ONE of the following within 24 hours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » law enforcement agency, » Texas Department of Family and Protective Services*, » Local office of Child Protective Services » State agency that operates, licenses, certifies, or registers the facility in which the alleged child abuse or neglect occurred <p>* A report to DFPS is required if the alleged abuse or neglect involves a person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child.</p> <p>A notification to school personnel of the following statutes for the following:</p> <p>Texas Penal Code, §39.06; Texas Family Code, §261.109</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » the penalties for failure to submit a required report of child abuse or neglect & Chapter 249 of this title (relating to Disciplinary Proceedings, Sanctions, and Contested Cases) Texas Family Code, §261.302 and §261.303, » applicable prohibitions against interference with an investigation of a report of child abuse or neglect » prohibiting school officials from denying an investigator's request to interview a student at school and prohibiting school officials from requiring the presence of a parent or school administrator during an interview by an investigator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Review policy developed by TEA governing the reports of child abuse or neglect, including reports related to the trafficking of a child. » Ensure that the policy provides for the cooperation with law enforcement child abuse investigations without the consent of the child's parents if necessary, including investigations by the Department of Family and Protective Services. » Ensure that the policy requires each school district and open-enrollment charter school employee to report child abuse or neglect, including the trafficking of a child. » Periodically review TEA's website to review the list of links that provide information regarding the prevention of child abuse » Have knowledge of how to access the TEA developed training program on child abuse prevention to use for staff development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » How do I access the TEA policy » How to communicate to staff how to report and process to let administration know » Do front office staff and other pertinent staff understand the DFPS does not need parental consent to meet with the child? » Is there a process of when DFPS comes on campus? » Where do they meet? » How is the student taken from class? » Is there a process as to what happens after the child has met with DFPS? Do they go back to class or meet with counselor, etc?

Legal Requirements	Required Components	Key Practices for Implementation	Questions for Consideration
<p>(cont.)</p> <p>TEC §38.004</p> <p>TAC §103.1401</p> <p>LEA must adopt a policy regarding Child Abuse Reporting & Programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » immunity provisions applicable to a person who reports child abuse or neglect or otherwise assists an investigation in good faith confidentiality provision relating to reports of suspected child abuse or neglect » any disciplinary action that may result from noncompliance with the district's reporting policy and prohibition against using or threatening to use the refusal to consent to administration of a psychotropic drug to a child or to any other psychiatric or psychological testing or treatment of a child as the sole basis for making a report of neglect <p>The policy must be consistent with Texas Family Code 261 & 40 TAC 700</p> <p>The policy may not require that school personnel report suspicions of child abuse or neglect to a school administrator proper to making a report</p> <p>The policy must include the current toll-free telephone number of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services</p> <p>The policy must provide for cooperation with law enforcement child abuse investigations without the consent of the child's parent</p> <p>Policies must be distributed to all school personnel at the beginning of each school year and should be addressed in staff development at regular intervals as determined by the board of trustees.</p>		

Legal Requirements	Required Components	Key Practices for Implementation	Questions for Consideration
<p>TEC §38.0041(c)(1)</p> <p>TAC §103.1401</p> <p>LEA must implement Training for staff that addresses "Sexual Abuse and Other Maltreatment of Children"</p>	<p>The training must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Be in accordance with the policy adopted under SBEC clearinghouse (TEC §21.4515) » Be given as part of a new employee orientation to all new school district and open-enrollment charter school employees » Include the following to reduce the risk of a child becoming a victim of sexual abuse, sex trafficking, or other maltreatment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At risk factors • Warning signs • Internal procedures for seeking assistance for a child who is at risk including a referral to a school counselor, a social worker, or another mental health professional • Techniques for reducing risk. • A list of community organizations that have relevant existing research-based programs that are able to provide training or other education for school district or open-enrollment charter school staff members, students, and parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Make sure your processes are updated annually » Processes established for new employees regular training intervals » Are all staff (including bus drivers, custodians, support staff) trained and aware of policies and requirements? » Has training been reviewed to ensure updated information? » Develop a process for tracking and maintaining records and record retention » Ensure that processes include how new staff that begin mid-year receive the training. » Policies, procedures and training should be integrated into school safety practices » Mental health resources that could be leveraged » Alignment between admin and staff » Clear understanding of roles and procedures » Ensure you have an updated list of community organizations that is updated annually. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » How often should all-existing staff be trained? » Will the same training be provided annually or during regular training intervals? » Who reviews and vets trainings to ensure that it meets statutory requirements and is up-to-date? » How will this policy and training requirements be communicated to staff? » Who will provide mandatory training and ensure training occurs for all new school employees, as a part of new-employee on-boarding? » Are you familiar with the frequency of the required training per SBEC Clearinghouse? » Provide for training for new employee orientation » Does the training selected address the required components? » How will training records be maintained? » Is there a community organization that could provide no-cost training to the district? » If the chosen training does not include the required information about community organizations, how will that information be provided? » Does the education service center have someone who can train staff? » Will training be campus led or district-wide? » What is your process of measuring the impact of the training to ensure the training is effective and knowledge gained?

Legal Requirements	Required Components	Key Practices for Implementation	Questions for Consideration
TEC §38.004 (b) TAC §103.1401 LEA must provide a student facing child abuse anti-victimization program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Each school district shall provide child abuse anti-victimization programs in elementary and secondary schools » Content delivered in programs should be age appropriate » Program should be student-facing » Program must be research-based designed to promote self-protection and prevent sexual abuse and trafficking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Ensure you have a process to vet training to ensure that training is age-appropriate » Consider vetting process to include a team » Consider including the SHAC for review and recommendations » Is there a measure of impact of the training » Outside agencies can be contracted to provide program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Who will deliver the program? Campus based staff or outside agency? » How will parents be notified of program? » Will parents be allowed to review content or attend the presentation? » Should the program be presented to the SHAC before adopting » How often will the program be held and how long will it be? » What configuration of students will attend each session? » What are resources or outside agencies that can provide this training, if this option is chosen? » What are the procedures if a student discloses abuse during or after the presentation?
TEC §38.0042 LEA must post the Child Abuse Hotline and Telephone Number on signs in English and Spanish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » A sign must be posted that contains the toll-free telephone number for reporting child abuse or neglect » The sign must be in a public location that is clearly visible that is readily accessible to students » The sign must be in English and Spanish » The number must be the one operated by the Department of Family and Protective Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Visit TEA's website to find template for signage » Ensure that signs are printed in both languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » What available resources exist for printing of the signs? » Where is the best location for the signs? » What is the process of having more made when they age or are damaged?
TEC §37.086 TAC §103.1403 LEA must post Human Trafficking Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Each public school shall post warning signs of the increased penalties for trafficking of persons in a conspicuous place reasonable likely to be viewed by all school employees and visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The signage must include a description of the provisions of Section 20A.02(b-1) of the Penal Code outlining the penalties for the violation of that section. » Be in English and Spanish » Signs must be at least 8-1/2 x 11 includes in size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » How are these signs accessed? » What is the best location(s) to post signage » Process if signs become aged or damaged

Student, Parent, or Guardian Handbook Guidance Exemplar

Table of Contents Language

Child Abuse, Neglect, Trafficking, and Other Maltreatment of Children (All Grade Levels)

- ◆ Definitions of Abuse, Neglect, Trafficking, and Other Maltreatment of Children
- ◆ Warning Signs of Abuse (physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse.)
- ◆ Warning Signs of Trafficking
- ◆ Reporting and Responding to Abuse, Neglect, Trafficking, and Other Maltreatment of Children
- ◆ Further Resources on Abuse, Neglect, Trafficking, and Other Maltreatment of Children
- ◆ Reporting and Responding to School Staff Misconduct

Addressing, [TEC §38.0041](#) (Policies Addressing Child Abuse, Neglect, Trafficking, and Other Maltreatment of Children)

Handbook Language

Child Abuse, Neglect, School Staff Misconduct, Trafficking, and Other Maltreatment of Children (All Grade Levels)

The district has established a plan for addressing child abuse, neglect, school staff misconduct, trafficking, and other maltreatment of children, which may be initiated by contacting the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)/Child Protective Services (CPS). Trafficking includes both sex and labor trafficking.

Definition of Abuse, Neglect and Other Maltreatment of Children:

Child abuse in the Texas Family Code is defined as any conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare and a failure to reasonably prevent a child's abuse.

Neglect is defined as an act or failure to act by a person responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare evidencing the person's blatant disregard for the consequences of the act or failure to act that results in harm to the child or that creates an immediate danger to the child's physical health or safety.

Anyone who suspects that a child has been or may be abused or neglected has a legal responsibility, under state law, to report the suspected abuse or neglect to law enforcement or DFPS/CPS.



Possible Warning Signs of Child Abuse, Neglect, and Other Maltreatment of Children

Signs and/or symptoms of abuse and/or neglect may include the following:

Physical Abuse:

- ◆ Frequent injuries such as bruises, cuts, black eyes, or burns without adequate explanations
- ◆ Frequent complaints of pain without apparent injury
- ◆ Burns or bruises in unusual patterns that may indicate the use of an instrument or human bite; cigarette burns on any part of the body

- ◆ Lack of reaction to pain
- ◆ Extreme fear of going home or seeing parents or caregivers
- ◆ Injuries that appear after a child has not been seen for several days
- ◆ Unreasonable clothing that may hide injuries to arms or legs

Neglect:

- ◆ Obvious malnourishment
- ◆ Consistent concern for lack of personal hygiene that poses a health risk
- ◆ Stealing or begging for food
- ◆ Child unattended for long periods of time
- ◆ Unaddressed need for dental care or other medical attention

Sexual Abuse:

- ◆ Physical signs of sexually transmitted diseases
- ◆ Evidence of injury to the genital area
- ◆ Pregnancy in a young girl
- ◆ Difficulty in sitting or walking
- ◆ Extreme fear of being alone with adults of a certain sex
- ◆ Sexual comments, behaviors, or play beyond what is considered age-appropriate behavior
- ◆ Knowledge of sexual relations beyond what is expected for a child's age
- ◆ Sexual victimization of other children

Emotional Abuse:

- ◆ Over-compliance or low self-esteem caused by scapegoating or verbal abuse by caregivers
- ◆ Severe depression, anxiety, or aggression
- ◆ Lagging in physical, emotional, and intellectual development
- ◆ Caregiver who belittles the child, withholds love and seems unconcerned about the child's problems
- ◆ Significant changes to behavior, such as withdrawal or over-aggression
- ◆ Significant changes to weight, such as substantial weight gain or weight loss.

School Staff Misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- ◆ Inappropriate boundaries or communications with a student, including inappropriate relationships.
- ◆ Violating school or district communication policies, such as improper use of messaging apps or social media.
- ◆ Showing favoritism toward certain students in a way that compromises fairness or student well-being.
- ◆ Creating, using, or sharing inappropriate AI-generated images involving students or staff.
- ◆ Neglecting, abusing, or physically harming a student.
- ◆ Providing alcohol or drugs to a student.
- ◆ Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while on school property or during school activities.

- ◆ Possessing a weapon on school property or during school activities.
- ◆ Committing a felony.
- ◆ Engaging in fraudulent or deceptive practices involving the school system or SBEC.

Definition of Trafficking

Child trafficking of any sort is prohibited by the Penal Code. Child sex trafficking could include forcing a person, including a child, into sexual abuse, assault, indecency, prostitution, or pornography. Labor trafficking involves forcing a person, including a child, to engage in forced labor or services.

Traffickers are often trusted members of a child's community, such as friends, romantic partners, family members, mentors, and coaches, although traffickers frequently contact victims online.

Possible warning signs of sex trafficking in children include:

- ◆ Changes in school attendance, habits, friend groups, vocabulary, demeanor, and attitude;
- ◆ Sudden appearance of expensive items (for example, manicures, designer clothes, purses, technology);
- ◆ Tattoos or branding;
- ◆ Refillable gift cards;
- ◆ Frequent runaway episodes;
- ◆ Multiple phones or social media accounts;
- ◆ Provocative pictures posted online or stored on the phone;
- ◆ Unexplained injuries;
- ◆ Isolation from family, friends, and community; and
- ◆ Older boyfriends or girlfriends.



Additional warning signs of labor trafficking in children include:

- ◆ Being unpaid, paid very little, or paid only through tips;
- ◆ Being employed but not having a school-authorized work permit;
- ◆ Being employed and having a work permit but clearly working outside the permitted hours for students;
- ◆ Owing a large debt and being unable to pay it off;
- ◆ Not being allowed breaks at work or being subjected to excessively long work hours;
- ◆ Being overly concerned with pleasing an employer and/or deferring personal or educational decisions to a boss;
- ◆ Not being in control of his or her own money;
- ◆ Living with an employer or having an employer listed as a student's caregiver; and
- ◆ A desire to quit a job but not being allowed to do so.

REMINDERS FOR TEXAS SCHOOLS ON CHILD ABUSE REPORTING



In scenarios, where there is a suspicion of child abuse or neglect, **school personnel must report to DFPS to Law Enforcement.**



As mandated reporters, teachers and all school personnel are required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect. **Reports must be made immediately, and no later than 24 hours after initial suspicion** to the DFPS Child Abuse Hotline or law enforcement.



To ensure immediate action is taken, when making a DFPS report, please ensure that reports are made via DFPS Hotline phone 1-800-252-4200.

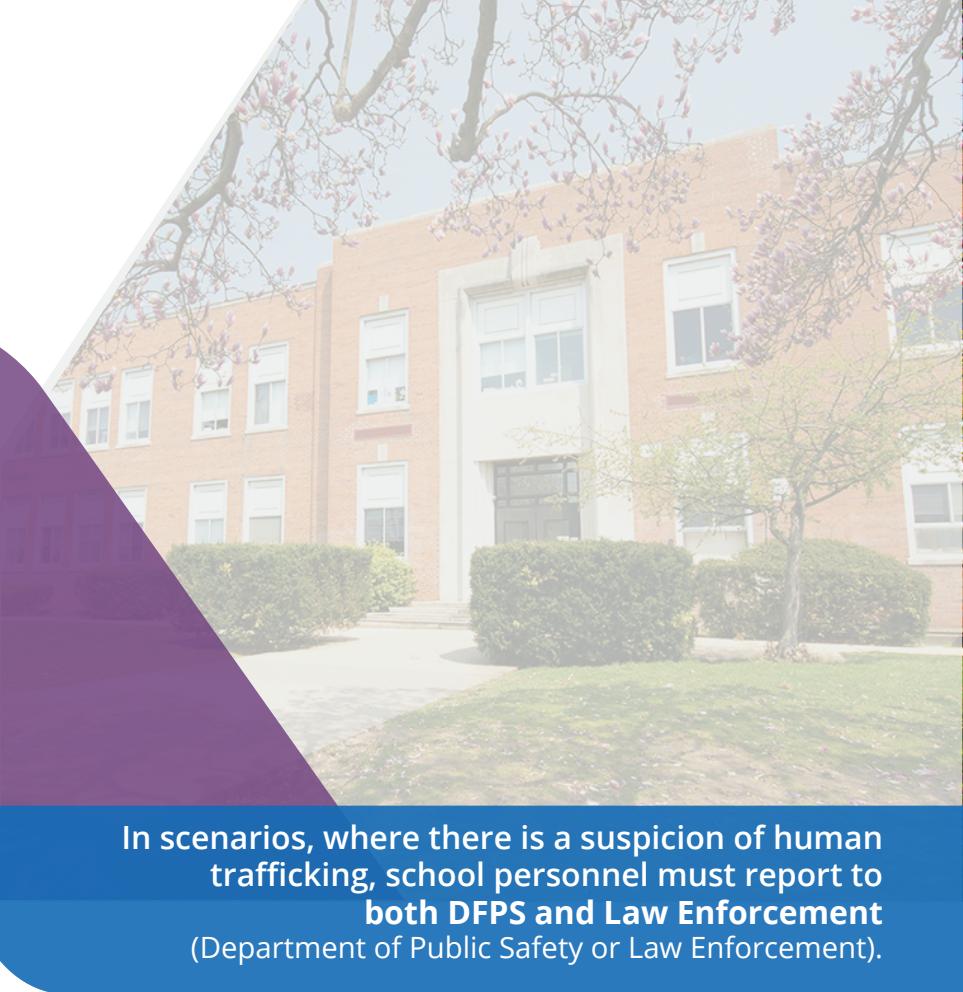


REMEMBER:

- ◆ Do not conduct your own investigation.
- ◆ A suspicion or outcry by the youth is enough to make a report.
- ◆ When making a report, let the DFPS intake specialist know you are a mandated reporter.
- ◆ Teachers and school employees **must not** delegate the duty to report to any other person.

- ◆ Call DFPS 800.252.5400 to report suspicion of child abuse or neglect confidentially.
- ◆ Report child abuse or neglect to DPS or law enforcement.
- ◆ Call 911 if you suspect a child or youth is in immediate danger.

REMINDERS FOR TEXAS SCHOOLS ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING REPORTING



In scenarios, where there is a suspicion of human trafficking, school personnel must report to **both DFPS and Law Enforcement** (Department of Public Safety or Law Enforcement).



Human Trafficking **is** abuse! As mandated reporters, teachers and all school personnel are required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect. **Reports must be made immediately, and no later than 24 hours after initial suspicion** to the DFPS Child Abuse Hotline or law enforcement.



This includes all forms of human trafficking including labor and sexual exploitation. To ensure immediate action is taken, when making a DFPS report, please ensure that reports are made via DFPS Hotline phone 1-800-252-5400, when reporting human trafficking or exploitation.



REMEMBER:

- ◆ Do not conduct your own investigation.
- ◆ A suspicion or outcry by the youth is enough to make a report.
- ◆ When making a report, let the DFPS intake specialist know you are a mandated reporter.
- ◆ Teachers and school employees **must not** delegate the duty to report to any other person.

- ◆ Call DFPS 800.252.5400 to report suspicion of child abuse or neglect confidentially.
- ◆ Report human trafficking to DPS or law enforcement.
- ◆ Call 911 if you suspect a child or youth is in immediate danger.

REMINDERS FOR TEXAS SCHOOLS ON SCHOOL STAFF MISCONDUCT REPORTING



School staff members have a professional and ethical duty to protect students from harmful or inappropriate behavior.



When there is suspicion of staff misconduct, including **certified and non-certified educators and service providers**, involving a student, **principals must report the misconduct within 48 hours of becoming aware to the superintendent and superintendents must report to the TEA and SBEC within 48 hours via the Mandatory Reporting Portal**.



In cases involving suspected child abuse or neglect call DFPS at 1-800-252-5400 to report.



REMEMBER:

- ◆ A superintendent required to submit a report of misconduct to TEA / SBEC commits a state jail felony if the superintendent fails to file a report with the intent to conceal a person's criminal record or alleged incident of misconduct.
- ◆ Do Not Hire Registry (DNHR)
 - ◆ Certified educators found guilty of misconduct may face disciplinary action up to revocation of their certificate and being placed on the DNHR.
 - ◆ Non-certified educators and service providers found guilty of misconduct may be placed on the DNHR.
 - ◆ Individuals may also be placed on the DNHR in a temporary status.



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