

Child Protection Handbook



COLEGIO BOLIVAR®
An Educational Community

Colegio Bolivar

Child Protection Handbook

Colegio Bolivar Board Policy on Child Protection

As a Colegio Bolivar community, we recognize the responsibility to safeguard the welfare of the children and young people in our care. Child abuse and neglect are violations of a child's human rights and are obstacles to the child's physical, emotional, and mental development. International school communities are particularly vulnerable to abuse because the nature of abuse often requires secrecy, isolation, and limited access to support resources. As a school community, we have a duty to take strong proactive measures to address this reality.

Colegio Bolivar is committed to promoting a safe and secure environment by protecting all children in our care. In order to achieve this goal, we will respond with a sense of urgency whenever a child is a victim or is at risk of becoming a victim. Educators have the opportunity to observe and interact with children over time and are in a unique position to identify children who may need help and protection. As such, educators have a professional and ethical obligation to identify children who are in need of help and protection, and the school must take the appropriate steps to ensure that the child and family avail themselves of the services needed to remedy any situation that constitutes child abuse or neglect.

All faculty and staff must report suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect. Reporting and follow up of all suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect will proceed in accordance with a regularly-updated *Colegio Bolivar Child Protection Policy*.

Colegio Bolivar endorses the Convention on the Rights of the Child and complies with local and international legal requirements. Colegio Bolivar seeks to be a safe haven for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives. Colegio Bolivar will maintain a Child Protection Policy, inform parents of key information related to child protection, teach students appropriate skills and knowledge related to abuse and neglect, provide annual training for all staff on their key responsibilities, and make every effort to implement strict hiring practices to ensure the safety of children. In the case of a staff member reported as an alleged offender, Colegio Bolivar will conduct a full investigation following a carefully determined course of due process.

By matriculating their child at Colegio Bolivar, parents agree to work in partnership with the school and abide by the policies adopted by the Board of Directors. The school-parent partnership is essential for providing the highest level of safety and care for our children.

Approved by the Board of Directors
Policy Adopted on August 2018

Introduction

As a Colegio Bolivar educational community, we recognize the responsibility to safeguard the welfare of the children and young people in our care. Child abuse and neglect are violations of a child's human rights and are obstacles to the child's physical, emotional, and mental development.* International school communities are particularly vulnerable to abuse because the nature of abuse requires secrecy, insularity, isolation, and limited access to support resources which are some of the characteristics of the international school community. It is our duty as a school community to proactively respond to this reality. This Child Protection Handbook will be shared with and reviewed by all staff and families to guide us in matters related to the health, safety, and care of every child.

This Colegio Bolivar Child Protection Policy is based on US¹ and Colombian² law as well as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child³ of which the US and Colombia are signatories. Two key articles of the Convention which guide our work related to protecting our children are:

Article 19 - Protection from abuse and neglect

The State shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programs for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims.

Article 34 - Sexual exploitation

The State shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.

Schools fill a special institutional role in society as protectors of children. Colegio Bolivar seeks to ensure that all children in our care are afforded a safe and secure environment in which to grow and develop. Educators, having the opportunity to observe and interact with children over time, are in a unique position to identify children who need help and protection. As such, educators have a professional and ethical obligation to identify children who are in need of help and protection and to take steps to ensure that the child and family avail themselves of the services needed to remedy any situation that constitutes child abuse or neglect.

All staff employed at Colegio Bolivar must report suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect whenever the staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse or neglect. It is also expected that any adult visitor or volunteer at Colegio Bolivar will report any suspected cases to the administration in a timely fashion. Reporting and

follow up of all suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect will proceed in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy.

In order to ensure all children at Colegio Bolivar are protected from abuse, exploitation, and neglect, the school administration has adopted child protection policies and procedures including:

- A clear Code of Honor and Disciplinary Policy which applies to all members of the Colegio Bolivar community
- Professional Boundaries and Social Media Usage policies outlining explicit expectations for healthy interactions between adults and children
- Shared definitions and understandings related to abuse, exploitation, and neglect
- Consistently applied procedures for reporting and responding to suspicions or allegations
- Training and education related to child protection for all students, families, and staff
- Diligent screening and selection of all new and existing staff, faculty, and volunteers
- Protocols and procedures for the implementation of the "Ruta de Atención Integral para la Convivencia Escolar" (procedures for the comprehensive assistance in matters related to violation of human, sexual and reproductive rights in boys and girls in educational environment.)

Child protection is a multi-faceted issue that involves dynamics of the child, the family, and the community. This Colegio Bolivar Child Protection Policy works to respond at all three levels: the child, the family, and the community.

The Community: At risk communities include those with limited law enforcement related to child protection, unusually high work stress placed on parents, acceptance of inappropriate behavior towards children (excessive corporal punishment), unusually high expectations placed on children to achieve. Colegio Bolivar strictly implements our CHILD PROTECTION POLICY, trains teachers and staff to recognize abuse, trains counselors to support children and families, trains and supports parents in protective behaviors, networks with community and health services for holistic referrals, and networks with local authorities.

The Family: At risk families include parents under stress, families with perceived less support and access to resources, socially isolated, unusually high expectations placed on their children, parental history on inappropriate discipline as children. Colegio Bolivar works with parents to understand appropriate discipline, networks with community and health services, and teaches parents child protection practices.

The Child: At risk children include those with difficult temperament, defiance, health issues, social or academic difficulties, and those unaware of their rights to protection.

Colegio Bolivar promotes respect, study and social skills, teaches right to protection, healthy relationships, assertiveness and use of support systems.

Definitions

Neglect

The action of not taking proper care of someone. This includes failure to provide food, shelter, appropriate supervision and hygiene, medical care, or psychological treatment for a child.

Neglect may be physical (e.g., failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision—this would include failure to provide proper adult guardianship such as leaving children unsupervised at home for any extended period of time), medical (e.g., failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment), and psychological (e.g., a pattern of actions, such as: inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting minors to consume alcohol or other drugs. Specific examples may include verbal humiliation, refusing to acknowledge presence of child, invasion of privacy for no specific reason, violent threats, etc.)

When a parent leaves the child for an extended time, a guardian should be appointed, and advance notice must be given to the principal and counselor.

Possible Indicators of Neglect

- Child is unwashed or hungry
- Low academic performance
- Parents do not respond to repeated communications from the school
- Child does not want to go home
- Signs of depression
- Both parents or legal guardians are absent from Cali for any period of 24 hours or greater, without appropriate provision made for child's care, and a temporary guardian named
- Parents cannot be reached in the case of emergency.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is inflicting physical injury on a child by other than accidental means or creating a substantial risk of physical harm to a child's bodily functioning. It also includes committing acts that are cruel or inhumane regardless of observable injury. Such acts may include, but are not limited to, instances of extreme discipline demonstrating a disregard of a child's pain and/or mental suffering. Physical abuse is also assaulting or criminally mistreating a child, engaging in actions or

omissions resulting in injury, or creating a substantial risk to the physical or mental health or development of a child. Failure to take reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any of the above would also fall under the category of physical abuse.

Possible Indicators of Physical Abuse

- Unexplained bruises and welts on any part of the body
- Bruises of different ages (various colors)
- Injuries reflecting shape of article used (electric cord, belt, buckle, ping pong paddle, hand)
- Injuries that regularly appear after absence or vacation
- Unexplained burns, especially to soles, palms, back, or buttocks
- Burns with a pattern from an electric burner, iron, or cigarette
- Rope burns on arms, legs, neck, or torso
- Injuries inconsistent with information offered by the child
- Immersion burns with a distinct boundary line
- Unexplained laceration, abrasions, or fractures

Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence

Undesired sexual behavior by one person upon another. This includes both contact and non-contact forms. In this context, Colombian law defines sexual violence as any act or behavior of sexual content, exercised over a child or an adolescent, using force or any other type of physical, psychological or emotional coercion, taking advantage of conditions of helplessness, inequality and relations of power between the victim and the aggressor.⁴

Contact action involves intentionally touching (either directly or through clothing) the genitals, anus, or breasts of a child other than for hygiene or childcare purposes or forcing the child to touch the adult in this manner. Non-contact sexual abuse includes making the child listen to or engage in inappropriate sexual talk or view sexually explicit materials.

Possible Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Sexual knowledge, behavior, or use of language not appropriate to age level
- Unusual interpersonal relationship patterns
- Venereal disease in a child of any age
- Evidence of physical trauma or bleeding in the oral, genital, or anal areas
- Difficulty in walking or sitting

- Refusing to change into PE clothes, fear of bathroom
- Child running away from home and not giving any specific complain
- Not wanting to be alone with an individual
- Pregnancy
- Extremely protective parenting

Sexual Abuse and Grooming

- Sexual abuse has some different characteristics of child abuse that warrant special attention. While physical abuse is often the result of immediate stress and not usually planned, sexual abuse requires planning with results that are more insidious. The planning, referred to as “grooming,” often results in victims accepting the blame, responsibility, guilt and shame for the sexual behavior of the offender. Sexual abuse requires far more secrecy than other forms of child abuse, so is more difficult to report.
- Many victims, through the process of grooming, are taught that the sex is a form of love, so tend to love their offender and often present as happy and well-adjusted children with no negative symptoms because of their perception of being loved.

- Working with the sexual offender cannot be done by school counselors.

Emotional Abuse

Any pattern of behavior that impairs the child’s emotional development, sense of self-worth, or self-esteem such as constant criticism, threats, verbal rejection, name-calling, insults, or put-downs on a regular basis. The non-verbal patterns of behavior can include isolation, ignoring, or rejection on a regular basis.

Possible Indicators of Emotional Abuse

- Speech disorders
- Substance abuse
- Sucking, rocking, biting or head banging
- Antisocial or destructive behaviors
- Sleep disorders
- Passive or aggressive behaviors

Reporting

Procedures for Reporting Suspected Cases of Abuse

Where there is a cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, it is the responsibility of the staff or any community member to report his or her suspicions to the Counselor of their section and/or to the Principal. In all cases, the Child Protection Officer which is the Head of the Counseling Department and the section Principal will be notified, or if there is no clear evidence, the case may be closed at any time. It is the responsibility of the principal to inform the Director of the suspected case of child abuse or neglect.

In cases of sexual abuse or sexual violence, Colegio Bolivar staff must follow the procedures set forth in the “*Ruta de Atención Integral para la Convivencia Escolar*” (procedures for the comprehensive assistance in matters related to social harmony in educational environments) which is part of Colegio Bolivar’s internal rules (“*Manual de Convivencia*”), and must also comply with Law 1146 of 2007, which sets forth the obligation to report before competent authorities any conduct or indication of sexual violence or sexual abuse against children and adolescents.

Confidentiality

- Adults should never guarantee confidentiality to anyone making a report nor should they agree to keep a secret which may endanger the health or safety of themselves or someone else.
- Individuals reporting suspected abuse or neglect as well as school personnel involved must not discuss

the case beyond the steps outlined in this policy (administrators or counselors).

- Individuals involved will be informed of relevant information regarding child protection on a “need to know basis” only. Any information shared in this way must be held with strict confidentiality.

All Colegio Bolivar staff, faculty, and administrators are mandated to report any suspicion of abuse and neglect. All reports of abuse and neglect must be made to the section counselor as soon as possible for immediate response.

Students, parents, or visitors with any suspicion of abuse or neglect are expected to report to a counselor or administrator as soon as possible.

Step 1 - Receiving a Report & Gathering Initial Information

The Counselor will take initial steps to gather information regarding the reported incident. In all cases, follow up activities will be conducted in a manner which ensures that information is documented factually, and that strict confidentiality is maintained.

The following procedure will be used:

1. Discussions between the child and counselor in order to gain more information.
2. Report status of the case to the Child Protection Officer and the Principal.
3. Observations of the child as necessary by the teacher, CB doctor, counselor, and/or administrator.

4. Interview staff members as necessary and document information relative to the case.
5. Consult with school personnel to review the child's history in the school as necessary.
6. Report status of case to the Director.
7. Determine the course of follow-up actions which may include:
 - a. Closing the case
 - b. Further internal investigation
 - c. Initiate external investigation (consultants, legal counsel, law enforcement, etc.)

If the abuse or neglect allegation involves a staff or faculty member, the school administration will follow policies and procedures to ensure child safety and ethical professional behavior. Actions taken may include:

- Immediate administrative leave
- Full internal or external investigation
- Involvement of law enforcement
- Disciplinary proceedings which may result in termination of the contract

Step 2 - After Initial Investigation

Based on acquired information, a plan of action will be developed to assist the child and family.

1. Actions that **may** take place are:
 - Discussions between the child and counselor in order to gain more information. Depending upon the age of the child, these discussions may include drawing pictures and playing with dolls to elicit more information as to what may have occurred.
 - Further in-class observations of the child by the teacher, counselor, or administrator.
 - Meetings with the family to present the school's concerns.
 - Consultation with other divisional counselors or knowledgeable Colegio Bolivar staff.
 - Referral of the student and family to external professional counseling.
 - Consultation with the school's or another attorney.
 - Informal consultation with local authorities.
 - Referral to the Colegio Bolivar Comité de Convivencia Escolar.
2. Report status of case to the Principal.
3. Report status of case to the Director.
4. Determine the course of follow-up actions which may include:
 - a. Closing the case
 - b. Further internal investigation
 - c. Initiate external investigation (consultants, legal counsel, law enforcement, etc.)

Step 3 - Follow-up

1. Subsequent to a reported and/or substantiated case of child abuse or neglect the Principal and counselor will collaborate to create a follow-up plan which may include:

- maintaining contact with the child and family to provide support and guidance as appropriate.
 - providing the child's teachers and the principal with ongoing support.
 - providing resource materials and strategies for teacher use.
 - maintaining contact with outside therapists to update the progress of the child in school.
2. Report status of case to the Director.
 3. Determine the course of follow-up actions which may include:
 - Closing the case
 - Further follow-up warranted

All documentation of the investigation will be kept in the counselor's confidential records file. Records sent to transferring schools may include notice that there is a confidential file for the child. Colegio Bolivar will make every attempt to share information to protect the child.

Most cases of suspected abuse or neglect will be handled by school counselors, such as those involving:

- 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.

Some cases will be referred to outside resources, for example:

- Mental health issues such as depression, psychosis, dissociation, suicide ideation.

Cases reported for investigation and outside resources:

- Severe and ongoing physical abuse or neglect.
- Sexual abuse and incest.

In extreme cases when families do not stop the abuse or concerns remain about the safety of the child, reports could be made to:

- The employer.
- The home-of-record welfare office.
- Local agencies (e.g. Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar-ICBF)

Colegio Bolivar remains committed to promoting a safe and secure environment by protecting all children in our care. Based on this commitment, Colegio Bolivar will maintain this Child Protection Policy, will inform parents of key information related to child protection, will teach students appropriate skills and knowledge related to abuse and neglect, will provide annual training for all staff on key responsibilities, and will make every effort to implement strict hiring practices to ensure the safety of children.

¹ US Federal Child Protection Laws: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/majorfedlegis.pdf>

² Ley Colombiana 1098: http://www.secretariassenado.gov.co/senado/basedoc/ley_1098_2006.html

³ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: <https://www.crin.org/en/home/rights/convention/text-convention>

⁴ Article 2, Law 1146 of 2007.



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