

El Colegio de Panamá

Child Protection Manual



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El Colegio de Panamá

El Colegio de Panamá is an educational institution founded in Panama City in 2007 and is located in Costa Sur. El Colegio de Panamá was born out of the need for an educational center with an innovative and transformative vision of learning.

The school promotes meaningful learning, the acquisition of skills, values, and knowledge that prepare our students to face the challenges of the future. Additionally, the teaching-learning process is designed to serve students with special educational needs (SEN) on equal terms with other students.

Mission

To encourage in the student the development of skills, abilities, and values that provoke meaningful learning and the acquisition of knowledge and attributes that promote the integral growth of the student.

Vision

A student population that achieves integral growth through the development of all the skills, abilities, and values that make them citizens capable of contributing to society.

Definition of Learning

El Colegio de Panamá is a bilingual school that promotes the acquisition of skills, knowledge and values that ensure integral success.

These are immersed in the school's main principles: **to value, to learn, and to grow**, which directly influence the student's character, competencies, and cognitive abilities development and ownership.

Introduction

It is the duty and commitment of El Colegio de Panamá to develop, in favor of minor students, an internal administrative system that complies with the regulations and laws relating to the protection of children through prevention and intervention in relation to situations of violence and abuse to the minor.

In order to guarantee the normal development of the teaching-learning process in a climate of order and stability. El Colegio de Panamá expects that teachers and collaborators report any conduct or indication of domestic violence or child abuse as a matter of urgency to the Child Protection Leader (Psychopedagogical Deputy Director) at ECP, who will be responsible for evaluating whether the conduct or evidence constitutes inappropriate behavior.

El Colegio de Panamá also expects students and parents to inform the Child Protection Leader (Psychopedagogical Deputy Director) of any conduct or evidence that may involve child abuse, violence, or any of the aforementioned risk situations towards a minor in our community.

This manual has been created with the purpose of providing information regarding the problem of violence against minors, existing laws, and prevention policies and regulations of our school in order to minimize the risk of abuse against minors in our learning community.

El Colegio de Panamá is committed to ensuring the well-being of its learning community, mainly of our children and their families, through compliance with national and international laws and internal protocols that govern practices that guarantee an environment of protection and security for all. Counting on suitable personnel, trained to prevent and respond to any situation that may represent a risk to the safety of our children. These personnel are recruited through a rigorous selection process in order to guarantee this assurance.

Our practices obey Panamanian legislation regarding the protection of children and adolescents and the obligation of all caregivers and guardians to report cases where there is evidence of potential risk.

El Colegio de Panamá is committed to communicating and training the entire ECP community: students, parents, teachers, directors, external companies that provide services, and volunteers; in the aspects concerning this policy to guarantee the fulfillment of the objectives and the improvement of the processes that contribute to the safety and protection.


Marta Lewis de Cardoze
Directora

Principles of Child Protection

Child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and should be reflected in all the school's policies, practices, and activities.

All ECP's policies, practices and activities will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare:

The school will:

- Recognize that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations.
- Fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters.
- Adopt safe practices to minimize the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave them open to accusations of abuse or neglect.
- Develop a practice of openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in the education of their children; and
- Fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

Child's Rights

Anyone under the age of 18 is legally considered to be a child according to the Panamanian law.

- All children have rights. No one can take away a child's right to be safe.
- All children have a voice.
- All children have the right to say "no" if any person tries to do something to them which they feel is wrong.
- All children have the right to be supported against bullies.
- All children must feel they can tell an adult of any incident that frightens or confuses them or makes them unhappy.
- All children must know that if they go to an adult for help, they will be listened to seriously and supported.
- All children have the right to be treated with respect and to be safeguarded from harm.

Scope

El Colegio de Panamá has an ethical and professional obligation to prevent and respond to child abuse or neglect in its learning community. All members of our educational community, especially our children from pre-kindergarten to twelfth grade, have the right to an education in a safe environment in which they can develop in an integral way

For this reason, prevention and a timely and pertinent approach are required in the face of any situation that could affect them physically, socially, emotionally, or intellectually.

Child Protection Team Members

Principal

T. Marta Lewis de Cardoze

Child Protection Leader (CPL)

T. Elicia Jiménez

Specialist teachers:

- T. Susana Antón
- T. María Alejandra Palacios
- T. Idalides Soo
- T. Elizabeth Navarro
- T. Cristina Rodríguez

Actors or interested parties who must abide by this policy.

- Students from El Colegio de Panamá (Preschool, Elementary School and Highschool)
- Parents from El Colegio de Panamá
- Teachers and staff from El Colegio de Panamá
- Consultants, volunteers, subcontractors

Training and Awareness

El Colegio de Panamá has committed to train all the representatives and members of these four pillars of our educational community.

The aim of this policy is to promote good practice by providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of El Colegio de Panamá, and to allow all staff to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

1st

General instruction

of Child Protection is done during the weeks of professional development for all educators and non-teaching personnel, before the beginning of classes.

-
- At the beginning of the year
 - During Professional Development (P.D) period.
 - For teaching non-teaching personnel. They must sign up a record of meeting document.

2nd

Review the policy

is planned to be done in the beginning of the third bimester (second half of the year).

-
- Reviewing of the Policy at the beginning of the third bimester (during August)
 - School staff must sign up a record of meeting document.

3rd

New staff

that is hired after the year has begun, receive the instruction in a separate scheduled meeting.

-
- New staff hired after the year has begun, and before the period of review of the policy, will receive the instruction in a separate scheduled meeting.
 - The meeting will be held during the first 2 weeks of starting the position. They must sign a record of meeting document.

Students
are informed about the Child Protection policy during SEL classes.

- Informed about the Child Protection Policy during SEL classes.
- Guided by the Special Teacher.

All parents
receive the Child Protection Handbook at the beginning of the year and must sign a document upon receipt.

- Receive the Child Protection Handbook at the beginning of the year and must sign a document upon receipt.



New admitted students
will receive the information in a separate schedule meeting.

- They will receive the information in a schedule meeting with the specialist teacher.
- During the first 2 weeks of class.

Consultants, volunteers, and subcontractors
such as bus drivers and cafeteria employees, coaches, and security guards, participate in a training session before school begins. New staff receive the instruction in a separate scheduled meeting.

- Bus drivers, cafeteria employees, coaches, security guards, participate in a training session before school begins.
- New staff receive the instruction in a separate scheduled meeting.

Communications

All parents will receive the Child Protection Handbook at the beginning of the year via email and must sign a document upon receipt.

The students will receive the information during SEL classes. With the support of the specialist teachers, the students will understand the purpose of this document. The parents will get a communication during the weeks before the SEL class, notifying that we are going to explain our students about this policy.

At the beginning of the year our teachers and non-teaching staff will receive an invitation to our Child Protection Policy meeting and will sign a record of meeting document.

Glossary of Terms

- **Age of Consent:** The age of consent is 18 years. It is a criminal offence to engage or attempt to engage in a sexual act with a child under 18 years of age.
- **Child:** A person who has not reached the age of 18 years of age and, in the absence of positive evidence as to age, means a person who is apparently under 18 years of age.
- **Child Abuse:** Any physical, sexual, and/or psychological maltreatment or neglect of a child or children, especially by a parent or a caregiver due to actions or omissions on the part of their parents, guardians, managers, officials, or institutions responsible for their care or attention.
- **Child Protection:** A set of rules, which limits access to and restricts collection of certain types of information. In the current context, all information relating to the child needs to be kept in a secure place. Any access needs to be kept to minimum, only for the “required for work” basis. Disclosure of sensitive information can be made only in the best interests of the child, such as suspicions of abuse, harassment, or personal issues. ECP aims to prevent potential harm to the child, such as malicious activities undermining the privacy of the child’s life, the child’s identity and/or well-being.
- **Child Protection Concern:** A concern about the wellbeing of a child based on the observation of indicators or information that may lead to a concern for:
 - The care of the child.
 - The physical, emotional, psychological, and educational development of the child.
 - The physical, emotional, and psychological health of the child; and the safety of the child.
- **Child Protection Leader (CPL):** The nominated child protection lead is responsible for making sure that safeguarding records are kept securely according to the organization’s safeguarding policies and procedures. They also report to the organization’s board or management committee about safeguarding issues.
- **Confidentiality:** The protection of personal, private, and sensitive information. The internal code of conduct and the Code of Ethics reinforce the importance of protecting an individual’s privacy.
- **Educators:** Educators are defined as the school’s agents who are in constant direct contact with the child and who implement the curriculum. They consist of teachers, teacher aids and supervisors.

- **Emotional and Psychological Abuse:** A pattern of behavior by parents or caregivers that can seriously interfere with a child's cognitive, emotional, psychological, or social development. Is a form of abuse characterized by a person subjecting or exposing another person to a behavior that may result in psychological trauma.

They can manifest both in isolated incidents and in repeated neglect by a parent or caregiver, who keeps the child in an environment that is inappropriate for their development and lacks support.

Included in this category are movement restrictions, continued contempt, blaming, threats, acts of terror, discrimination or ridicule, and other non-physical variants of rejection or hostile treatment.

- **Front line responders:** Properly trained and qualified staff to address child risk situations.

- **Harassment or Bullying:** Systematic action or omission that affects the dignity of another person.

In the educational field, it consists of threats, intimidation, humiliation, teasing, physical abuse, discrimination against people with disabilities, or any type of discrimination based or not on the sex of the victim.

Any form of abuse that occurs between students on a recurring basis, over a considerable period and that causes a pain to the victims.

- **Mandatory reporter:** All teachers, staff, nurses, paramedic, specialists' teachers, who form a belief that a child is or has been the subject of sexual abuse during their work, are mandatory reporters.
- **Negligence or Inattention:** It covers both isolated incidents and the repeated neglect by a parent or other family member (when they can offer it) with respect to the development and well-being of the child, in one or more of the following aspects: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, home, and safe living conditions.

- **Non-teaching staff:** Include all employees of ECP, excluding teachers, teacher aids and supervisors who are in constant direct contact with the child.
- **Parent/Carer:** The person acting as the legal guardian and who has the child in his or her care and protection, providing physical, emotional, and moral support to the minor.
- **Prevention:** Strategies that promote self-management, emotional awareness and interpersonal problem-solving skills that reduce risk factors and promote protective factors to ensure the wellbeing of children and young people.
- **Protective behaviors:** A personal safety program designed to equip children with the knowledge and skills to act in ways that reduce the likelihood of abuse occurring and help them to report abuse and to seek help if abuse occurs.
- **Psychoactive Substances:** A chemical agent that affects how the brain works and causes changes or alterations in mood, awareness, thoughts, feelings, or behavior.
- **Physical Violence (or Physical Abuse):** Deliberate use of physical force against a child in a way that causes, or is very likely to cause, harm to the health, survival, development, or dignity of the child. This includes hitting, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, strangling, burning, poisoning, and suffocation.

Much of the violence against children in the home serves the purpose of punishing the child.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Refers to situations in which a child is involved or used in sexual activities that he does not fully understand, in which he cannot knowingly consent or for which he is not sufficiently developed, or that transgress laws or social taboos.

Children can be the object of sexual abuse by adults or other children who, due to their age or stage of development, are in a position of responsibility, trust, or power in relation to their victim.
- **Suicidal Risk:** Exposure or danger of death that may be caused by self-inflicted harmful behavior with any intention to die because of the behavior.

What is Child Protection?

How does education promote child protection?

There are many ways in which education can help protect children. For example, schools should be a place where children feel free to communicate that they are in trouble.

Teachers should also be able to recognize abuse and respond to it in a sensitive manner.

The school should provide protection following:

Physical Protection

- Provides safe places for learning and play
- Reaches out to all children, without discrimination
- Offers means to identify children with special needs, such as experience of family separation.
- Prepares children for appropriate work which is not harmful or threatening their health or security.

Cognitive Protection

- Helps children to develop and keep the academic skills of basic education (i.e., literacy and numeracy)
- Gives children knowledge of human rights and awareness on what behavior is acceptable and what not.
- Encourages young people to analyze information, express opinions, and act on chosen issues.

Psychological Protection

- Gives children an identity as students
- Provides a venue for expression through play and cultural activities such as sports, music, drama, and art.
- Facilitates social integration of vulnerable children such as separated children.
- Supports social networks and community interaction for children and their families
- Provides a daily routine.

Indicators to consider in child protection

Every child has the right to live free from violence, exploitation, and abuse. At ECP, we consider a priority our Child Protection Policy. Its goal is to protect our students from abuse and maltreatment, preventing harm to children's health or development, and ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care, taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes.

Considering that Child Protection is part of the safeguarding process, we detailed several indicators that may lead to a concern around Child Protection Issues:

Possible Indicators of Abuse (and other conditions)

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognize a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. **Most people are not experts in such recognition, but indications that a child's being abused may include one or more of the following:**

Emotional/Psychological Abuse

Physical or Corporal:

- Language and/or motor skills disorders
- Delays or gaps in emotional, mental, or physical development
- Eating disorders
- Sleeping disorders or deregulation
- Hyperactivity

Attitudinal and Behavioral:

- Submission to others
- Abrupt changes in school
- Changes in social functioning
- Isolation
- Self-esteem problems
- Difficulties expressing feelings
- Acting outs
- Regressive behavior
- Reproduction of negative models

Abandonment and Neglect:

Physical or Corporal:

- Frequent hunger or nutritional problems
- Personal hygiene problems
- Inappropriate clothing for the weather
- Lack of medical and dental care
- Chronic tiredness or listlessness
- Physical deterioration due to lack of supervision

Attitudinal and Behavioral:

- Asks, begs, or steals food.
- Institutionalization
- Unexcused absences from school
- Apathy
- Assumes adult responsibilities.
- Aggressiveness or withdrawal
- Inappropriate behavior for his age.

Physical Abuse**Physical or Corporal:**

- Bites
- Lack of hair, especially on the nape or behind the ears
- Lacerations, abrasions, or bruises
- Burns
- Fractures, dislocations, or wounds
- The marks are situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries and the explanation for the injury seems inconsistent.

Attitudinal and Behavioral:

- Attitude of submission to others
- Excessive aggressiveness or withdrawal
- Avoidance of bodily contact with others
- Defensive attitudes
- Fear of arriving or staying home
- Inability to trust others
- Household leaks
- Eating disorders and sleeping disorders

Sexual Abuse**Physical or Corporal:**

- Difficulties sitting or walking due to genital discomfort.
- Stained or bloody underwear
- Genital pain or itching
- Elimination disorders
- Pregnancy
- Engaging in sexually explicit behavior

Attitudinal and Behavioral:

- Aggression
- Attitudes of submission to others
- Excessive permanence in protected spaces such as school
- Distrust of significant adults
- Concentration problems
- Emotional, eating, or sleeping disorders
- Unusual sexual knowledge for the age
- Sexually suggestive behavior with unfamiliar adults
- Anxious – depressive symptomatology

Possible Indicators of Psychoactive Substance Use

Changes in Behavior

- Frequent and unexcused absences from school; repeated tardiness.
- Rebellion and lack impulse control, repeated behavior problems, disciplinary sanctions.
- Repeated lies.
- Need and continuous search for money, the disappearance of objects.
- Sudden changes in habits and behavior: repeated drowsiness, untidy appearance, irritability.
- Concentration, attention, and memory problems
- Poor school performance and general disinterest.

Physical Signs of Psychoactive Substance Use:

- Tremors.
- Red eyes.
- Alcoholic breath or smoker's breath.
- Burned fingers.
- Stained lips (purple or black).

Changes in the Affective Area

- Sudden and oscillating changes in mood
- Exaggerated emotional reactions
- General demotivation
- Disinterest in things or activities that previously motivated them
- Discouragement, loss of vital interest
- Attitude of indifference

Changes in Social Relationships:

- Preference for new friends and, sometimes, repudiation for old ones.
- He belongs to groups of friends who use drugs
- Positive reviews of consumer peers
- Withdrawal from family relationships
- Selection of older peer groups.

Possible Indicators of Harassment or Bullying

- Difficulty concentrating in the classroom.
- Class attendance or grades drop.
- Preoccupation with recess time or trying to avoid it.
- Isolation, group activities are avoided.
- Sudden changes in behavior or mood.

Possible Suicidal Risk Indicators

- Lack of purpose
- Hopelessness
- Suicidal ideation
- Drastic changes in mood
- Giving away prized possessions
- Decreased interest in activities
- Loss of energy in activities
- Not sleeping or sleeping all the time
- Decreased interest in school

Possible Eating Disorders Indicators

Physical

- Sudden weight loss, gain, or fluctuation in short time
- Complaints of abdominal pain
- Feeling full or “bloating”
- Feeling faint, cold, or tired
- Dark circles under the eyes or bloodshot eyes/ burst capillaries around eyes
- Calluses on the knuckles from self-induced vomiting
- Dry hair or skin, dehydration, blue hands/feet
- Lanugo hair (fine body hair), thinning, dry hair
- Fainting or dizziness upon standing; frequent fatigue

Emotional

- Changes in attitude/performance
- Expresses body image concerns: being too fat even though normal or thin; unable to accept compliments; mood affected by thoughts about appearance; constantly compares self to others; self-disparaging; refers to self as fat, gross, ugly; overestimates body size; strives to create a “perfect” image; seeks constant outside reassurance about looks.
- Incessant talk about food, weight, shape, exercise, cooking, etc.
- Displays rigid or obsessive thinking about food, eating, exercise: labels foods as good/ bad; on/off limits for no actual reason; appears uncomfortable or unwilling to share food; inflexible about diet without reason.
- Appears sad/ depressed/ anxious/ ashamed/ embarrassed/expresses feelings of worthlessness.
- Emotions are flat or absent.
- Intolerance for imperfections in academics, eating, social life, etc.
- Is target of body or weight bullying currently or in the past.
- Spends increasing amounts of time alone; pulls back from friends.
- Is obsessed with maintaining unhealthy eating habits to enhance performance in sports, dance, acting, or modeling.
- Overvalues self-sufficiency; reluctant to ask for help.
- Unable or unwilling to acknowledge recent changes.

Behavioral

- Diets or chaotic food intake; pretends to eat, then throws away food; skips meals.
- Creates rigid dietary rules or observes strict diet without medical or religious reason.
- Exercises for long periods and with obsessional attitude; exercises excessively every day.
- Constantly talks about food; unwilling to share food; hoards food; refuses to eat food prepared by others or without knowing exact ingredients.
- Difficulty sitting still: hovers over chair instead of sitting, constantly jiggles legs, gets up from desk at every opportunity, offers to run errands.
- Makes frequent trips to the bathroom.
- Makes lists of foods and calories eaten
- Wears very baggy clothes to hide a very thin body (anorexia) or weight gain (binge eating disorder) or to hide a “normal” body because of concerns about body shape/size.
- Avoids cafeteria, works through lunch, eats alone.
- Shows some type of compulsive behavior (e.g., compulsive hand washing; hoarding; repetitive movements/speech; need for constant reassurance)
- Denies difficulty with food or body image despite evidence that it is an area of concern.

Divorce and other legal aspects indicators

- Academic difficulties (e.g., lower grades, school dropout, absence, etc.)
- Disruptive behaviors (e.g., conduct and substance use problems)
- Changes in mood (anger, confusion, sadness)
- Disconnected or isolated
- Constant preoccupation about parents' whereabouts
- Overwhelmed
- Risky behavior (can be sexually, disruptive, etc.)
- Emotional instability
- Worrying about events in where the two parents can meet.
- Feelings of being guilty.
- Lying or omitting information from parents or tutors.
- Fantasizing about other scenarios

Action Protocol

When a case is detected or suspected, the Child Protection Leader (CPL)—the psychopedagogical deputy director must be notified. The CPL will document the case and report it to school director for the corresponding intervention and follow-up either through the school, external specialists, specialized agencies and/or judicial authorities according to the requirements of the case.

Flowchart

1**Detection**

There is a suspicion of child abuse or a report involving a student under the age of consent.

2.**Notification to CPL**

The first line of response, the person who receives the information, have to report it to the CPL.

3**CPL conducts investigation**

The CPL documents the information and conducts the investigation. If needed, the CPL can ask for a formal report from the person who received the information.

4.**Interventions and Documentation**

In the event of a potential risk, the director will meet with parents to provide referrals and recommendations.

4.1**Interventions and Documentation**

The CPL informs the Director, considering the observations, reports, and other relevant information about the case.

5.**Follow-ups**

In case of an immediate risk the case will be reported to the Panamanian authorities relevant to the case.

Action Protocol in case of abuse

- **Emotional / Psychological**
- **Abandonment / Neglect**
- **Physical and / or sexual abuse**

What to do if you suspect abuse? – How to report

We may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. We may see it happening, we may suspect it happening because of signs such as those listed above, it may be reported to us by someone else or directly by the young person affected. In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately.

If you suspect an adult (or another student/child) is a threat to a child in some way, tell the Child Protection Leader (CPL). If a student says or indicates that they are being abused, you should use the following guidelines without delay. You must act on allegations made. You cannot ever ignore an allegation or suspicion.

Do

- Stay calm in the event of an allegation. It is extremely unlikely that the student is in immediate danger.
- Believe the child.
- Create a rapport with the child.
- Assure the child of confidentiality which is reasonable.
- Be realistic and explain circumstances as they are likely to happen.
- Listen, hear, and believe. Keep a neutral position.
- Give time to the person to say what they want.
- Be patient: let the child go on at her/his own pace.
- Reassure and explain that they have done the right thing in telling. Explain that only those professionals who need to know will be informed.
- Report the allegation or suspicion immediately to the CPL.

Don't

- Don't panic, don't over-react.
- Don't ask accusing questions.
- Don't be overly formal.
- Don't give information about the child unless professionally required.
- Don't assure the child about matters you have no control over.
- Don't interpret or put words into the mouth of someone making an allegation.
- Don't try to deal with it yourself.
- Don't pressure the child to speak.
- Don't make a child repeat a story unnecessarily.
- Don't gossip with colleagues about what has been said to you.

What the CPL will do

T

Tell me

E

Explain to me

D

Describe to me

Handling a disclosure by a child

Care must be taken to remain calm and to show support to the child throughout the disclosure phase. The following guidelines will help lessen the risk of causing more trauma to the child and/or compromising a criminal investigation during the disclosure phase. Ideally, a child making a disclosure should be taken immediately to the CPL.

If this is not immediately possible, do as following:

1st

Receive

Remain calm and show support.

2nd

Reassure

Acknowledge how difficult sharing is, but don't promise confidentiality

3rd

React

Explain what you must do next and to whom you must talk. Refer to the CPL.

4th

Record

This is done by the CPL or CP team.

The person handling the disclosure will follow the principle of T.E.D.

- The CPL will take a written statement from all parties involved.
- All contact between the child concerned and the alleged abuser should cease with immediate effect.
- The CPL will speak to the person concerned to advise them of the allegations and advise them that no further contact is permitted.
- The CPL will take appropriate action which may involve contacting external agencies, contacting agents / parents, suspending the member of staff concerned (or student) pending an investigation.
- If the CPL is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the initial report must be made by other member of the Child Protection Team.

There is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting to the CPL.

This Policy ensures all staff that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Receive

Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief. A common reaction to news as unpleasant and shocking as child abuse is denial.

However, if you display denial to a child, or show shock or disgust at what they are saying, the child may be afraid to continue and will shut down.

Accept what is being said without judgement. Take it seriously.

Reassure

Reassure the child, but only so far as is honest and reliable. Don't make promises that you can't be sure to keep, e.g., "everything will be all right now".

Reassure the child that they did nothing wrong and that you take what is said seriously. Don't promise confidentiality – never agree to keep secrets. You have a duty to report your concerns.

Tell the child that you will need to tell some people, but only those whose job it is to protect children.

Acknowledge how difficult it must have been to talk. It takes a lot for a child to come forward about abuse.

React

Listen quietly, carefully, and patiently. Do not assume anything – don't speculate or jump to conclusions. don't speculate or jump to conclusions. Do not investigate, interrogate, or decide if the child is telling the truth. Remember that an allegation of child abuse may lead to a criminal investigation, so don't do anything that may jeopardize a policy investigation. Let the child explain to you in his or her own words what happened, but don't ask leading questions.

Do ask open questions like "Is there anything else that you want to tell me?" Communicate with the child in a way that is appropriate to their age, understanding, and preference. This is especially important for children with disabilities and for children whose preferred language is not Spanish. Do not ask the child to repeat what they have told you to another member of staff. Explain what you must do next and to whom you must talk. Refer directly to the Child Protection Leader or team.

Do not discuss the case with anyone outside the Child Protection Team.

Record

(this would be for the CPL or Child Protection Team)

- Make some very brief notes at the time and write them up in detail as soon as possible, using the internal document "Bitácora de casos específicos".
- Do not destroy your original notes in case they are required by Court or legal instances.
- **Record the date, time, place, words used by the child and how the child appeared to you – be specific.**
- Record the actual words used, including any swear words or slang.
- Record statements and observable things, **not your interpretations or assumptions – keep it factual.**

What information should be recorded in the formal report?

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- The child's name, age, and date of birth.
- The child's home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation: include dates, times, any special factors, and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion, or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also, any indirect signs, such as behavioral changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted?
- If so, what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to the police should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.
- All reports will be reported to and recorded by one of the Child Protection Team and kept securely in a password protected folder. Only the nominated Child Protection Team and Principal will have access to this folder, and outside agencies as appropriate.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information will be handled and disseminated on a "need to know" basis only. This includes the following people:

- The principal and/or CPL
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused.
- The person making the allegation.
- Police
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child)

Information (such as incident report) will be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

Action Protocol in case of substance abuse

Substance abuse is common among school students, particularly in adolescence. This can result in a range of academic, physical, mental, and social problems.

Educators can identify students who may be at risk or consuming alcohol, drugs, or vapes. If there are signs such as mood changes, poor class attendance, low grades, disregard for school rules, memory lapses, poor concentration, bloodshot eyes, lack of coordination, or slurred speech there is a need to intervene.

It is important to remember our 4R's

- **Receive the information:** Detect this issue, talk with the student to know the condition, severity of the behavior, actions, etc.
- **Reassure the student:** do not keep the secret. This is a health problem.
- **React:** Refer to de CPL the situation. Notify immediately.
 - **Note:** The CPL must notify the parents of the student about the situation and conditions. The school will make recommendations on how to manage the situation at home, set limits and boundaries.
- **Record:** Fill the "Bitácora de casos específicos" document. The CPL will continue with this process.

In case the substance abuse happens in the school, the intervention must be clear:

- **Vape**
- **Alcohol**
- **Cigarettes**
- **Drugs**
- **Etc**

If a teacher or specialist teacher detects this behavior, it must be notified immediately to someone in our Child Protection Team.

The Team will check the filming footage if needed.

The CPL will talk with the student about the situation and possible repercussions.

Reviewing of the Code of Ethics will be a must, so the CPL and school Leadership Team can determine the actions to take as a school.

Notify the parents about the situation and the decisions made accordingly.

The school will make recommendations on how to manage the situation at home, set limits and boundaries with student and parents.

Action Protocol in case of Harassment or Bullying

An environment laced with bullying or harassment can adversely affect the psychological and physical health of a person. It's a psychological hazard that has the potential to harm a person, and it also creates a psychological risk as there is a possibility that a person may be harmed if exposed to it.

It is important to remember our 4R's

- **Receive the information:** Detect this issue, talk with the student to know the condition, severity of the behaviors, actions, etc. Do not interpret or put words into the mouth of the student making the allegation. Clarify the information, take notes. Don't try to deal with it yourself.
- **Reassure the student:** do not keep the secret. This is a safety problem.
- **React:** Refer to de CPL the situation. Notify immediately.
 - **Note:** The CPL must notify the parents of the student about the situation and conditions. The school will make recommendations on how to manage the situation at home, set limits and boundaries.
- **Record:** Fill the "Bitácora de casos específicos" document. The CPL will continue with this process.

*CPL and the Child Protection Team must follow the Bullying Protocol in detail.

Action Protocol in case of divorce or other legal aspects

As a school, our role in family situations (such as family feuds, divorces, or other legal processes) is to encourage understanding, help the children to communicate, increase self-esteem, help children appropriately express feelings, and support positive parent-child relationships.

Legal aspects are not just a family affair. The consequences need to be managed inside the school perimeter too.

It is important for parents to notify the school about their process, especially when the students are involved.

School will often be seen by the child as their “safe place”, and this may help them to be more open so we as adults can provide the minor with the tools and strategies that may help to get through the difficult

It is important to remember our 4R's

- **Receive the information:** Detect this issue, talk with the student to know the condition, severity of the behaviors, actions, etc. Do not interpret or put words into the mouth of the student making the allegation. Clarify the information, take notes. Don't try to deal with it yourself.
- **Reassure the student:** do not keep the secret.
- **React:** Refer to de CPL the situation. Notify immediately.
 - **Note:** The CPL must notify the parents of the student about the situation and conditions. The school will make recommendations on how to manage the situation at home, set limits and boundaries.
- **Record:** Fill the “Bitácora de casos específicos” document. The CPL will continue with this process.

*The school will try to provide support to the students and parents during this difficult time.

What if there is animosity between the parents?

The school needs to know who the primary carer is and who else is allowed to pick up the child from school. Teachers also need to know if one of the parents is likely to try to remove the child from school without permission. **Emergency contact details must always be kept up to date.**

Managing Allegations of Child Abuse

by Educators or Non-Teaching Staff

(Source: Managing Allegations of Child Abuse by Educators and
Other Adults -Protocol for International Schools, 2018)

An allegation is any concern that an adult working in a school has

- Harmed or abused a child, including physical, emotional, or sexual harm or abuse, exploitation, and neglect.
- Behaved in a way that could constitute a criminal offense towards or related to a child.
- Behaved in a way that indicates they are not suitable to work with children.

Guiding Principles

Effective management of an allegation is guided by three duties:

1st

- **The duty to children:** to keep children safe and act in the best interests of victims and children in our school or elsewhere.

This takes precedence over all other duties and includes providing support for all children affected; ensuring the continuity of education and delivery of services to children; ensuring that the best interests of the victim are the primary consideration in decision-making; where possible, taking into account the victim's wishes and feelings when making decisions, while recognizing that the ultimate decision lies with adults; working with the parents unless to do so would jeopardize the welfare of a child; and working across agency and institutional boundaries to protect children.

2nd

- **The duty to the alleged perpetrator:** ensuring that their rights are upheld.

Including their employment and privacy rights, and that the principles of natural justice are followed. These principles require schools to provide alleged perpetrators with notice of the allegation and an opportunity to respond.

3rd

- **The duty to the law and mandatory reporting obligations:** ensuring that local and international legal obligations are complied with.

Allegations are reported promptly to relevant external agencies. The school must take immediate actions to protect as far as possible the integrity of any future criminal investigation.

Initial Assessment and Response

The school will consider, in consultation with its legal advisers, whether there is a need to report to and engage external agencies. Proactive reporting and transparency can lead to additional support and may protect the integrity of a criminal investigation related to evidence gathering and admissibility. There may also be a legal requirement on the school to make a report.

In borderline cases, the school will consult with local police or other agencies as to whether the school should make a report or not.

Record-keeping

Keep an incident file which includes all relevant dates and times, days of week, summaries of conversations with external agencies and advisers, and an action log which sets out any actions taken, and the decision-making process.

Investigation by external agency or inquiry commissioned by the school.

In consultation with the school's legal advisers and any external agencies, different scenarios may occur. For example, if the police and/or child protection services decline to investigate initially and the school uncovers further evidence which suggests criminal activity, it should report this immediately to the police who may then choose to investigate.

Equally, where the police complete an investigation, the school may still need to conduct its own safeguarding inquiry and/or evaluation of suitability. This is because, the police will be working to a criminal threshold, whereas the school must determine if the alleged perpetrator is unsuitable to work with children; or the decision not to pursue an investigation or prosecution may be the result of several factors which do not mean that the alleged perpetrator did not do what they are accused of doing, and/or that the alleged perpetrator is necessarily suitable to work with children.

These include, for example, lack of evidence, procedural failings, corruption, and a higher standard of evidence for criminal charges.

Promoting Good Practices

All daily activities at El Colegio de Panama, are expected to be immersed in an ambiance that is safe and enriching for everyone.

The following are guidelines of good practices that all staff and teachers are expected to follow:

- All staff and responsible adults will promote an atmosphere of tolerance and respect and will actively challenge extremist views that threaten this atmosphere. Staff will report any concerns with the goal of preventing harmful situations.
- All staff and responsible adults need to set standards and to be excellent role models by being somebody children can trust, using appropriate language, being punctual, being fair and not having favorites, giving clear instructions, knowing professional boundaries, being positive, reacting and responding appropriately to a variety of situations.
- All staff and responsible adults need to have appropriate appearance.
- All staff and responsible adults should refrain from smoking, drinking alcohol and taking any form of illegal drug inside the perimeters of the school, during school activities, while representing the school or while they are using the school uniform.
- All staff and responsible adults should not swear in front of young learners.
- All staff and responsible adults should be aware of the correct action to take regarding arranging transportation for young learners.

What can adults do to prevent sexually harmful behavior between children?

- Set and respect physical boundaries.
- Encourage children to also respect themselves and others.
- Demonstrate to children that it is all right to say “no” and that they need to accept “no” from others.
- Stay aware of how children are interacting with one another.
- Talk with children and listen to what they have to say.
- Set clear guidelines.
- Regularly remind children of other trusted adults whom they can talk to.

Regulations for Teachers

Teachers and community members must:

- Take seriously any concerns raised.
- Take positive steps to ensure the protection of children who are the subject of concerns.
- Act appropriately and effectively in instigating or co-operating with any subsequent process of investigation.
- Be guided through the child protection process by the principle of “best interests of the child”.
- Listen to and take seriously the views and wishes of children.
- Work in partnership with parents/carers and/or other professionals to ensure the protection of children.

Duty to Report Infringement of a Child’s Right

It shall be the general duty to any member of the community, who reasonable suspects that a child’s rights have been, or are being, or likely to be infringed upon, to report the matter to the CPL of the school.

The CPL must notify the Director, and they should consider the next steps:

- In case the CPL and Director can work without involving local government officials or taking legal actions, it must be their priority to provide a safe environment to the child and to act according with the protocols.
- If the case demands to open the matter to local government officials, social workers, attorneys to further investigate the case and take legal actions, the CPL and Director must provide all information in detail.

Procedures for travel involving children/young people.

Where the school organizes transport for children/young people, consent from the parent/guardian is to be arranged, which will indicate an agreed pick-up and drop-off point. Staff must not transport a single child on their own.

In the case where a child/young person travels with a member of staff to a trip, meeting, or an event, the school will be responsible for the welfare of the young person while traveling and while at the event. This includes travel abroad.

In these instances, parental consent forms must be completed by parents/guardians and a record must be kept of the emergency contact numbers supplied.

Before the trip, the parents/legal guardian must fill and sign a consent form and send it back to the school.

Trip Reports

At the end of the trip, the staff leader must fill a trip report in which the teacher will detail general information about the trip and specific situations that happened during the trip. This information must be filled objectively, not changing events, adding, or altering in some way the information in the report. This document must be signed by the school staff that participate in the trip.

Activities involving overnight stays away from home.

Where activities involve staying away from home overnight (such as international trips), additional safeguards need to be considered:

General Guidelines

- Adequate and safe transport arrangements will be made prior to the trip.
- Parent/guardian consent will be obtained for each participant, prior to the trip, including information on each participant about the following:
 - Contact details of parent/guardian and another person named by the parent/guardian in the event of the parent/guardian not being available in an emergency.
 - All relevant medical information for the participant and consent for medical intervention, if necessary.
 - Any special needs which the participant may have, including diet, medical needs, support needs, etc.
- All relevant information including contact details, allergies, medicines, dietary needs, etc., for the child or young person will be kept with the leader/staff member of the trip.
- Parents/guardians will be fully informed of the program or timetable for the event and will receive a copy of the program.
- Parents will be given full contact details of the hotel/accommodation and of the staff member in charge of the event.
- There will be an appropriate ratio of adults to young people at the event – this may vary depending on the age and ability of the group involved.
- There will be appropriate gender-based supervision for the event.
- One staff person will be designated as the “key contact person” for the event and parents/guardians and participants will be given contact details of this person. All complaints, concerns should be directed to this person.
- Parents/guardians will also be given the contact details of the Child Protection Leader. Complaints in relation to the safety and welfare of the children/young people should be made to this person.
- There is an international medical insurance in case anything happens. If this is the case, the parents/carers/legal guardian will be notified immediately.

Prevention

It is the responsibility of the school to contribute to the prevention of any form of abuse and neglect through curricular provision.

In the context of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) program, is a mandatory part of the curriculum for all students in the school.

As a school, we know that the communication and relationship with our students plays a great role in their development, that's why we always procure to:

- **Point out the positive:** whenever a student does something helpful, caring, cooperative, or shows improvement, we let them know that we've noticed and give words of appreciation.
- **Have an interaction based on respect:** towards students and other teachers. We help them to do and be better, we guide.
- **Share expectations:** communicate expectations to students and give space for them to comment their expectations towards teachers and classes.
- **Use humor:** not every misbehavior that a student commit needs disciplining. Children and adolescents, like adults, get tired, frustrated, or bored. Disciplining may not work in such situations. Using humor during classes can keep everyone interested, not bored.
- **Recognize effort, not correctness:** trying is the first step in learning even if the child does not get it right.

What steps can we take to maximize the protection of children in schools?

- Training of teachers
- Community awareness raising
- Ensuring health, safety, and emergencies procedures are available in schools.
- Teaching children life skills in schools
- Ensuring Code of Conducts are implemented and followed in schools.
- Ensuring children's participation
- Addressing discrimination and harmful practices in the school curriculum
- Monitoring children's attendance and any problems that arise.

How to prevent?

As the teachers interact with students frequently and spends more time with them than their parents do, they have a unique role to play in this regard.

Teachers must:

- Teach children about the right and wrong touch. Inform them that no one has a right to touch them in ways they do not like.
- Teach them that it is in order to disobey a teacher if the teacher asks them to do something wrong like kiss or have intercourse with the teacher and that she or he cannot be punished for disobeying the teacher on that account.
- Tell them to report to their parents or to an adult they trust if someone has been touching the child in ways she or he does not like.
- Tell the child to be persistent in reporting such incidents.
- Tell the child not to assist strangers or to remain alone with strangers.
- Tell the child not to agree to a request for help by a stranger. Instead, the child should tell the stranger to seek the assistance of an adult.
- Teachers should strictly adhere to the Code of Conduct for teachers and not engage in sexual activities with students.
- Inform children to immediately report any threats to teachers or to parents.

The school will continually work towards building a safe community, provide our staff and students a sense of safety and belonging.

During our academic year, we will have:

- Training for teachers
- Conferences for teachers and students about prevention in different areas of our Child Protection policy (such as suicidal risk, bullying, cyberbullying, abuse, etc.)
- Social and Emotional Learning Program to promote cohesion, development of individual strategies and positive environment.
- Activities to improve the mental health awareness as a community (i.e., Mental Health Week, Sports Week, etc.)
- Campaigns reinforcing the diversity, individuality and differences between members of a community, based on respect and tolerance.

Panamanian Legislation

Violence to Minors

Panamanian legislation refers to child abuse in Title III of the Family Code. **Article 500** defines the matter stating that “when it is inferred or placed at risk of suffering damage or harm to their physical or mental health or well-being, due to actions or omissions on the part of their parents, guardians, managers, officials or institutions responsible for their care or attention”

More specifically, according to article 501 of the same Code, the child or adolescent is a victim of abuse when

(Law N ° 3 of 1994 that Approves the Family Code, 1994):

- It causes or allows another person to cause, non-accidentally, physical, mental, or emotional harm, including physical injury caused by corporal punishment.
- He is not provided with adequate food, clothing, housing, education, or health care, having the economic means to do so.
- Others commit or allow others to commit sexual abuse with the minor or other lewd or indecent acts, even if they do not involve carnal access.
- He is exploited or allowed by another to use it for profit, including begging, the use of photographs, pornographic films or for prostitution, propaganda, or advertising not appropriate for their age, or in a criminal act.
- He is employed in work that is prohibited or contrary to morality or that endangers his life or health; and
- He is given negligent treatment and mistreatment that may affect his physical and mental health.

Article 502 of the Family Code, which establishes “are obliged to report, within a term not exceeding twenty-four (24) hours, as soon as they have knowledge of situations of abuse against a minor, the following professionals or officials who in the performance of their functions had knowledge or suspicion of the existence of a situation of abuse: health professionals, education, social workers, public order, investigative police and managers and officials of care, observation or rehabilitation centers for minors, among others.

Likewise, any person who has knowledge of a case of abuse must inform the competent judicial or administrative authority, without the need to identify the informant.

Silent or unjustified permission will be considered as complicity in the abuse”

(Law No. 3 of 1994 that Approves the Family Code, 1994).

The Family Code provides in Article 532 that minors shall enjoy the individual and procedural guarantees recognized by the Constitution of the Republic and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Article 489 of the same Code establishes a series of rights in favor of the minor, among which is to express their opinions freely and any process that may affect, must be heard directly or through a representative.

Article 495 of the Family Code defines that children and adolescents are in “especially difficult circumstances” when:

- They are in a situation of social risk.
- Be a victim of abuse or neglect
- Be less deprived.
- Be a worker in conditions not authorized by law.
- Be a victim of catastrophe; and
- Is disabled.

Article 498 of the Family Code establishes that the child or adolescent is in a “situation of social risk” when:

- They do not attend the school or educational institution in which they are enrolled, or when he does not receive the corresponding education.
- Engages in begging, loitering, or wandering regularly, or consuming alcoholic beverages or drugs and narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances.
- Leave the home of your parents or guardians.
- Are used in occupations that may be considered dangerous or harmful to health, morals or contrary to good customs.
- Frequent dealing with vicious or malicious people or living at home destined for vice.
- His parents, relatives or guardians cannot control him, or he frequently withdraws from their authority.
- Parents without legal means of life are delinquents, alcoholics, drug addicts, lazy, mentally ill or retarded mentally profoundly and therefore cannot offer you a parenting model.

The Family Code in **article 502** states the following about the responsibility to report: The following professionals are obliged to report, within a period of no more than twenty-four (24) hours, as soon as they become aware of situations of abuse against a minor. o officials who, in the performance of their functions, have knowledge or suspicion of the existence of a situation of abuse: health professionals, education, social workers, public order, investigation police and managers and officials of care centers, observation or rehabilitation of minors, among others. Likewise, any person who has knowledge of a case of abuse must inform the competent judicial or administrative authority, without the need to identify the informant. Silent or unjustified permission will be considered complicity in the abuse.

Psychoactive Substances

Articles of the Family Code referring to minors and the possession, use and sale of psychoactive substances.

Article 489 section 16. Every minor has the right to be protected against the illicit use of drugs and narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances since their use in the production and trafficking of these substances is prevented. For this, the State will sanction those who use minors for such purposes and will establish prevention programs.

Article 553. Minors who make illicit use of drugs and narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances must be admitted for detoxification and rehabilitation treatment, for as long as necessary.

Article 554. When the parents or guardians of a minor who makes illicit use of drugs and narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances give sufficient guarantee for the detoxification and rehabilitation treatment in a private or official establishment, the Juvenile Judge may order the delivery of the minor. their parents to do so under the supervision of the technical team of the Juvenile Court. Once recovered, the minor will maintain his constitutional right to education.

Article 555. In case of recidivism of a minor in the use of drugs and narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances, the Juvenile Judge, with the guidance of the technical team, will order his internment in the corresponding health establishment, so that he receives detoxification and reeducation treatment. for the period required.

Article 556. Minors who are engaged in drug and narcotic trafficking or psychotropic substances will be admitted to an establishment where a complete study of their personality and environment must be carried out, so that, once this study is obtained, the Juvenile Judge will decide on the action to take according to his situation.

Article 557. If a minor re-offends in drug and narcotic trafficking or psychotropic substances, the Juvenile Judge will order his internment until he reaches the age of majority, unless the Judge himself, after a technical evaluation, provides otherwise.

Article 558. The directors, teachers, or professors of public or private educational establishments, who detect among their students' cases of possession, trafficking or consumption of drugs and narcotics or psychotropic substances, are obliged to inform the parents and the Juvenile Judge so that the measures of corresponding protection. In no case, minors with consumption problems may be deprived of access to educational establishments, provided that their attendance at rehabilitation programs or receipt of special therapies is proven.

Article 563. Who Anyone induces a minor to consume alcoholic beverages will be punished with an arrest of one (1) to three (3) months and a fine of twenty-five (B / .25.00) to one hundred (B / .100.00) balboas. Who Anyone induces a minor to consume drugs and narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances will be punished with arrest for one (1) to three (3) years, and if he is a repeat offender, the penalty will be five (5) to eight (8) years.

Harassment or Bullying

Resolution 2588-A of May 30, 2018, Ministry of Education by which the implementation of the protocol for the detection of children in particularly difficult situations in which children's victims of bullying or harassment are included is made mandatory.

Suicide Risk

Law 174 of November 2, 2020.

Which governs the comprehensive approach to suicidal risk behaviors. **Article 18:** In the case of attempted suicide of a child or adolescent, it is mandatory to communicate to the National Secretary for Children, Adolescents, and Family or to the corresponding administrative authority for the protection of children's rights at the local level, to request measures for the comprehensive protection of the rights inherent to the minor.

Conclusion

El Colegio de Panamá is committed to providing a safe environment for our students by offering them the care, attention, and protection they require.

We carry out this commitment through our child protection policy presented in this manual from which arise the various protocols of action to prevent and intervene promptly in case of child abuse, provision and use of psychoactive substances, bullying, suicide risk, and any situation or phenomenon that may jeopardize the safety and welfare of our children and adolescents.

We are committed to communicating and training our staff, parents, and students on issues related to these situations and updating and improving our practices in order to ensure a safe environment in our ECP community.

El Colegio De Panamá

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February 14, 2018.

Law 174 of November 2, 2020. Which establishes the legal framework for the comprehensive approach to suicidal risk behaviors.

National Eating Disorders (NEDA)
<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/>

Policies of El Colegio de Panamá

In our educational community, we adhere to the following fundamental policies. These policies have been developed to foster a safe, inclusive, and enriching learning environment for all.

Students and Parents Handbook**Code of Ethics for students****Assessment Policy****Senior's Handbook****Child Protection Handbook****Technology Policy****Special Education Policy**



El Colegio
de Panamá