

IST is committed to safeguarding student wellbeing. We believe that it is the fundamental right of all children and young people, to learn and develop in a secure and effective environment. IST has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that children in its care are not placed at any risk of harm.

Child abuse and neglect are violations of a child's human rights and are obstacles to the child's education as well as to their physical, emotional, and spiritual development. The International School of Turin endorses the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), of which our host country, Italy, is a signatory.

IST's definition of violence, abuse, and exploitation, includes, but is not limited to: physical violence and corporal punishment, sexual abuse and harassment, negligent treatment, any form of exploitation, emotional abuse, and bullying, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, development or dignity.

No one likes to think of children being abused or neglected, but child abuse is unfortunately a reality. If we are to protect children it is important that all people involved with them are alerted to the possibility of child abuse and know what they can do if they have concerns about a child's safety or welfare. Parents need to be aware of their responsibilities in child protection matters and of the lines of communication open to them for the reporting of actual or suspected child abuse.

IST recognizes that the above principles apply to all members of the school community, including faculty, staff, contractors, vendors, volunteers, parents, campus guests, partner organizations and students, involved in IST activities on or off site during such IST activities. All staff employed at IST must report suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect whenever the staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered, or is at significant risk of suffering abuse or neglect. All IST staff are aware of their responsibility in the protection of children and have received training by the IST Child Protection officer. Our goal is to build and maintain a protective environment that protects children by either preventing child abuse before it occurs or by ensuring its earliest possible detection, intervention and reporting.

This booklet provides basic child protection guidelines. Please also refer to the full Child Protection Procedures document for further detailed information. This document can be found on the IST Community Handbook under 'Child Protection'.

IST's Child Protection procedures are written in accordance with Italian child protection law, international law and The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

While it is not IST's responsibility to monitor the conditions under which children live, the school follows its legal obligation to inform the appropriate authorities where there is suspicion of abuse. The school recognises that abusive behaviour may be physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or that of child neglect.

IST recognises its role in the recognition and response to the abuse or neglect of the children in its care, and its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of these children at all times. The interests and welfare of children are the prime considerations in any response to suspected cases of abuse or neglect, and IST will act to ensure that all children are treated with respect and dignity at all times in its response.

IST shall promote the principles of the Child Protection Policy to all students at the beginning of the school year (and for new students on their entry throughout the school year). The Child Protection team will conduct the student sessions through the Advisory Programme from Early Years through to Grade 12, using age appropriate language, activities and materials.

### **The IST Child Protection Team**

Where there is cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, you should report any concerns to a member of the Child Protection Team. Research confirms that most children know their abusers. They may be family members or friends of family, someone who works with the child or someone who lives in the community. There are many signs, or indicators that a child might be suffering abuse. There may be injuries, but it is more likely that you will notice some change in the child's behaviour.

Remember that, if your child is being harmed, she or he may be too frightened to tell you. If your child becomes distressed or you are not happy with the explanations, you could talk to a Child Protection Team member who can advise you.

### **Some signs to look for are:**

(Signs may not necessarily indicate abuse but could also indicate other issues)

Bruises or other injuries.

A distinct change in behaviour.

Pain or discomfort or vague complaints of illness.

Fear of a particular person, or a reluctance to be alone with them.

Fear of a place or activity and reluctance to go there. Secrecy around a relationship with a particular person. Reluctance to discuss where they go, or who they are with. Sexual talk, behaviour or knowledge beyond their years. Being anxious, watchful, or always on edge.

Losing interest in their appearance, hobbies or family life. Alcohol abuse, drug taking or self-harming

Having money and refusing to say where it has come from. Emotional outbursts, withdrawing from others

Changes in sleep and eating habits.

Five things to tell a child who decides to confide in you:

1. "I believe you"
2. "It's not your fault"
3. "I'm glad you were able to tell me"
4. "I will help you as best as I can"
5. "This is so important I need to talk to someone about it"

**NEVER PROMISE TO KEEP IT A SECRET!**

**Reporting**

All staff employed at IST must report suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect whenever the staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered, or is at significant risk of suffering abuse or neglect. A confidential mechanism shall be established within the school, through which complaints from any community member, including students, can be reported and registered. The mechanism for reporting and resolving complaints shall be made widely known to the school community, including students, employees and parents and be easily accessible by them.

Transparent procedures for investigating, reviewing and resolving such cases in a timely manner shall be determined through Italian law, school regulations and appropriate sanctions defined and applied as required. Procedures shall protect the identity and safety of children who are the subject of the complaint from any contact with the accused. Procedures shall protect parties who report suspected violations of the Child Protection Policy. Procedures shall protect the rights of the accused in compliance with IST policies and procedures. If the Head of School is in any way involved in the conduct in the complaint, the procedures shall require the complaint to be made to the President of the Board. The President shall bring the matter (after a proper assessment has been completed) to the full Board. Any employee of IST who becomes aware of a possible violation of the Child Protection Policy shall make a complaint as outlined in this paragraph and procedures.

### **Response to a Suspected Incident of Child Abuse.**

IST must pass on any report to the local authorities and it is these authorities who will determine if any action is required.

Helpful Resources for Parents in Turin

Social Services in Turin

<http://www.comune.torino.it/servizionline/schede/userTorinoE.php?context=torinoE&submitAction=homeIndice&id=745&idRoot=134&refLanguage=it>

<http://www.cr.piemonte.it/web/per-il-cittadino/corecom/cosa-facciamo/tutela-minori>

### **Commonly Held Myths Vs the Realities About Child Abuse & Neglect**

**Myth:** *Child abuse is carried out by strangers.*

**Fact:** Research indicates that 90% of abuse is from domestic causes and is committed by individuals known to the child. International school communities tend to have families that move often and are separated from their extended families in their home-of-record. When abuse is within the family, the transient life-style then increases the risk to international school students who tend not to have access to outside resources, and therefore cannot get help.

**Myth:** *Learning about child protection is harmful to your children.*

**Fact:** Research indicates that developmentally appropriate education makes children more confident and able to react to dangerous situations. Teaching using a specific population context increases protective behaviour.

**Myth:** *Abuse education is sex education.*

**Fact:** Research-based programs prepare students to develop the skills and attitudes to keep themselves safe from perpetrators, and behaviours that include bullying, harassment and other forms of exploitation.

**Myth:** *Abuse is a matter of culture; physical or sexual abuse falls within the norms of some cultures and is acceptable.*

**Fact:** The reality is that there no excuse for child abuse! No culture supports harming children.

**Myth:** *Child abuse is a result of poverty and happens in low socioeconomic circumstances.* **Fact:** Research indicates that child abuse occurs in all racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and cultural sectors of society. A common characteristic of an abusive family is isolation, such as that commonly found in our international school families who move often or are separated from their extended families at home.

**Myth:** *International Schools do not have to report abuse to local authorities.*

**Fact:** International schools are bound by the laws of the host country and as such international schools must be knowledgeable and compliant with the child protection laws in their locale. Furthermore, international schools are legally and ethically liable for any violation of existing laws related to reporting of cases of abuse or neglect; there are cases now pending where schools are facing legal action in regard to non-compliance.