

Maria Montessori Academy
Policy: Sexual Abuse and Molestation Prevention Policy
Adopted: August 6, 2019



Maria Montessori Academy (the “School”) takes seriously the responsibility of its personnel to protect the physical and psychological well-being of its students. We believe that the School’s personnel have an important role to play in the elimination of child abuse because they are in a unique position to observe children over extended periods of time on a daily basis.

Sexual abuse takes the form of inappropriate sexual contact or interaction for the gratification of the actor who is in a position of responsibility with respect to the student. Sexual abuse includes sexual assault, exploitation, molestation or injury.

Reporting by School Personnel

Utah law requires that whenever any person, including any school employee, contracted or temporary employee, or volunteer who has reason to believe that a child has been subjected to incest, molestation, sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect, or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect, he/she shall immediately notify the nearest peace officer, law enforcement agency, or the Division of Child Family Service. School employees must also report such information to the School’s Director. The law provides serious penalties for failure to fulfill one’s duty to report. School personnel and volunteers must comply with these provisions of Utah law and the School’s Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Policy.

Reporting by Students and Parents

Reports of sexual abuse should typically be made to the Director, who is the designated individual to receive and investigate complaints of these matters. However, students and parents may make reports to any School employee, and that employee is responsible for conveying the report to the Administration or, if the report involves the Administration, to the Board of Directors. Reports may be made verbally, but all reports will be documented in writing.

Investigation & Follow Up

The School takes allegations of sexual abuse involving School personnel seriously. Once an allegation is reported, the School will promptly, thoroughly, and impartially begin an investigation to determine whether there is a reasonable basis to believe that sexual abuse has been committed. When it is appropriate considering the nature of the allegations, an internal team may conduct the investigation. However, when the report involves potentially criminal conduct, the School will refer the reports to law enforcement

and cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by law enforcement or regulatory agencies.

The School reserves the right to place the subject of the investigation on an involuntary leave of absence, reassign that person to responsibilities that do not involve personal contact with individuals or students, or terminate employment.

To the fullest extent possible, but consistent with the legal obligation to report suspected abuse to appropriate authorities, the School will endeavor to keep the identities of the alleged victims and investigation subject confidential.

If the investigation substantiates the allegation, appropriate disciplinary actions will be taken, including but not limited to the termination of the actor's relationship with the School

Signs of Abuse

There are a number of red flags that suggest someone is being sexually abused. They take the form of physical or behavioral evidence.

Physical evidence of sexual abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- Sexually transmitted diseases;
- Difficulty walking or ambulating normally;
- Stained, bloody or torn undergarments;
- Genital pain or itching; and
- Physical injuries involving the external genitalia.

Behavioral signals suggestive of sexual abuse include, but are not limited to:

- Fear or reluctance about being left in the care of a particular person;
- Recoiling from being touched;
- Bundling oneself in excessive clothing, especially night clothes;
- Discomfort or apprehension when sex is referred to or discussed; and
- Nightmares or fear of night and/or darkness.

Additionally, adult perpetrators of abuse often display warning signs, including:

- Overly affectionate behavior such as prolonged hugging and touching;
- Engaging in nonprofessional behavior such as telling sexual jokes and sexual teasing;
- Seeking to extend their contact with certain students beyond the day.

Retaliation Prohibited

We prohibit any retaliation against anyone, including an employee, volunteer, board member, student or individual, who in good faith reports sexual abuse, alleges that it is being committed or participates in the investigation. Intentionally false or malicious accusations of sexual abuse are prohibited.

Screening Prospective Employees

The School's Administration must take reasonable effort when screening prospective School employees. In addition to conductive required criminal background checks, each applicant and former employer(s) of applicants should be asked, before an offer of employment is extended, whether the applicant has ever been investigated or accused of sexual misconduct.

Training

The Administration will provide School personnel every other year with training and instruction on child sexual abuse and human trafficking prevention and awareness, including (a) responding to a disclosure of child sexual abuse in a supportive, appropriate, manner; (b) identifying children who are victims or may be at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation; and (c) the mandatory reporting requirements in the Schools Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Policy and Utah Code Sections 53E-6-701 and 62A-4a-403.

The Administration will provide the parents or guardians of elementary school students with training and instruction every other year on child sexual abuse and human trafficking prevention and awareness, including (a) recognizing warning signs of a child who is being sexually abused or who is a victim or may be at risk of becoming a victim of human trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation and (b) effective, age-appropriate methods for discussing the topic of child sexual exploitation.

Administration will communicate this policy to personnel, volunteers, and students annually. Documentation of the communication of this policy will be maintained.

Signature:

Board President

Date