



# **INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF ICELAND**

## **Child Protection Policy & Procedures**



## **Safeguarding Student Well-being**

Updated: August 2018

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## ISI POLICY STATEMENT

**The International School of Iceland (ISI) strives to provide a safe and supportive environment for all students.**

### **1 Responsibilities to local and international laws and agencies**

International schools must be aware of the host country (local & national) as well as international requirements in developing and implementing their child protection policy. Relevant documents that require and guide the development and implementation of child protection policies and procedures include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989, and of course, Icelandic law. Iceland signed the UN agreement for the Convention of the Rights of the Child in January 1990, and became incorporated into Icelandic Law in February 2013. Under the terms of the Icelandic Child Protection Act 80/2002 mentioned below, "All persons shall be obliged to notify a child protection committee" if they have reason to believe that a child is suffering from abuse or neglect (see Section IV, Article 16 below for full text). ISI also incorporates the relevant Standards from CIS (Council of International Schools) and MSA (Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools) accreditation agencies (Appendix 2).

Under the terms of the Icelandic **Child Protection Act, No. 80/2002**, the Icelandic **Ministry of Welfare (Velferðarráðuneytið)** sets out the following laws for parents and professionals:

#### **1.1 SECTION I - Objectives of the Child Protection Act etc.**

##### **Article 1 - Rights of children and duties of parents.**

Children have a right to protection and care. Their rights shall be maintained in accordance with their age and maturity. [All those involved in the care and upbringing of children shall treat them with respect and consideration, and no child may ever be subjected to violence or any other degrading treatment. Parents shall treat their children with care and consideration and observe their duties of upbringing and custodianship as to best suit their child's interests and needs. They shall create satisfactory conditions for their children to grow up in and ensure their welfare in all respects.] Act No. 52/2009, Article 1.

##### **Article 2 - Objectives and jurisdiction.**

The objective of this Act is to ensure that children who are living in unacceptable circumstances or children who place their health and maturity at risk receive the necessary help. Efforts shall be made to achieve the objectives of the Act by strengthening families in their child-raising role, and applying measures to protect individual children when applicable. **The Act shall apply to all children within the territory of the Icelandic state.**

**Article 16 - Public duty of notification.** All persons shall be obliged to notify a child protection committee if they have reason to believe that a child:

- a. is living in unacceptable circumstances of upbringing,
- b. is exposed to violence or other degrading treatment or
- c. is seriously endangering his/her health and maturity.

**Article 17 - Duty of notification by those who deal with children.** [All persons involved in matters concerning children or expectant mothers, through their position or occupation, are obliged to notify a child protection committee, if they become aware of circumstances as described in Article 16.]

Pre-school heads and teachers, child-minders, school heads, teachers, clergy, physicians, dentists, midwives, nurses, psychologists, social workers, developmental therapists, [career counsellors] and those providing social services or counselling are under obligation to monitor the behaviour, upbringing and conditions of children as far as possible, and to inform the child protection committee if the child's circumstances appear to be of the nature described in paragraph 1. The duty of notification provided in this Article takes precedence over provisions in law or codes of ethics on confidentiality within the relevant professions. 1) Act No. 80/2011, Article 8.

**Article 20 - Collaboration with child protection authorities.** All those who, due to their position and work, are involved with children must collaborate with child protection authorities. Child protection authorities shall also seek to maintain good collaboration with these parties

Link to the full document - Icelandic "Velferðarráðuneytið" // Ministry of Welfare: Child Protection Act (pdf document)

[https://eng.velferdarraduneyti.is/media/acrobat-enskar\\_sidur/Child-Protection-Act-as-amended-2016.pdf](https://eng.velferdarraduneyti.is/media/acrobat-enskar_sidur/Child-Protection-Act-as-amended-2016.pdf)

## 2 The aim of this Policy

To ensure that all members of the ISI community help keep our students safe by:

- contributing to the provision of safe learning environments for all of our students
- taking appropriate action with the aim of making sure they are kept safe at school
- identifying students who are suffering or likely to suffer harm
- communicating to the school and wider community our commitment to safeguarding children.

Child abuse and neglect can have serious short and long-term physical and psychological implications for the victims. Child abuse and neglect are violations of a child's human rights and are obstacles to the child's education as well as their physical and emotional (holistic) development.

### **3 Our Commitment**

**The International School of Iceland (ISI) is therefore committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all students.**

All staff employed at ISI 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. Reporting and follow-up of all suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect will proceed in accordance with the administrative guidelines as set out in this policy. Furthermore, cases of suspected child abuse or neglect may be reported to the appropriate child protection agency at local level, as well as to the appropriate agency in the home country (if applicable).

As a part of this commitment, ISI will ensure that this policy is appropriately communicated to our students, and is made available to all parents via our school website. All ISI employees will similarly receive communication and training in relation to this policy. The school will make every effort to implement hiring practices which ensures the safety of children.

Should any staff member be reported as an alleged offender, ISI will conduct a full confidential investigation in compliance with the law, and with the interests and safety of the child as the highest priority.

This policy applies to all members of the ISI community - all staff, students, parents and visitors.

This policy will be reviewed annually for compliance and effectiveness.

### **4 Screening and criminal background checks**

ISI is committed to maintaining procedures to ensure the safe recruitment and selection of all teaching and non-teaching staff.

One effective means of preventing child abuse is through screening and criminal background checks. All personnel, staff, teachers, volunteers, and other members of the community whose potential employment or volunteer service involves direct contact with, and/or the potential for unmonitored access to children (including any individuals who regularly provide transportation to children) are given thorough reference and criminal background checks.

It will be made clear to all applicants that any misrepresentations, falsifications, or material omissions in the information provided by the applicant, whenever discovered, may result in disqualification from, or termination of employment or volunteer service with the organization.

All hiring practices with regard to background checks and suitability for employment adhere to Icelandic law, and will include the following:

- A personal interview, to include question(s) regarding: awareness and observation of professional boundaries; appropriateness of relationships with children; commitment to and evidence of taking action to protect children.
- Credential checks, including requested assurances regarding: awareness and observation of professional boundaries; appropriateness of relationships with children; commitment to and evidence of taking action to protect children.
- Criminal history background checks to be provided at the point of application, from all previous countries of residence, together with a copy of the Icelandic equivalent (Sakavottorð) for those applicants resident in Iceland, prior to the applicant signing a contract of employment.
- All staff returning from a sabbatical or long term leave of two years or more will be expected to renew their background check.

## 5 STEPS & PROCEDURES

### **What happens when a teacher or staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child is being abused?**

The indicators of abuse and neglect (see Appendix 1) will be used by the staff member as a guideline for reporting to the **Well-being Team (Lausnateymi)**, who will determine if the case needs further attention. If a staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect (either through own observations, or if a child has disclosed information), a report must be made immediately to a member of the Well-being Team, who will in turn report to the Head of School. (Appendices 3 & 4 also make useful reading).

#### **All reports must remain confidential.**

A **reporting form** is available at the end of this Handbook (Appendix 7) or from the office.

**Bullying Policy:** Should any incidences of bullying be reported, ISI also has reporting and action procedures in place for staff to follow (see Appendix 6 & also Staff Handbook).

## 5.1 The Role of the Well-being Team (Lausnateymi)

The Well-being Team (Lausnateymi) is responsible for the on-going proactive support for and monitoring of well-being in the school, as well as for reactive responses to any reports or requests for support, diagnosis-support, and reports of abuse or neglect. Should a member of the Team receive a report of abuse or neglect, they must immediately notify the Head of School, who will in turn convene a meeting of the Wellbeing Team within a maximum of 48 hours of notification. The team can also reach out to the Icelandic Child Protection Services, as well as local municipality consultants.

### Who to contact - the Well-being Team (Lausnateymi)

Hanna Hilmarsdóttir	Headmistress
Kirsten Kummerfeld	Homeroom Teacher & Positive Discipline Co-ordinator
Elísa Línudóttir	Student Support Co-ordinator

## 5.2 What to do if a student confides in you:

- **Do not let a child swear you to secrecy** before telling you something. You may need to report, which the child will view as breaking your trust with them.
- You can reassure the child that the information they give you will be treated sensitively and kept as confidential as necessary.
- You may want to suggest to the student that there are other people they can talk to, and who might be better placed to help them. However, it is important for the child to not feel dismissed.
- If a child asks to speak with you, try to find a neutral setting where you can have quiet and few interruptions.
- **Do not lead the child in telling.** Just listen, letting him/her explain in his/her own words.
- **Don't pressure** for a great amount of detail.
- Respond calmly and matter-of-factly. Even if the story that the child tells you is difficult to hear, it is important not to register disgust or alarm.
- Do not make judgmental or disparaging comments about the abuser as it is often someone the child loves or with whom he/she is close.
- Do not make promises to the child that things will get better.
- Do not confront the abuser.
- If the child does not want to go home, this should be considered an emergency. Report and handle immediately by contacting a member of the Wellbeing Team. Do not take the child home with you!
- Explain to the child that you must tell a member of the Wellbeing Team to get help.
- Try to let the child know that someone else also will need to talk with him/her and explain why.
- Empower the student by, as much as possible, allowing the child a part in the process.

### **5.3 If a member of staff has suspicions of abuse or neglect:**

If you have any suspicions (even if a child has not confided in you), please report your suspicions to a member of the Well-being Team, who will in turn report the matter to the Head of School for further investigation.

### **5.4 Reporting Steps:**

**Step 1 - Report the disclosure to any member of the Well-being Team.** This member of the Well-being Team will in turn pass this information onto the Head of School, who will convene the Well-being Team within a maximum of 48 hours.

**Step 2 - The Well-being Team will gather information** regarding the reported incident, and in cases of suspected physical, emotional, sexual abuse and/or neglect.

**Step 3 - Factual documentation:** In all cases, follow-up activities will be conducted in a manner that ensures that information is documented factually and that strict confidentiality is maintained. The following procedure will be used:

- Interview staff members as necessary and document information relative to the case.
- Consult with school personnel to review the child's history in the school.
- Determine the course of follow-up actions.

**Step 4 - Implementation** of the actions.

**Step 5 - Emotional support:** During and after the process described above, there might be a need for emotional support for staff, students and families involved. This will be provided by the Well-being Team.

## **6 STAFF TRAINING & AWARENESS COACHING**

### **6.1 Annual Staff Training**

Regular training and procedure awareness will be provided so that all ISI staff feel confident in dealing with, and reporting on, suspected incidents of abuse or neglect.

**Professional Days:** The school calendar contains a number of Staff Training (Professional) days at the beginning of the school year and over the course of the year.

Staff training will take the form of workshops provided by:

- In-house 'how-to' training from Well-being Team (Lausnateymi)
- The school nurse
- A member of the Icelandic Child Protection Services
- External Agencies which provide awareness training, such as "Blátt Áfram", a sexual abuse prevention organisation in Iceland.
- Local municipalities have vast resources to support schools and safe-guard children.

## 7 STUDENT AWARENESS & TRAINING

### 7.1 Positive Discipline

The PD program at ISI is designed to teach young people to become responsible, respectful and resourceful members of their communities. The philosophy of PD teaches important social and life skills in a manner that is respectful and encouraging for both children and adults, to model respect for self and respect for others. ISI has a comprehensive library of PD reference books which offer guidance on supporting and maintaining respectful relationships, both in the classroom and in the home.

### 7.2 Personal Development Program - empowering students through education

At ISI, we strive to give our students the skills they need to excel in their personal and professional capacities throughout their lives. Each month we have a theme for personal development which is used to supplement the academic objectives in that same month, and is presented through age-appropriate discussions and tasks/projects. Provision will be made to include elements of age-appropriate awareness on child protection, such as strategies to recognise and report inappropriate behaviour.

#### 7.2.1 Primary School:

Our **Personal Development Program** for the Primary School covers the following topics (the underlined topics incorporate child-safety themes):

**August – September** – Transitions, Personal Environment, Friendship, Traffic Safety

**October** – Conflict Resolution

**November** – Personal Hygiene

**December** – Gratitude, Multi-cultural celebration

**January** – Health: Physical & Mental

**February** – Personal Safety, Children’s Rights

**March** – Careers & Respectful Relationships

**April** – The Environment

**May – June** – Transitions & Change, Exercise

### 7.2.2 High School:

Our High School similarly covers a range of monthly topics - “**Life Skills for the 21st Century**”, as well as Health & Fitness. The underlined topics incorporate adolescent-safety themes:

**August – September** – Study Skills, Time Management, Respectful Relationships

**October** – A Culture of Thinking

**November** – Speech and Presentation Skills

**December** – Conflict Resolution

**January** – Health: Physical & Mental, Personal Hygiene.

**February** –Personal Safety, Anti-smoking campaign

**March** – Careers & Leadership Skills.

**April** – Community Service

**May – June** – Transitions & Change, Exercise

### 7.2.3 School Nurse Support & Education

Under the Icelandic Health Care system, school nurses provide students with age-appropriate health education, termed “6H”, taken from the following Icelandic words:

<b>Hollusta</b>	Health
<b>Hreyfing</b>	Movement
<b>Hamingja</b>	Happiness
<b>Hugrekki</b>	Courage
<b>Hvild</b>	Rest
<b>Hreinlæti</b>	Personal Hygiene

Link to the 6H Icelandic Health Centre Guidelines for children and adolescents.

<http://www.6h.is/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=10&Itemid=33>

Students in 6th grade and upwards into High School will also receive age-appropriate sex education.

A report prepared by Suzie March, a CIS Affiliated Consultant, identifies a “clear need” for a program of up-to-date and relevant information provided by schools to provide students with the tools they need to protect themselves in the modern world. The report notes the following:

**“In their report to the UN in 2010, the WHO stated ‘The right to education includes the right to sexual education, which is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realising other human rights, such as the right to health, the right to information and sexual and reproductive rights.’**

According to the WHO, an integral part of a school’s obligation within its Child Protection programme is sex and relationship education (SRE). International accreditation bodies, and other bodies engaged in the quality assurance of international education - for example, school inspection agencies - have a responsibility to set clear and detailed standards that are not open to misinterpretation.

In the 21st century, SRE also delivers vital information about how children can protect themselves from cyber bullying, online grooming or sexting, as well as covering sexual abuse by peers or those in a position of trust. This has become an increasingly impactful element of SRE: helping protect a child from modern day threats that were never considered or dealt with by any previous programmes. International Planned Parenthood considers *‘They should also be able to protect themselves and feel protected by their environment.’* (Marsh, Nov. 2015).

Ref: <http://www.cois.org/page.cfm?p=2678>

## 8 APPENDICES

### 8.1 Appendix 1

#### 8.1.1 Definition of Terminologies

**Child Protection** is a broad term used to describe philosophies, policies, standards, guidelines and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In this document the term “child protection” applies to protection of children at the International School of Iceland. Please note that this definition also includes harm to self.

**Child Protection Policy** is a statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to protecting students from harm (to self and from others) and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of students. It serves to create a safe and positive environment for children and to demonstrate that the school is taking its duty and responsibility seriously. This handbook considers that the International School of Iceland will provide appropriate guidance to increase children’s ability to understand abuse prevention.

**Child protection concerns** include suspected, alleged, self-disclosed, or witnessed abuse of a child by anyone associated within or outside the school which must be investigated and followed by appropriate action.

**Child Abuse** - According to the World Health Organization, child abuse constitutes “all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.”

A person may abuse a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional (e.g. school) or community setting; children may be abused by individuals known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. Often children may experience multiple forms of abuse simultaneously, further complicating the problem.

Most child abuse is inflicted by someone the child knows, respects or trusts. International school communities have unique characteristics of which school personnel must be aware in terms of the individuals who are around our children. School personnel should be knowledgeable of the potential reasons why children may not be able to talk about any victimization they might have experienced.

To increase the ISI community awareness, **this policy focuses on four main categories of abuse** and provides basic information about the physical and behavioral signs associated with each type.

**I. Physical abuse (*child in danger*)** May involve hitting, punching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, biting, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing intentional physical harm to a child. (These symptoms could also indicate harm to self, such as, cutting and suicide ideation).

**Possible Signs of physical abuse:**

- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Injuries that occur to the body in places that are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained stomach pains
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather
- Fear of returning home or of parents being contacted
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Being aggressive towards others
- Being very passive and compliant
- Chronic running away

**II. Emotional abuse (*child in danger*)** Is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child so as to cause severe and adverse effects on a child's emotional development.

**It may involve:** conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved; that they are inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person; age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children; causing children frequently to feel frightened; or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may also occur alone.

**Possible Signs of emotional abuse:**

- Physical, mental and emotional development is delayed
- Highly anxious
- Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder
- Fear of new situations
- Low self-esteem
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Chronic running away
- Compulsive stealing
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Attention-seeking behavior
- Persistent tiredness
- Lying

**III. Sexual abuse (*child in danger*)** Involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (i.e. rape) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production or viewing of pornographic material or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Children involved in commercial sex work are victims of sexual abuse, whether they perceive themselves as victims or not.

**Possible Signs of sexual abuse:**

- Pain or irritation to the genital area
- Difficulty with urination
- Infection, bleeding
- Fear of people or places
- Aggression
- Regressive behaviors, bed-wetting or stranger anxiety
- Excessive masturbation
- Sexually provocative
- Stomach pains or discomfort walking or sitting
- Being unusually quiet and withdrawn or unusually aggressive
- Suffering from what seem physical ailments that can't be explained medically
- Showing fear or distrust of a particular adult
- Mentioning receiving special attention from an adult or a new "secret" friendship with an adult or young person
- Refusal to continue with school or usual social activities
- Age inappropriate sexualized behavior or language

**IV. Neglect (*child at risk*)** Is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or physiological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development.

**Possible indicators of neglect:**

- Medical needs unattended
- Lack of supervision
- Consistent hunger
- Inappropriate dress
- Inadequate nutrition
- Fatigue or listlessness
- Self-destructive
- Extreme loneliness
- Extreme need for affection
- Failure to grow
- Poor personal hygiene
- Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school
- Low self-esteem
- Poor social relationships
- Compulsive stealing
- Drug or alcohol abuse

## **Long term impact of unmitigated child abuse**

The impact of child abuse can persist for a lifetime after the abuse has been committed. Some victims of abuse are resilient and thus manage to function and survive. Much research has established the relationship between long-term child abuse and lifetime health and well-being, especially if the children do not get appropriate support to help them cope with the trauma. The most important point to consider is that children often are exposed to multiple forms of abuse and suffer a myriad of symptoms. Furthermore, all forms of abuse have the potential for long-term impact on the victims, and can affect the victim's ability to function as a human being. Abuse challenges the self-value, self-esteem, and sense of worth of its victims, rendering them hopeless, helpless and unable to live a complete life.

### **Possible long term impact of child abuse**

- Poor educational achievement
- Inability to complete responsibilities
- Inability to live according to plan/ability
- Inability to care for self
- Inability to coexist, cooperate or work with others
- Lack of self-confidence, prone to addiction
- Inability to express love / or accept love
- Inability to lead family, constant health problem
- Prone to mental health problems
- Low self-esteem, depression and anxiety
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Attachment difficulties
- Eating disorders
- Poor peer relations, self-injurious behavior (e.g., suicide attempts)

In addition to knowing the signs of victimization, below are some early warning signs to look out for in potential offenders:

### **Signs of offenders (students)**

- Unusual interest in sex, sexualizing inanimate objects and activities
- Does not stop sexual misbehavior when told to stop
- Uses force and coercion in social situations
- Unusual intensity when discussing sex and sexuality
- Socializes with children much younger
- Gives gifts, requires secrecy in relationships

### **Signs of offenders (adults)**

- Has "favorite" student or child
- Attempts to find ways to be alone with children
- Inappropriate language, jokes and discussions about students/children
- Sexualized talk in the presence of students/children
- Gives private gifts or has private chats on Facebook/internet

## 8.2 Appendix 2

### 8.2.1 Responsibility to Accreditation Agencies

International schools are responsible to meet the best practice standards of their accrediting agencies as well as meeting accreditation standards (legal requirements) of the host country.

It is important for international schools to be knowledgeable about and respond to recent changes in standards of accreditation. The Council of International Schools (CIS) and the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA) have lead the way in adding specific standards related to Child Protection Programs in their most recent edition of accreditation standards.

Below is the statement from the CIS and MSA:

To reflect evolving programs and practices in the areas of Child Protection and related issues as well as the continuity of learning programs in exceptional circumstances, CIS and MSA are introducing a specific number of amendments to the Accreditation Standards and Indicators contained in the 8th Edition of the "Guide to School Evaluation and Accreditation". These amendments will apply to all schools, whatever their position in the accreditation cycle, from 1st January 2013 onwards.

**Standard D1** The school shall have faculty and support staff that are sufficient in numbers and with the qualifications, competencies and sound moral character necessary to carry out the school's programmes, services, and activities, to support fulfilment of the mission and objectives, and to ensure student protection and well-being.

**Indicator D1a** Recruitment and screening processes are in place to ensure that employees in all categories are appropriately qualified and of sound moral character.

**Indicator E4b** A culture of shared responsibility for the social and emotional well-being and protection of students is promoted by the school leadership and teachers through programmes to address awareness, prevention and responsiveness to issues such as sexual harassment, substance abuse, hazing and bullying, and discrimination in any form.

**Indicator D2d** Members of the faculty foster respectful interactions among and with students and with their peers, both in classrooms and about the school.

**Indicator D4a** School policies include:

- ii. recruitment and hiring guidelines that include provisions such as background checks which ensure the protection of students
- iv. clearly stated expectations for faculty and staff behaviour;

**Standard F1** A school climate characterized by fairness, trust, and mutual respect shall support student learning and well-being.

**Indicator F1** A culture of shared responsibility for the social and emotional wellbeing and protection of students is promoted by the school leadership and teachers through programmes to address awareness, prevention and responsiveness to issues such as child abuse, sexual harassment, substance abuse, hazing and bullying, and discrimination in any form.

**Indicator F1b** The school has policies, procedures, and practices that promote and address the physical, emotional, and social wellbeing of students and staff.

**Indicator F1f** Student, staff and parent information is treated with an appropriate degree of confidentiality.

**Indicator G4b** Appropriate and regularly reviewed arrangements exist to cover threats to the security of people and premises as well as to support – to the extent possible - programme continuity under exceptional circumstances.

## 8.3 Appendix 3

### 8.3.1 Some commonly held myths versus the realities about child abuse and neglect:

**1. 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.

**2. 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 behavior.

**3. Myth:** Abuse-awareness education is sex education.

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

**4. 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 should support harming children.

**5. 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.

## 8.4 Appendix 4

### 8.4.1 Some typical characteristics/attributes of international (transient) families:

#### Characteristics/attributes of international (transient) school children:

- Transience and mobility impacts development of identity and relationships (especially for support in times of need)
- Early maturity/sophistication versus naiveté and immaturity in other areas
- Separation from extended families; working and traveling parents, and separation from long term friendships/relationships results in attachment issues and thus support during times of crisis or need may be minimal or non-existent
- Lost between multiple and sometimes conflicting cultures and value systems resulting in confusion of behavioral expectations
- High expectations placed on students to achieve academically
- Access to maids and other daily helpers (drivers)
- Access to expensive international schools because companies pay tuition while they (and their peers) in their home-of-record, previously attended public school.

#### Characteristics of international (transient) families:

- Isolation from extended family, previous community for support
- Power differential in marriage (who has the work permit) creates vulnerability
- Impact of absentee parents
- *Love-hate* relationship with host country for expatriates
- Lack of control over critical life decisions: company decides where, when, and how the family moves. Lack of stability
- Superficial/tourist relationship with host country.

#### Characteristics of international school communities for transient families:

- School takes on role as center of family life and often provides superficial relationships that cannot meet mental health needs
- Power influence: family's *position* in community can be an inhibitor for school to act
- Sense of being *lost* in diversity of community – can cause further isolation.

## **Cultural dynamics of international school communities often create conflict:**

- Multiple norms rooted in different cultural traditions can cause confusion: religious values, values of parenting, discipline, care-giving, sexuality, gender roles and responsibilities
- Impact of rapidly changing “youth-culture” from developed nations
- Varying degrees of openness rooted in cultural traditions
- Varying cultural attitudes toward gender issues and child development – different concepts of developmental needs through childhood.

International school communities are vulnerable because the nature of abuse requires secrecy, insularity, isolation and limited access to support resources, which are some characteristics of the international community. These are the characteristics that perpetrators will use to their advantage in abusing children.

## **8.5 Appendix 5**

### **8.5.1 Useful weblinks:**

Link to the Icelandic “Velferðarráðuneytið” // Ministry of Welfare: Child Protection Act (pdf document)

[https://eng.velferdarraduneyti.is/media/acrobat-enskar\\_sidur/Child-Protection-Act-as-amended-2016.pdf](https://eng.velferdarraduneyti.is/media/acrobat-enskar_sidur/Child-Protection-Act-as-amended-2016.pdf)

Link to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (pdf document)

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf>

Link to the 6H Icelandic Health Centre Guidelines for children and adolescents (in Icelandic).

<http://www.6h.is/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=10&Itemid=33>

Link to Blátt Áfram, a sexual abuse prevention organisation in Iceland

<https://www.blattafram.is/>

8.6 Appendix 6

8.6.1 Anti-Bullying Action Plan



# Anti-Bullying Action Plan

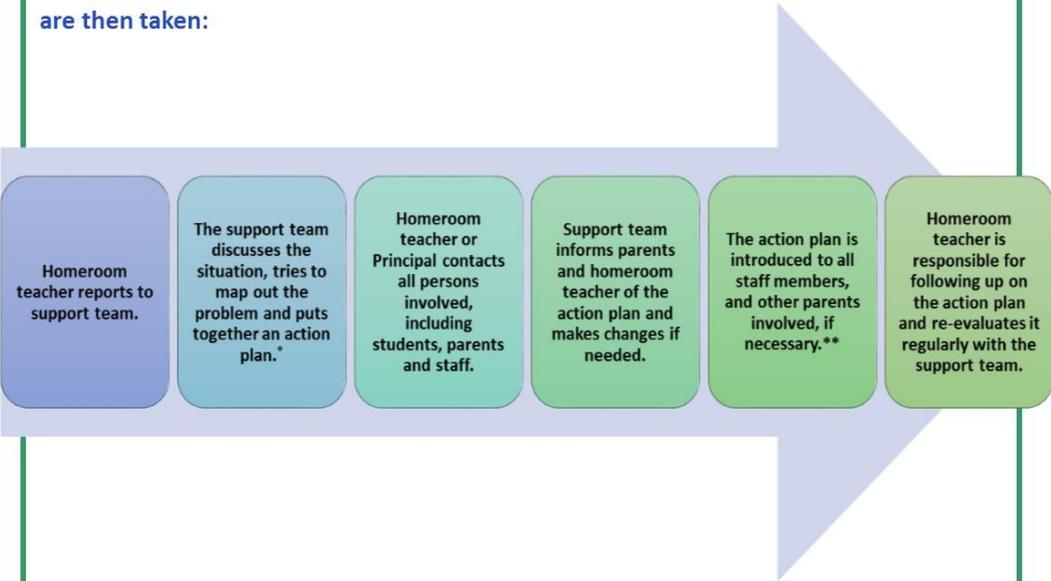
*“Bullying is repeated, intentional and overwhelming”*  
*Michael Thompson*

Bullying is a humiliating harassment or violence (physical, social or verbal) controlled by one person or a group and is directed to a single individual that can not defend him/herself. The harassment or violence needs to be cyclic and happen over a period of time.

(Office of the Public Advocate for children in Iceland, 2015)

If bullying is suspected in school, the student, parent or staff member who suspects that it is happening should report their suspicions to the homeroom teacher of the student who is possibly being bullied. The homeroom teacher talks to those involved in a neutral and safe environment, with no preconceived judgements.

**If the homeroom teacher suspects that a bullying issue is at hand, the following actions are then taken:**



*\*The support team evaluates every case individually and therefore the action plan can be different between cases.  
\*\*Action plan could involve counselling, social support, meetings with parents etc.*

## 8.7 Appendix 7

### 8.7.1 Reporting Form

Date of Report:	Reported by:
Reported to:	
<b>Key Questions</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Student's name, gender & age	
Name(s) of parents/guardians	
Reporter's relationship to student	
How & where reporter became aware (first-hand witness?). Write a brief description or disclosure of circumstances	
Name of perpetrator & relationship to student (if known)	
Any previous concerns with student?	
Any other relevant information	
Signed: (reportee)	Signed: Wellbeing Team member
Signed: Head of School	Action to be taken: