



CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

TOM TORLAKSON
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

February 4, 2016

Dear County and District Superintendents and Charter School Administrators:

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING AND PREVENTION

With the beginning of a new calendar year, I join you in emphasizing even more pointedly our most important priority—student safety.

This fundamental responsibility of ours has been codified into state law for some time, which mandates that all school and district employees, administrators, athletic coaches, and others involved with the education of our children immediately report any known or suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to an appropriate law enforcement agency. Law enforcement is required by state law to investigate these complaints.

Tragically, even after major news stories and investigations over the past few years, we continue to learn of very upsetting accounts of non-reporting and covering up of illegal actions. Some districts have paid out significant legal settlements for failure to report suspected abuses. Additionally, some school and district employees have faced criminal prosecution for failing to follow their duties as mandated reporters. Most importantly, unaddressed responses to abuse and neglect subject our students to additional risk and danger.

The safety and welfare of the children in our schools continues to be the top priority of the California Department of Education (CDE) and state lawmakers. We continue to maintain and update the CDE Child Abuse Prevention Web page, located at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/lr/ss/ap/>, as a resource for you and other school personnel on training, reporting guidelines, procedures, and other information to create safe school environments.

Last year saw the enactment of AB 1432 (Gatto), legislation I supported that mandated annual training of teachers and other school employees on identifying child abuse and reporting obligations. The California Department of Social Services, with input from the CDE, created the online Child Abuse Mandated Reporter Training Web site to help meet this annual training requirement. The training module for educators is at <http://mandatedreporterca.com>.

This year, AB 1058 (Baker) takes effect with its emphasis on child abuse prevention.

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AB 1058 calls on the CDE and the Department of Social Services to develop a list of "best practices" to prevent the abuse of children on school grounds. We are working to develop these guidelines and will share them as soon as they are available.

AB 1058 encourages teachers and other school employees to receive additional training with respect to child abuse prevention at least once every three years. I further urge you, however, to incorporate this preventative training into your existing annual training programs on child abuse identification and reporting procedures.

Let's work even harder this year to have all of our employees fully trained and aware of their mandated responsibilities under the law. If you have any questions or additional ideas regarding this subject, please contact CDE's Coordinated School Health and Safety Office by phone at 916-319-0914.

Thank you for joining me in committing to make 2016 the safest possible year for the children in our schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Torlakson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent horizontal line above the first name.

Tom Torlakson

TT:pt