Mandated Reporter Statement of Understanding for Students and Faculty Volunteering through the Center for Community Engagement

In 2015, Act 15 of the PA Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) was amended to expand the list of people who are required to report suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect. Under this amendment, all people who are affiliated with an institution of higher education and have regular contact, through employment or volunteering, with children under the age of 18 are considered Mandated Reporters and have an obligation to report suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect to the PA Department of Human Services.

Child abuse is defined by the CPSL as intentionally, knowingly or recklessly causing bodily injury, death, or serious neglect to a child through any act or a failure to act. Any act or failure to act that causes sexual abuse, exploitation or trafficking of a child, that creates a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury or sexual abuse; that abuses or substantially contributes to mental injury; or that fabricates, feigns, or intentionally exaggerates or induces a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child also falls under the CPSL definition of child abuse. Bodily injury to a child can occur through kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing, or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child; unreasonably restraining or confining a child; forcefully shaking a child under one year of age; forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under one year of age; or interfering with the breathing of a child.

According to the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance, a Mandated Reporter must make a report of suspected child abuse under the following circumstances:

- They have contact with the child as part of work or through a regularly scheduled program activity or service OR
- They are responsible for the child or work for an agency that is directly responsible for the child OR
- Someone makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter and the child is identifiable. This includes children that the mandated reporter may not know through their work or volunteer position OR
- A person 14 years old or older makes a disclosure that he/she has committed child abuse. This includes children that the mandated reporter may not know through their work or volunteer position.

The Mandated Reporter does not need to approach the victim nor discuss the suspected abuse with the victim in order to make a report of suspected child abuse. Mandated Reporters should not try to gather more information about the abuse or determine whether abuse has occurred. The sole responsibility of the Mandated Reporter is to report the suspected abuse to the PA Department of Human Services.

When a Mandated Reporter has cause to suspect that a child is being abused, they are obligated under CPSL to make a report. Sexual abuse, serious mental injury, serious physical injury, and deaths caused by child abuse have no statute of limitation and must be reported as soon as they
are suspected. All other suspected acts of child abuse that have occurred within two years must also be reported immediately upon suspicion. Reports to PA Department of Human Services are made by calling PA Childline at 1-800-932-0313, or online at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis. Both services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

While it is not possible to make an anonymous report of suspected child abuse, all reports are confidential and cannot be released by the county under most circumstances as specified by CPSL. Mandated Reporters are protected under the law from liability as long as they acted in good faith when reporting.

More detailed training on recognizing potential child abuse or neglect is available by state licensed Mandated Reporters through the Center for Community of Engagement. In accordance with the requirements of PA Act 126, trainers are certified by a state-approved “train the trainer” program. While Act 126 is silent on teacher and student volunteers, it is recommended that these individuals be provided the opportunity to participate in any training provided by Lafayette College. Please do not hesitate to contact the CCE with any questions.

Please sign below to acknowledge that you have read and understand this statement and your responsibilities as a Mandated Reporter representing Lafayette College.

X

Print Name: