

Child Protection Policy

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Dear Parents,

Child protection is extremely important, and we are committed to ensuring the protection of all our students. In September 2019, the school adopted a Child Protection Policy which set definitions for child abuse as well as outlines preventative measures and guidelines for the school's response in case of suspected abuse.

Following this policy, HILA is committed to setting up procedures to verify the previous employment for any new job applicants as well as to ensure all members of the HILA community are informed and educated regarding symptoms of child abuse.

We hope you share our commitment and will work with us as to ensure our children are safe as well as knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities. Your support of our efforts is important as we are a community. Please note that our Child Protection Policy will be included on our website. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Ms. Andrea Morris
Principal

Child Protection at HILA

HILA endorses the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which Liberia is a signatory. We believe that every child has the right to be protected from harm and all forms of abuse.

Child Protection Policy

The school believes that every child has the right to be protected from harm and all forms of abuse, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse as well as domestic violence and neglect. The school also believes that no child bears the responsibility for the abuse perpetrated on him or her by another. If a child is harmed, he or she has the right to treatment and support.

Definitions:

According to the World Health Organization, “Child maltreatment, sometimes referred to as child abuse and neglect includes all forms of physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation that results in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, development or dignity. Within this broad definition, five subtypes can be distinguished: physical abuse; sexual abuse; neglect and negligent treatment; emotional abuse; and exploitation.”

The school sets out below the common definitions of abusive behavior as specified:

- **Physical Abuse:** Non accidental physical injury including but not limited to female genital mutilation, burns, human bites, bruises, lacerations, bone fractures, missing teeth and any internal or head injuries, any of which have been intentionally inflicted.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Exploitation of a child by an adult or a child for sexual gratification, including but not limited to obscene conversation, exposure to pornographic material, exhibitionism, genital fondling, incest, and rape.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Mental anguish and/or chronic emotional pain caused by such things as rejection, isolation, severe humiliation, excessive teasing and verbal assault.
- **Domestic Violence:** Allowing a child to witness violence within his/her immediate environment.
- **Neglect:** Persistent abandonment; failure to provide adequate food, water, clothing, shelter, or medical care for a child; failure to protect a child from exposure to any danger which may affect his or her health or development.

Cultural and religious differences

Within the universally accepted norms of human rights framework, culture, religion, or tradition can never be invoked to condone any form of violence against children.

Child abuse reporting

All employees of the school have the responsibility to protect students and to act as their advocates in cases of suspected child abuse. If an employee suspects or encounters evidence of child abuse, he or she must immediately report this information to the respective counselor and/or Principal. If a

counselor or Principal is in any way involved in the suspicions, the employee must report to the Director. If the Director is in any way involved in the suspicions, the employee must report to the Chair of the Board. The Chair shall bring the matter to a Closed Session of the Board.

Response

The school shall take all reports of abuse seriously. In response to suspected abuse, the school shall take reasonable, responsible, and legal steps to protect the child. The principal has a coordinating role and has the additional task of ensuring confidentiality and keeping the Director informed as appropriate. The counselor is the designated person with regards to student contact. In all decisions, the protection and safety of the child will remain the foremost concern.

Child abuse prevention

In order to protect the students and staff of the school:

- The school shall conduct a comprehensive verification of previous employment of any applicant.
- The Head of School shall establish regulations for staff for the prevention, reporting, investigation and follow up of (suspected) child maltreatment and shall ensure that particular care is taken with respect to the collection of evidence in a confidential matter.
- The Head of School shall ensure that the school staff is periodically informed and educated regarding the symptoms of child abuse, reporting obligations and appropriate regulations for dealing with such issues in the school environment.

The Head of School shall periodically undertake a review of policies and regulations in the following areas as part of the effort to prevent child abuse.

- Guidelines for field trips involving overnight accommodation
- Guidelines for appropriate conduct between students and staff
- Educational programs on child protection issues
- Educational programs on human sexuality
- Criteria for screening school staff and volunteers
- Privacy guidelines.

All staff, faculty and administrators are mandated to report incidences of abuse and neglect. All HILA employees are also required to report suspicion of abuse or neglect. All reports of abuse and neglect must be made to the counselor, principal, or director within 48 hours for immediate response.