



# International School **TWente**

## PROTOCOL

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD ABUSE

### Stichting Consent

Compiled and translated from the "Protocol HUISELIJK GEWELD EN KINDERMISHANDELING"  
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# Introduction

Stichting Consent is responsible for providing good quality services to its students. This responsibility is certainly relevant in the case of services provided to students who are (suspected) affected by domestic violence or child abuse. Based on this responsibility, employees working at the Stichting Consent are expected to be alert to signals that may indicate domestic violence or child abuse in all contacts with students and parents/guardians and to respond effectively to these signals. The "Domestic Violence and Child Abuse" protocol has been drawn up on the basis of the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Reporting Code and supports employees of Stichting Consent so that they know what steps are expected of them in the event of signs of domestic violence or child abuse.

## Domestic violence and child abuse reporting code

Since July 1, 2013, professionals have been obliged to use the Reporting Code in the event of suspicion of violence in the home. This applies to all professionals who work with young people, such as in (youth) health care, education, childcare, youth care, social support and for the police and the judiciary. A mandatory reporting code is different from a reporting obligation. If there is a reporting obligation, the professional must always report his suspicion of violence to other authorities. The use of a reporting code provides professionals with guidance when identifying and initiating interventions to ensure that violence stops.

The Reporting Code consists of the following five steps:

- a) Mapping signals;
- b) collegial consultation and, if necessary, consultation with the Veilig Thuis hotline <sup>1</sup>;
- c) conversation with the student and/or parents;
- d) paths of violence or child abuse;
- e) decide: organize or report help.

From January 1, 2019, the requirement that there must be an assessment framework in step 5 of the reporting code also applies. This allows professionals to assess whether there is (a suspicion of) serious domestic violence or serious child abuse. Until January 1, 2019, the existing reporting code applies to professionals. Does the assessment framework show that there is (a suspicion of) serious domestic violence or serious child abuse? The professional is then expected to report this to Veilig Thuis. The aim of this is to ensure that (suspected) serious domestic violence and serious child abuse are known to Veilig Thuis. And that Veilig Thuis can carry out a safety check.

This change changes step 5 of the reporting code. From January 1, 2019, the care provider will ask themselves 2 questions:

- Do I have to report (suspicion of) serious domestic violence or child abuse?
- Is it possible to offer or organize help?

## Definitions

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<sup>1</sup>Veilig Thuis: Advice and Reporting Center for Domestic Violence and Child Abuse, tel. 0800-2000, [www.veiligthuiswente.nl](http://www.veiligthuiswente.nl)

'Domestic violence' is defined as: physical, psychological or sexual violence, or the threat thereof by someone in the home, whereby violence is understood as: the physical, sexual or psychological violation of the personal integrity of the victim, including elder abuse, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and previous related violence. The victim's domestic circle includes: (ex) partners, family members, relatives and family friends.

'Child abuse' is defined as: any form of interaction of a physical, psychological or sexual nature that is threatening or violent to a minor, which the parents or other persons towards whom the minor has a relationship of dependence or lack of freedom, actively or passively imposing, which causes or threatens to cause serious harm to the minor in the form of physical or psychological harm, including previously related violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and witnessing, as a minor, domestic violence between parents and/or or other housemates;

'Employee' in this protocol is defined as: the employee who works for Stichting Consent and who, in this context, provides care, guidance or another form of support to students of the public schools for primary education that fall under Stichting Consent.

'Student' in this protocol is defined as: the student to whom the employee provides his professional services.

## Step-by-step plan for signs of domestic violence and child abuse

### Steps in the reporting code

Step 1  
Mapping signals

Step 2  
Collegial consultation and, if necessary, consult Veilig Thuis or an injury expert

Step 3  
Discussion with the parents, depending on the situation

### Steps in the support route

Step 1  
Observe, signal and guide.  
The teacher guides the student and observes and identifies obstacles to development.

Step 2  
Peer consultation.  
Teacher shares any suspicions of concern with colleagues and internal supervisor (possibly in group and student discussions)

Step 3  
Discussion in the Diepteteam  
Teacher and Quality Coordinator discuss concerns about child/family in the school's community team; multidisciplinary action-oriented assessment of educational and care needs, agreements on the use of required care and action-oriented advice for teachers and parents

Step 4  
Weigh the nature and severity of the domestic violence or child abuse.

Step 5  
Decide: organize help yourself and/or report it to Veilig Thuis

Step 6  
Follow and close

Step 4  
Discussion in the Care Advisory Team  
Requests for help from students/parents and school are discussed in the care advice team; multidisciplinary, action-oriented assessment of education and care needs, agreements on the use of required care, action-oriented advice for the teacher and parents and preparation of (integral) indications and combined education-care arrangements

Step 5  
Aftercare and evaluation  
Evaluation of advice and interventions offered, aftercare for child/parents and identification of any bottlenecks for policy advice for schools, care partners, school boards and municipalities

## Step 1: Mapping signals

**Identify and record the signals that confirm or refute a suspicion of domestic violence or child abuse.**

**Also record the contacts, as well as the steps that are taken and the decisions that are made.**

With early detection, signals are seen that indicate a worrying or possibly threatened development. Rarely will these signals provide immediate clarity about the cause, such as domestic violence or child abuse. It is therefore wise to rely on the signals that you, as a teacher or other person involved, observe with the student or in the interaction between parent and student. You will find an overview of the signals in the signal list in the manual.

When identifying domestic violence or child abuse, use your school's early detection instrument or the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse detection list from the accompanying manual.

In this phase you observe the student in the classroom and possibly outside (for example during a home visit) so that you can identify the signals.

It is customary to talk to the parent during pick-up and drop-off times. During the exchange about the activities of the day, the student and the facts that stand out to you, you get an idea that allows you to map the situation with information from the parent.

You also observe the parent and child during other contact moments. You collect all signals to make it clearer whether there are concerns and what these concerns are.

You must record all information relating to signaling and action in writing. You can have the conversation reports signed by those involved. This allows you to be accountable later to the education inspectorate if this is requested.

If the signals indicate child abuse committed by a school employee, this must be reported immediately to the school management and the school board. In that case, the step-by-step plan does not apply.

Signals of violence between students are not covered by the step-by-step plan of the reporting code. Report the signals to your manager or management.

## Step 2: Collegial consultation and, if necessary, consultation with Veilig Thuis or an injury expert.

**Discuss the signals with an expert colleague. If necessary, also ask Veilig Thuis or an injury expert for advice.**

Depending on the organization's internal agreements, consultation is possible with the following colleagues: the internal supervisor, the management, a colleague from the same class and/or the youth nurse or youth doctor. It is also an option to discuss the student "openly" (not anonymously) in the care advisory team, but this requires written permission from the parents. If you are transparent and honest in your interactions, there is a good chance that an open discussion about these matters will be possible.

If the parent refuses, this is a worrying signal and must be included in the assessment (step 4). The student can be discussed anonymously if the parents do not give permission, but this is not preferable because of possible follow-up actions.

If you have any doubts about the cause of the situation and/or possible insecurity among the student, it is advisable to ask for advice from Veilig Thuis. Veilig Thuis can make an initial assessment of whether you are justified in being concerned about the situation and whether there may be child abuse or domestic violence. This advice is also important to carefully consider possible safety risks of any follow-up steps.

An injury expert can be consulted for injury assessment. You can contact Veilig Thuis for advice about this.

### **Emergency situations**

In case of signals that indicate acute and serious violence that the student or a family member must be immediately protected against it, you can immediately ask Veilig Thuis for advice. If, based on the signals, they conclude that immediate action is required, you can, if necessary, make a report during the same conversation so that the necessary actions can be initiated at short notice. In emergency situations, you can also contact the crisis service of the Youth Care Office and/or ask the police to provide assistance.

## Step 3: Conversation with the parent

**Discuss the signals with the parent.**

**If you need support in preparing or conducting the conversation with the parent, consult an expert colleague and/or Veilig Thuis or the Domestic Violence Support Center.**

1. Explain to the parent the purpose of the conversation.
2. Describe the facts you established and the observations you made.
3. Invite the parent to respond to this.
4. Only after this response, if necessary and if possible, provide an interpretation of what you have seen, heard and observed. In case of suspicion of sexual abuse, (intended) female genital mutilation (girl circumcision) or honour-related violence, you should urgently contact Veilig Thuis prior to the conversation.
5. Record the conversation and, if possible, have it signed by everyone involved.

In most cases it is unclear what the causes of the signals are. By informing parents and exchanging information about the student's development, concerns can be clarified, refuted or confirmed. Explicitly invite the parent to give his/her opinion and ask questions about student-related topics in the home situation. Does the parent recognize the situation? How does the student behave at home? How does the parent respond to this? How is parenting going at home? How does the student respond to this? How has the student's development been so far? What does the parent think about that? How does the parent experience the upbringing and his role as a parent?

Notify the parent after consultation with others. During these contacts, continuously inform and exchange information about the student's development and the concerns you have. If an action plan is used for the student, discuss this with the parent. Also discuss the results of the action plan in the meantime and afterwards.

If the parent recognizes the concerns, a start can be made on investigating opportunities and solutions. In addition, action recommendations can be exchanged for in the classroom and at home.

If during the conversation with the parent it turns out that the concerns have another cause, you can close this process. You can further guide the student and parent within the school's internal and external support structure.

No conversation with the parent or reporting to Veilig Thuis without discussing the signals with the parent is only possible if:

- The safety of the parent, your own, or that of someone else is at stake; or
- If you have good reason to believe that this conversation will cause the parent to break contact with you and leave the school.

This does not apply when asking for advice from Veilig Thuis, you can always ask for advice anonymously.

## Step 4: Weigh the nature and severity of the domestic violence or child abuse

**Based on the signals, the advice obtained and the conversation with the parent, weigh the risk of domestic violence or child abuse. Also consider the nature and severity of the domestic violence or child abuse. If in doubt, always contact Veilig Thuis.**

Estimate the risk based on the following three basic questions:

1. Is there immediate physical danger?

2. Does the parenting situation hinder the safe and healthy development of the child?
3. Are there risks to the child's safety in the near future?

When assessing the risk of domestic violence or child abuse, use a risk assessment instrument if such an instrument is available within your organization or practice. A risk assessment instrument is not used within primary education.

If in doubt, always contact Veilig Thuis.

## Step 5: Decide: organize or report help yourself

### Step 5a: Organize help and monitor effects

**Based on your assessment in step 4, do you believe that you can reasonably adequately protect the student and his family against the risk of domestic violence or child abuse:**

- **Then organize the necessary help;**
- **Follow the effects of this help, and;**
- **Still report it if there are signs that domestic violence or child abuse does not stop or starts again.**

If the school has made use of the care advice team, the care advice team can coordinate further action. The care advice team discusses the request for help from the school and parents, assesses the request for help, determines an approach, provides action recommendations for the teacher and advises on further help.

The responsible employee within the school discusses the outcome of the discussion in the care advisory team with the parent. Discuss with the parent the further steps to be taken for recommended assistance for the student and/or parent. Provide information and make agreements about any indications required for further assistance. Refer the parent and then ask whether the parent has arrived at help.

If you need support for any of the previous steps, please request this from the care advice team.

Make agreements in class about the student's guidance and care needs. Draw up an action or guidance plan and implement it. Share the outcome of this discussion with the parents.

### Step 5b: Report and discuss with the parent

**Are you unable to adequately protect your student against the risk of domestic violence or child abuse, or are you unsure whether you can provide sufficient protection against this:**

- **Report your suspicion to Veilig Thuis**
- **Make your report as close to facts and events as possible and clearly indicate if the information you report (also) comes from others;**
- **When you report, discuss with Veilig Thuis what you can do after the report, within the limits of your usual duties, to protect your student and his or her family members against the risk of domestic violence or abuse.**

Discuss your report with the parent in advance. You can also discuss the report with the student if he or she is 12 years or older.

1. Explain why you plan to make a report and what its purpose is;
2. Explicitly ask the student and/or parent for a response;
3. In the event of objections from the student and/or parent, discuss how you can meet these objections and record this in the document;
4. If this is not possible, weigh the objections against the need to protect your student or his family member against violence or child abuse. In your assessment, take into account the nature and seriousness of the violence and the need to protect the student or his family member against it by reporting it.
5. Report if, in your opinion, the protection of the student or his family member should be the deciding factor.

You can refrain from contacting the student and/or parent about the report:

- If the safety of the student, your own, or that of someone else is at stake, or;
- If you have good reason to believe that the student and/or parent will break contact with you as a result.

If insufficient improvement is visible after some period, it is important to contact Veilig Thuis again and, if necessary, report it again. Veilig Thuis advises, if necessary, to contact you several times if you see insufficient improvement or deterioration.

## Conclusion

The reporting code - and this protocol derived from it - has similarities with: the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR); the Youth Act; the Social Support Act (WMO); the Primary Education Act; and the privacy regulations of Stichting Consent. The basic model for the Reporting Code can be found at [www.meldcode.nl](http://www.meldcode.nl). Relevant and concise background information can be found at [www.protocolkindermishandeling.nl](http://www.protocolkindermishandeling.nl) under "protocol".

Training and other forms of expertise development will be offered regularly through the VCO Consent Academy, so that professionals develop and maintain sufficient knowledge and skills for identifying domestic violence and child abuse and for taking the steps of this protocol.

This protocol is discussed in the induction program for new employees. The operation of the reporting code is regularly evaluated during the regular audit process at schools and, if necessary, actions are initiated to promote knowledge about and use of the reporting code.