

## Reporting code for responding to signs of domestic violence and child abuse

The competent authority of Stichting Het Rijnlands Lyceum

Considering

- Stichting Het Rijnlands Lyceum is responsible for providing quality services to its clients and that this responsibility is certainly relevant to services to clients who are or may be affected by domestic violence or child abuse;
- that the professionals employed by Stichting Het Rijnlands Lyceum to share this responsibility are expected in all their dealings with clients to be attentive to signs that may indicate domestic violence or child abuse and to respond effectively to these signs;
- that Stichting Het Rijnlands Lyceum wishes to draw up a reporting code so that the professionals it employs know what steps they are expected to take if they observe signs of domestic violence or child abuse;
- that, in this reporting code, Stichting Het Rijnlands Lyceum will also lay down how it will assist the professionals in carrying out these steps;
- that 'domestic violence' is defined as: (threats of ) violence, in any location, committed by a person in the victim's domestic circle, 'violence' being defined as: physical, sexual or psychological harm to the victim's personal integrity (including senior abuse and honour-based violence). The victim's domestic circle includes: (former) partners, family members, relatives, and housemates;
- that 'child abuse' is defined as: any threatening or violent interaction of a physical, psychological or sexual nature with a child that the parents or other persons with whom the child is in a relationship of dependency or constraint impose actively or passively, causing or liable to cause serious harm to the child in the form of physical or psychological injury (including honour-based violence and female genital mutilation);
- that 'professional' is defined as: the professional employed by Stichting Het Rijnlands Lyceum who provides the organisation's clients with care, counselling, education, or other forms of assistance;
- that 'client' is defined as: any person to whom the professional provides his professional services.

Taking into account:

- the Personal Data Protection Act;
- the Youth Care Act;
- the Social Support Act

Adopts the following Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Reporting Code.

### Reporting Code

The Reporting Code consists of a plan of action for when there are signs or suspicions of domestic violence and child abuse. These steps are:

1. identifying the signs;
2. peer consultation and, if necessary, consultation with the Advice and Reporting Centre for Child Abuse and Neglect (Stichting Veilig Thuis);

3. interview with the client;
4. assess the nature and severity of the domestic violence or child abuse identified;
5. reaching a decision: organising assistance yourself or filing a report.

### **For primary education**

#### **Step 1: Signs**

Signs of obstructions in the development of a child and discussions with parents form an important part of the professional attitude of teachers and internal counsellors. This professional attitude is assumed in any contact with the pupil and the parents. Identifying the signs is often preceded by the feeling that there is 'something fishy'. The observed signs and any information obtained from parents form the basis for further action.

#### **Step 2: Peer consultation**

The teacher discusses the observed signs with colleagues and/or the internal counsellor. This may be the teacher of the pupil's class from the previous year, or the teacher of a brother or sister. The counsellor can, if necessary, consult the school nurse, paediatrician or school social worker. If there is a suspicion of domestic violence or child abuse, the counsellor may also (anonymously) ask for advice from the Advice and Reporting Centre for Child Abuse and Neglect (Stichting Veilig Thuis).

#### **Steps 3 and 4: Appraisal and risk assessment in the multidisciplinary care team and/or ZAT national support centre**

The next step is to discuss the signs, the advice obtained from colleagues and the information from the interview with the parents in the care team (at school) or the ZAT national support centre. The nature and severity of the signs and the risk of child abuse or domestic violence will then be assessed from a multidisciplinary point of view. The expertise of the partners will be collated and optimally utilised. A coordinated approach will then be established and implemented, directed towards supporting the child, the parents and the teacher.

#### **Step 5: Reaching a decision: offering assistance and action-oriented recommendations for the teacher**

The care team or the ZAT national support centre organises the necessary assistance and provides advice to the teacher about how to act. In addition, consultations will be held to determine whether and who makes a report to the AMK. Discussions will take place with the AMK to decide what the care team or the ZAT national support centre still can do after the report, within the limits of the usual activities, in order to protect the pupil and his family members from the risk of domestic violence or abuse. The care team/ZAT national support centre will agree who informs the parents about the results of the discussion and any report made to the Stichting Veilig Thuis.

#### **Step 6: Follow-up**

When assistance is offered by the care team or ZAT national support centre, the team agrees who coordinates the care. The care team/ZAT national support centre monitors the effects of this assistance and adjusts the approach as necessary. Finally, after-care is provided and the approach evaluated.

The schools use the following instructions as a guide for the actions of individual members of staff:

<http://www.handelingsprotocol.nl/>

## **For secondary education**

### **Step 1: Identifying signs**

Mentors and teachers initially come into action when there are concerns about students. In comparison with primary education, there is much less continuity in secondary education in the contact between student and mentor/ teacher. It often takes more time and effort to observe properly. Systematic student discussions are therefore a good basis to organise and discuss all the signs from teachers about students. Of course, these signs must then be connected with information already available from the transfer with the previous school and any data from the intake interview. If the development of the student is not as expected or desired, the mentor and teachers may agree on a targeted approach. The signs and proposed approach are then shared with the student and his parents. When signs indicate possible child abuse and/or domestic violence, there may be reasonable grounds to assume that the student will be at risk when the concerns are discussed with his parents. This is particularly the case if a threatening situation at home is discussed directly by the student with the mentor or a teacher. In such a case, step 2 is quickly started. However, many signs are non-specific and may point to a variety of problems. The discussion with the student and his parents must then relate to the more detailed identification of signs. On the basis of this, the mentor assesses whether there are grounds for taking follow-up steps.

### **Step 2: Peer consultation**

If the information gathered confirms the suspicion of child abuse and/or domestic violence, the mentor consults the school's internal care staff, for example, the care coordinator. Remedial educationalists and school social workers are also attached to some schools. All schools have a form of internal care consultation in which signs from teachers and mentors are discussed if they lead to requests for support. The key official in this consultation is the care coordinator. He chairs the consultation and the team/department managers represent the line. Other internal school care professionals and school social workers are also involved. Internal school care is brought into action on the basis of this consultation. In the case of single issues (well-defined problems with logical follow-up), the relevant ZAT national support centre partner institution is referred to by means of bilateral consultation. Within this consultation, the decision may be made to consult the Stichting Veilig Thuis about the identified concerns. It is also possible to make a risk report in the Reference Index (VIR). This is because if signals are not detected directly within the school organisation or during the discussion with the parents, they may nevertheless have been observed elsewhere and led to the 'fishy feeling'! In this way, a connection is made with the VIR, separate signs can be brought together and, if there is a match, rapid contact between ZAT national support centre partners is possible. During the internal care consultation, it is also assessed whether a case requires discussion in the ZAT national support centre. This is decided upon if the issue is so complex that a multidisciplinary examination and possibly interventions by ZAT national support centre partners are required. The involvement of student and parents in the concerns, as well as feedback to those who reported the signs, are points of attention during the discussion in the internal care consultation.

### **Step 3: Interview with the student and/or parents**

Following the peer consultation in internal care team and any advice from the AMK or SHG, the mentor discusses the signs with the student and/or the parent(s). Depending upon the situation, this may be jointly or separately. He often does this together with another school official. In most cases, it is unclear what are the causes of the signs are. His concerns are clarified, refuted or confirmed by informing the parents about the signs, by asking them to discuss the home situation and by exchanging information

about the development of their child. Permission can also be requested to discuss matters in the ZAT national support centre. On the basis of the previous considerations, the discussion with the parents may be omitted in connection with the safety of the child or others.

#### **Step 4: Assessment of the nature and severity**

The next step is for the school to discuss the signs, the advice obtained from colleagues and the information from the interview with the parents in the ZAT national support centre. The nature and severity of the signs and the risk of child abuse or domestic violence will then be assessed in the ZAT national support centre from a multidisciplinary point of view. A coordinated approach will then be established, which aims to support the student, the parents and the school. To this end, the necessary specialist assistance is available in the ZAT national support centre. If necessary, an additional examination may take place, a diagnosis made and the preliminary work for child welfare and/or special education indications can be performed. The special care from these institutions is thus initiated.

#### **Step 5: Reaching a decision**

The ZAT national support centre organises the necessary assistance and provides advice to the school about how to act. In addition, the participants in the ZAT national support centre discuss whether the AMK will be notified and if so, by which ZAT national support centre official. Discussions will take place with the AMK to decide what the internal care team or the ZAT national support centre still can do after the report, within the limits of the usual activities, in order to protect the persons concerned from the risk of domestic violence or abuse. The responsible school official (head teacher or care coordinator) discusses the outcome of the discussion in the ZAT national support centre with the parents.

#### **Step 6: Follow-up (is not formally part of the reporting code but is desirable)**

When assistance is offered by the ZAT national support centre, the team agrees who coordinates the care. The ZAT national support centre monitors the effects of this assistance and adjusts the approach as necessary. Finally, aftercare is offered and the approach is evaluated.

The schools use the following instructions as a guide for the actions of individual members of staff:  
<http://www.handelingsprotocol.nl>.

### **Responsibilities of Stichting Het Rijnlands Lyceum for the creation of preconditions for a safe working and reporting environment**

To make it possible for professionals to identify domestic violence and child abuse in a safe working environment and to take the steps in the reporting code, Stichting Het Rijnlands Lyceum will ensure that:

- publicity is given to the purpose and content of the reporting code within the organisation and in the circle of clients;
- training courses and other forms of professional development are regularly offered so that professionals develop and maintain sufficient knowledge and skills for the identification of domestic violence and child abuse and to take the steps outlined in the code;
- there are sufficient experts available who can support the professionals with the identification and with taking the steps outlined in the code;
- the reporting code is aligned with the working processes within the organisation;
- the operation of the reporting code is regularly evaluated and, if necessary, actions are initiated in order to optimise the application of the reporting code;
- agreements are made about the way in which Stichting Het Rijnlands Lyceum will support its

professionals if they are held accountable, either judicially or extrajudicially, for the way in which they apply the reporting code.

Determined in Wassenaar on 1 August 2013.

*(This document was adapted on 1 November 2016 when "AMK" was changed into "Stichting Veilig Thuis".)*