



Child Protection



at
RAS



Rabat American School Vision

Learning in a World Community:

Pursuing excellence in an environment of unity, mutual respect, and understanding.

Rabat American School Mission Statement

The Rabat American School is a world learning community, preparing its students for higher education by inspiring academic excellence, intellectual curiosity, effective communication, service, and integrity.

Dear RAS Community Members,

Our school's Child Protection Brochure is meant to inform you of a matter we take very seriously at our school. Our policy is based on international law, U.S. laws and guidelines, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which Morocco is a signatory. Two key articles of the convention we wish to draw to your attention are:

Article 19 - Protection from abuse and neglect

The state shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child.

Article 36 (Other forms of exploitation)

Children should be protected from any activity that takes advantage of them or could harm their welfare and development. Other articles (for instance, 34) speak specifically to protection from sexual exploitation.

By enrolling your child at RAS, you agree to work in partnership with the school and abide by the policies adopted by the RAS Board. Of equal importance is that all of us at RAS, from the Board through the administration, faculty and staff, want you to know that we value our partnership in providing for the safety and care of your children. It is for this reason that RAS has adopted its policy on Child Protection, and created guidelines for implementing the policy at the school and school community level. This brochure is designed to outline our guidelines and how we endeavor to work together with parents of our students.

By working together, we can provide a consistent and safe environment for our students, and ensure that they are knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities to themselves and each other. Thereby, they can grow and learn free of fear in a safe and supportive environment. I thank you for your support of our efforts and partnership, and invite you to contact your school division's principal or counselor regarding any specific questions you may have in this regard.

Sincerely,

Sean Goudie

Sources:

1. Amnesty International Unofficial Summary of the UN Rights Convention of the Child:
<https://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/children-s-rights/convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child>
2. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:
<https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

RABAT AMERICAN SCHOOL—CHILD PROTECTION

The Board of Trustees recognizes that RAS students may potentially be the victims of any form of abuse or neglect. Because of its continuing concern for the health and welfare of all RAS students, the Board established the following policy, with supporting guidelines and procedures to be established by the school's administration.

POLICY 7.500: CHILD SAFETY AND WELFARE

I. Responsibility of the Administration

- A. Guided by the precepts in sections II through IV below, the Director shall develop appropriate procedures for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect cases.
- B. Guided by the same precepts, the Administration shall develop and periodically review guidelines for RAS's response to suspected child abuse and neglect cases.
- C. The Administration may develop academic or extra-curricular programs to promote understanding about child abuse and neglect among students, parents, faculty and administrators.
- D. The Administration shall communicate the procedures and guidelines annually to the faculty and staff of the school.

II. Responsibility of the School Staff

- A. For the purposes of this policy, "school staff" includes all school employees, including (but not limited to) teachers, nurse, administrators, and counselors.
- B. All members of the school staff who have reason to believe that a student or students may be at risk of abuse or neglect, or who have actual evidence of such abuse or neglect, shall report suspected or confirmed cases of abuse or neglect to the school principal or school counselor without delay, normally within 24 hours.
- C. Recognizing that it cannot compel them to do so, the Board encourages persons other than school staff (e.g. parents) who have reason to believe that an RAS student may be at risk of abuse or neglect, or who have actual knowledge of such abuse or neglect, to discuss their concerns without delay with a principal or counselor.

III. Confidentiality

- A. The Administration and staff shall respect the privacy of any student and family involved in all cases of suspected or actual abuse or neglect.
- B. To this end, the Director shall ensure that information and records concerning the student's case remain confidential. Access to such information and records, and their dissemination, shall be limited to those individuals who reasonably require access to the information to carry out this policy and any recommendations made to ensure proper medical treatment of the student, or to detect and act upon cases in which an increased risk of abuse or neglect may be reasonably thought to exist.

IV. Policy and Procedures to be Consistent with U.S. Law

In the absence of similar laws and guidelines in the host country, this policy and all procedures, guidelines and programs developed under it, shall be consistent with U.S. laws on documenting and reporting suspected child abuse or neglect to the school, and from the school to appropriate authorities (embassies, consulates, local agencies) of students' home countries.

HOW ARE ABUSE AND NEGLECT DEFINED?

The Rabat American School recognizes four types of abuse and neglect, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (IPSCAN):

PHYSICAL ABUSE
SEXUAL ABUSE
EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE
NEGLECT

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse of a child is defined as the intentional use of physical force against a child that results in -- or has a high likelihood of resulting in -- harm for the child's health, survival, development, or dignity.

This includes beating, kicking, shaking, hitting, biting, strangling, scalding, burning, poisoning, and suffocating.

Much physical violence against children in the home is inflicted with the object of punishing.



Possible Indicators of Physical Abuse

The child:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Seems frightened of the caregiver and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a caregiver
- Abuses animals or pets

The parents or legal guardians:

- Offer conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury, or provide an explanation that is not consistent with the injury
- Describe the child as "evil" or in some other very negative way

Source: Child Welfare Information Gateway.
Available online at:
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/whatiscan.cfm>

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is defined as the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or else that violates the laws or social taboos of society.

Children can be sexually abused by both adults and other children who are -- by virtue of their age or stage of development -- in a position of responsibility, trust, or power over the victim.



Possible Indicators of Sexual Abuse

The child:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Attaches very quickly to strangers or new adults in their environment
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a sexually transmitted infection, particularly if under age 14
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver

The parents or legal guardians:

- Are unduly protective of the child or severely limit the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
- Are secretive and isolated
- Are jealous or controlling with family members

Source: Child Welfare Information Gateway.
Available online at: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/whatiscan.cfm>

Emotional and Psychological Abuse

Emotional and psychological abuse involve both isolated incidents, as well as a pattern of failure over time on the part of a parent or caregiver to provide a developmentally appropriate and supportive environment.

Acts in this category may have a high probability of damaging the child's physical or mental health, or its physical, mental, moral or social development. Abuse of this type includes: undue restriction of movement; patterns of belittling, blaming, threatening, frightening, discriminating against or ridiculing; and other non-physical forms of rejection or hostile treatment.

Other examples of emotional abuse include other types of verbal humiliation, refusing to acknowledge the presence of a child, and invasion of privacy for no specific reason.

The RAS Vision Statement promotes:

- Pursuing excellence in an environment of unity, mutual respect, and understanding.

We believe that:

- each RAS student has dignity and worth.

RAS Foundational Documents

Possible Indicators of Emotional and Psychological Abuse

The child:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
- Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example)
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has attempted suicide
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent

The parents or legal guardians:

- Constantly blame, belittle, or berate the child
- Are unconcerned about the child and refuse to consider offers of help for the child's problems
- Overtly reject the child
- Engage in emotional neglect: a pattern of actions, such as inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting a child to use alcohol or other drugs.

Source: Child Welfare Information Gateway.
Available online at
[:https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/whatiscan.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/whatiscan.cfm)

Neglect

Neglect includes both isolated incidents, as well as a pattern of failure over time on the part of a parent or other family member to provide for the development and well-being of the child—where the parent is in a position to do so – in one or more of the following areas:

- health;
- education;
- emotional development;
- nutrition;
- shelter and safe living conditions

The parents of neglected children are not necessarily poor. They may equally be financially well-off.

Note: When both parents or legal guardians are absent from Rabat for a period of 24-hours or greater, RAS requires them to appoint a temporary guardian and notify the school in writing of that individual's name and contact information. This guardian will assume responsibility, including medical responsibility, for the child, in the parents' absence.

Possible Indicators of Neglect

The child:

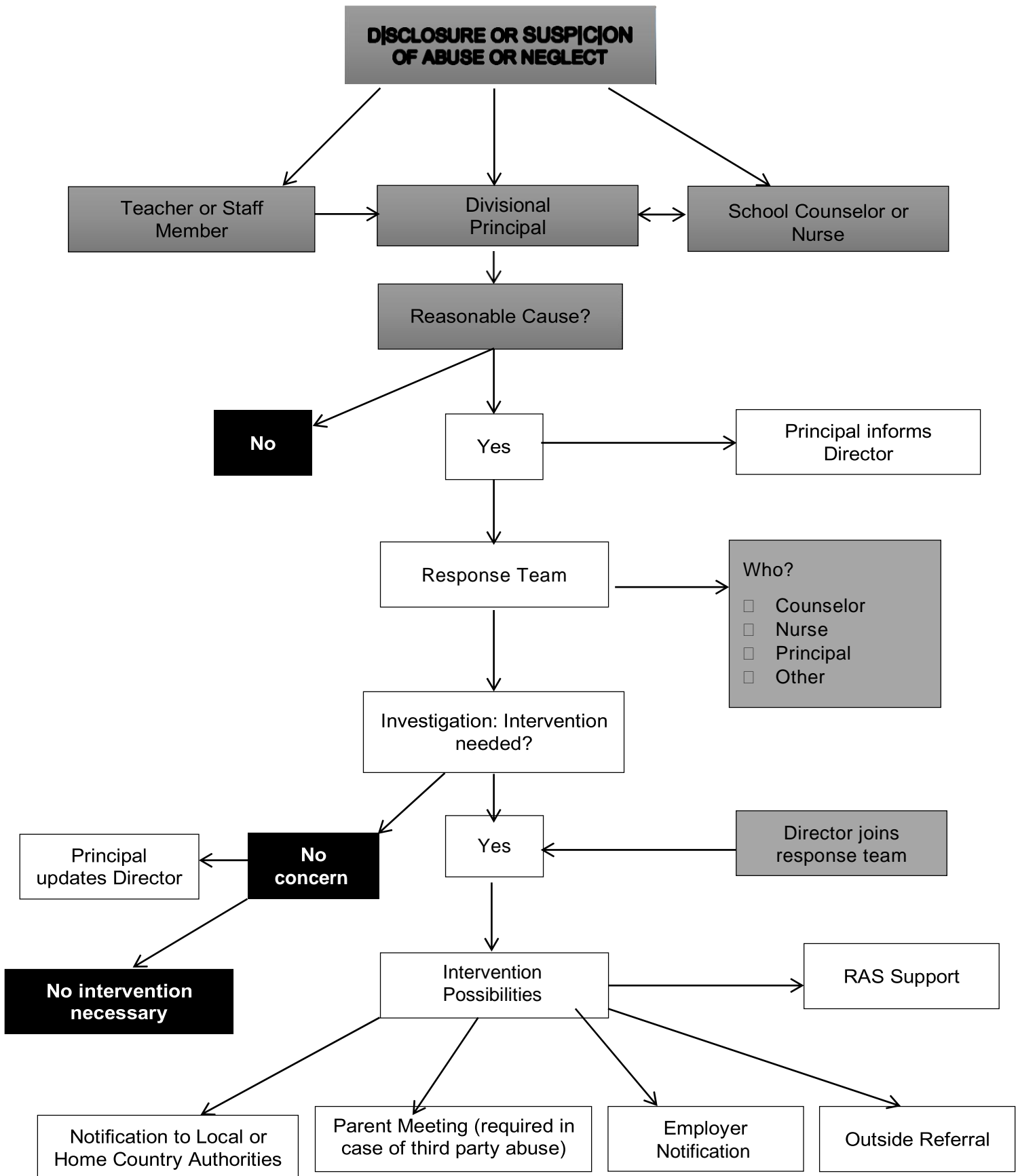
- Is frequently absent from school
- Beggars or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

The parents or legal guardians:

- Appear to be indifferent to the child
- Do not respond to repeated communications from the school
- Seem apathetic or depressed
- Behave irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Are abusing alcohol or other drugs
- Cannot be contacted in case of emergency

Source: Child Welfare Information Gateway.
Available online at
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/whatiscan.cfm>

STEPS FOLLOWING DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT



STEPS FOLLOWING DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Disclosure or suspicion:

When an RAS employee suspects that a child has been abused or neglected, the employee is **required** to make a report to their divisional principal. The principal, in consultation with the school counselor, determines whether there is reasonable cause to suspect neglect or abuse. If so, the principal informs the director and a response team (consisting of counselor, nurse, and others) is assembled to determine whether an investigation is necessary.

Investigation:

If an investigation is required, information can be gathered from:

- School personnel who know child's history at the school
- School records
- Witnesses who were nearby
- Child involved

The investigation will focus on gathering factual information and will be conducted in a way that assures respect and privacy for the child, his or her family, and others who may be involved. Observations of children may be conducted through observations, play assessment, drawings or interview. Based on the results of the investigation, the response team will develop a plan, keeping the director informed.

Intervention:

If the investigation indicates that a third-party (i.e., a person outside the family) is a potential perpetrator, parents will be contacted immediately.

If parents or family members are involved in the abuse or neglect, the following may be options:

- Parent meeting to present the concerns;
- Referral of the family to outside resources for counseling;
- If the family member is an employee of a diplomatic mission or international employer, possible notification of that mission or employer.

Depending on the type of abuse, the judgment of the response team, and the response of the family to interventions, other actions that may be taken, subject to the approval of the Director, are as follows:

- The parent's employer may be contacted;
- Local authorities may be contacted;
- Home country authorities (such as child welfare authorities) may be contacted;
- Another school the child may attend may be notified.

Moroccan laws governing child abuse will be observed.

Support for the child will be offered throughout this process by his or her counselor at RAS. The counselor may:

- Maintain contact with the child and family to provide support and guidance
- Provide support to teachers and administrators
- Provide resources and strategies to teachers
- Maintain contact with outside counselors working with the child.

Documentation of the neglect and abuse, including information about the dates, the reported incidents, the people involved, and the plans to assure the child's safety will be kept in a confidential file at the school.



DISCIPLINE OR PUNISHMENT?

The World Health Organization, in its guide entitled, "Preventing Child Maltreatment," discusses physical abuse by contrasting discipline and punishment, as reproduced below.

Discipline for children involves training and helping them develop judgment, a sense of boundaries, self-control, self-sufficiency, and positive social conduct . Discipline is frequently confused with punishment, particularly by caregivers who use corporal punishment in an attempt to correct and change children's behavior. There are several differences between discipline and punishment.

Positive strategies of discipline recognize children's individual worth. They aim to strength children's belief in themselves and their ability to behave appropriately, and to build positive relationships.

On the other hand, punishment involving either physical or emotional measures often reflects the caregiver's anger or desperation, rather than a thought-out strategy intended to encourage the child to understand expectations of behavior. Such punishment uses external controls and involves power and dominance. It is also frequently not tailored to the child's age and developmental level.

Corporal punishment entails the use of physical force. It has been commonly used in many societies in the past, and the exact form it takes varies according to culture and religion. Research has shown, though, that is it not effective in promoting the desired change in behavior in any lasting way. The behavior and emotional consequences of corporal punishment vary according to how frequently and how severely the punishment is applied, as well as to the age, development state, vulnerability and resilience of the child. Corporal punishment can cause relationships to break down. It serves to humiliate children and can lead to physical injury and serious impairment in development.

All children need discipline, and it is best if children can be supported in developing their own self-discipline. An approach to discipline should be encouraged that uses alternatives to corporal punishment. These include such methods as distraction and redirection, the fixing of a cooling-off period, the setting of rules and limits appropriate to the child's age and developmental level, problem-solving, and the withdrawal of privileges.

Source: *Preventing Child Maltreatment: A Guide to Taking Action and Generating Evidence*, Geneva, World Health Organization, 2006.

SOME THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE

Who Sexually Abuses Children?

It is impossible to describe a typical abuser. They look and act in various ways, can be found in all areas of society, and are often well-respected members of our communities. They may appear to be kind, caring people who are great with children. Abusers work hard to cultivate this image --- so people will not suspect them of, and will not believe it if they are ever accused of, sexually abusing children.

Here is what research tells us:

1. Nearly all child sexual abuse is committed by people known to children and families, including:
 - Family members such as parents, stepparents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins;
 - People in a family and/or student's circle of trust such as friends, neighbors, teachers, coaches, or household staff.
2. Most abusers are male --- although females also sexually abuse children.
3. Over one-third of abusers are under the age of 20.

Offenders vary in many ways. What they have in common is this: They have thought about being sexual with children and have acted on those thoughts.

Source (adapted): Department for Children and Families, Agency of Human Services, State of Vermont, USA. Statistics from *2011 Report on Child Protection in Vermont*.



The Grooming Process: How Abusers Groom Children and Adolescents

Grooming is a subtle, gradual, and escalating process of building trust with a child. It is deliberate and purposeful. Abusers may groom children for weeks, months, or even years --- before any sexual abuse activity actually takes place. It usually begins with behaviors that may not even seem to be inappropriate.

Grooming may include:

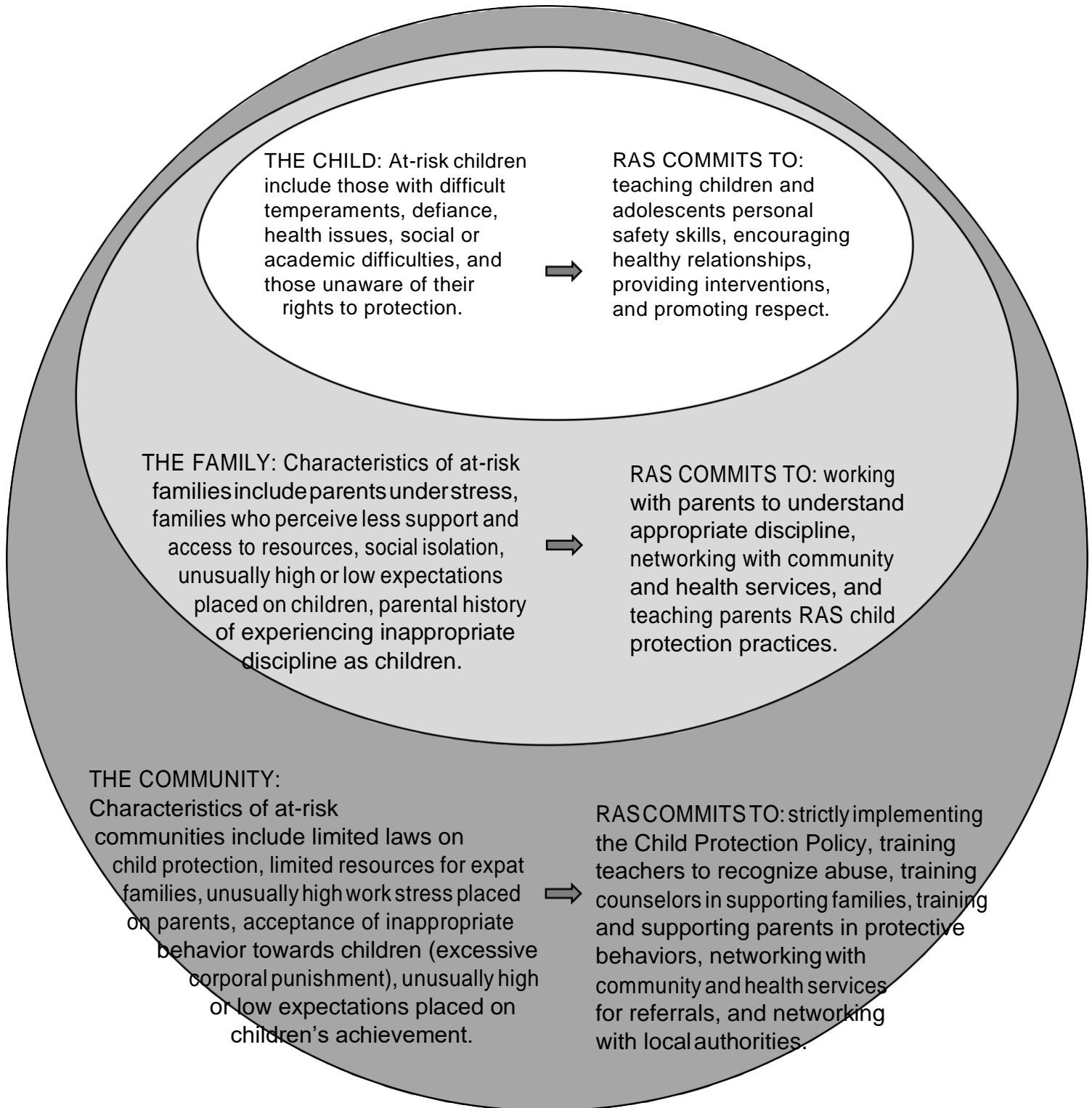
- Befriending a child and gaining his or her trust.
- Testing a child's boundaries through telling inappropriate jokes, roughhousing, backrubs, tickling or sexual games.
- Moving from non-sexual touching to "accidental" sexual touching. This typically happens during play so the child may not identify it as purposeful, inappropriate touching. It is often done slowly so the child is gradually desensitized to the touch.
- Manipulating the child to keep a secret about what is happening. The abuser may use a child's fear, embarrassment, or guilt about what has happened. Sometimes, the abuse uses bribery, threats, or coercion.
- Confusing the child into feeling responsible for the abuse. Children may not notice or become confused as the contact becomes increasingly intimate and sexual.

How abusers groom adolescents:

- Identifying with the adolescent. The abuser presents himself as the only one who understands him or her.
- Displaying common interests in sports, music, video games, etc.
- Recognizing and filling the adolescent's need for affection and attention.
- Allowing or encouraging the adolescent to break rules (e.g., smoking, drinking, using drugs, viewing pornography).
- Communicating with the adolescent outside the person's role (e.g., teacher or coach), including texting, emailing without parents' knowledge.

RABAT AMERICAN SCHOOL CHILD PROTECTION

The RAS Child Safety and Welfare Policy works for the child, the family, and the community. Research indicates that international communities are as prone to child abuse as other communities. Child abuse is a multi-faceted issue that involves dynamics of the child, the family, and the community. The RAS Child Protection Procedures work to respond at all three levels: for the Child, situated primarily within the Family, which in turn exists within the greater Community.



Source: *Child Protection: Shanghai American School*

RAS CHILD PROTECTION CODE OF CONDUCT

Our students are children, and RAS is wholly committed to the safety and protection of the children in its care. This code of conduct applies to all faculty, staff, employees, volunteers and students who represent the school and are called upon to interact directly with students.

The public and private conduct of faculty, staff, employees, students, and volunteers acting on behalf of RAS can inspire and motivate those with whom they interact, or can cause great harm if inappropriate. We will, at all times, be aware of the responsibilities that accompany our work, and we will provide a safe environment for our students. We will intervene when there is evidence, or reasonable cause to suspect, that a child in our care is the subject of any form of abuse or neglect. Cases of suspected abuse or neglect will be reported as appropriate.

We will be aware of our own and other persons' vulnerability, especially when working alone with our students; we will be constantly aware that we are responsible for maintaining clear, unthreatening and appropriate physical, emotional, and sexual boundaries in such interactions. We will avoid any covert or overt sexual behavior in respect of those for whom we have responsibility, including seductive or suggestive speech or gestures as well as physical contact that exploits, abuses, harasses, or confuses.

RAS personnel and volunteers are strictly and absolutely prohibited from physically disciplining a student, at any time or in any way. We will exercise prudence and discretion before touching another person, especially a student; we will be aware of how physical touch will be perceived or received, and consider whether touching would be an appropriate expression of greeting, care, concern, or celebration. Physical contact with children can be misconstrued both by the recipient and by those who observe it; it should occur only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and must never take place in private. Whenever possible, one-on-one meetings with a student will be held in a public area, in a room where the interaction can be (is) observed, or in a room with the door left open.

Teachers, staff, employees, and volunteers may not possess, distribute, use or be under the influence of alcohol, tobacco, solvents, controlled substances or drugs other than prescription medication when on the RAS campus, at any RAS-sponsored activity off-campus, or when working with children generally. We may not possess or distribute inappropriate reading or video material to students, and we may not accept gifts from, or give gifts to, them without their parents'/guardians' approval.

All communication between RAS staff (including volunteers) and students will be transparent, and strictly limited to the professional role of the personnel concerned. Email exchanges between students and persons acting on behalf of the school will be made using a school email address. Electronic communication that takes place over a school network or platform may be subject to periodic monitoring. Faculty, staff, and volunteers will use online communications, including social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and text messaging, to communicate with students solely in respect of bona fide school activities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SIGNED BY ALL STAFF MEMBERS

I hereby solemnly undertake strictly to adhere to the principles and guidelines of the RAS Child Protection Code of Conduct as a condition of my employment by the school. I recognize that students are children, and understand that as a person working with and/or providing services to students under the auspices of RAS, I am subject to a criminal history background check. My signature below confirms that I have read the Child Protection Code of Conduct and that I agree to abide by the standards it upholds. I understand that any action inconsistent with this code, or failure to take action as mandated by it, may result in disciplinary action up to and including my dismissal from RAS.

I will:

- Treat all parties with respect, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Never be alone with a student at school activities without another adult being present or notified (counselors excepted). Parental notification should occur when regular one-on-one meetings are scheduled. This is true for virtual learning. Any 1:1 conferences should be recorded.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition, or comparison when working with students.
- Maintain appropriate physical boundaries at all times and touch students – when necessary – only in ways that are appropriate, public, and non-sexual.
- Comply with RAS's mandatory reporting requirements in respect of suspected child abuse.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of alleged abuse of children and/or young people.

I will not:

- Touch or speak to a student or other child in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Inflict any physical or emotional abuse such as striking, spanking, shaking, slapping, humiliating, ridiculing, threatening, or degrading students or other children.
 - Smoke or use tobacco products, or possess, distribute or be under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances at any time while working with students or other children.
 - Give a student or other child who is not my own a ride in my car alone.
- Accept gifts from, or give gifts to, students, without the knowledge of their parents or guardians.
 - Engage in private communications with students via text messaging, email, Facebook, Twitter or other forms of electronic or social media except with respect to school activities.
 - Use profanity in the presence of students at any time.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

This signed document will be placed in the employee's HR file.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This booklet was created by:

The Child Protection Work Group, Rabat American School

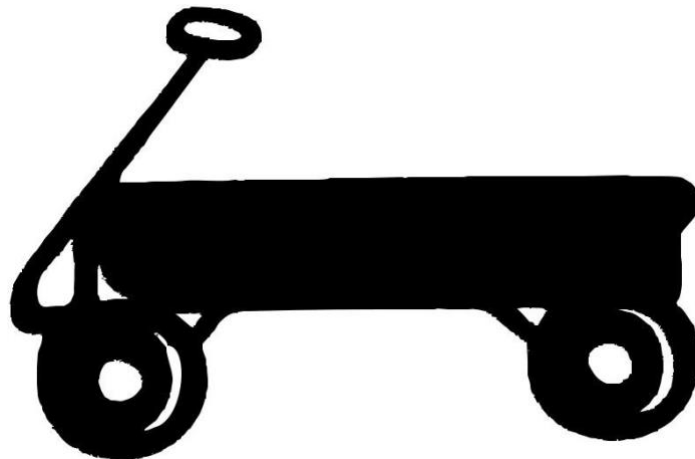
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