



# **AST Child Protection Handbook**

*Last updated: August 1, 2025*



Dear Faculty, Staff and or Volunteer,

Welcome to AST!

At AST, we take our responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of students very seriously. This handbook provides a general overview of the procedures and guidelines in place to protect our students—and to safeguard and support you in your role—while upholding AST’s mission. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment and protect our students and you while upholding the mission of AST. The following procedures have been adopted and will be consistently enforced to ensure the highest standards of safety for all.

Sincerely,

AST Child Protection Committee

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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*

## **Safety Policies & Procedures**

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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*



## Objectives:

American School in Taichung (AST) acknowledges that it is every child's right to live and grow up in a safe and secure environment. The procedures outlined in this policy are designed to ensure that all AST community members are fully aware of their responsibilities in keeping children safe. School faculty and staff will create opportunities in curriculum, personal interaction, and/or public meetings to provide age-appropriate information to instruct students of their rights in this area and the appropriate steps to take in dealing with such issues should they occur. The school will make this policy available and continuously communicate the contents to all stakeholders in the AST community. Staff will be alerted of their responsibilities and the contents of the policy will be integrated into the school's hiring procedure to ensure the safety of children.

## FOOTNOTES:

- 1 Website: Facts for Life: Child protection <http://factsforlife.org/12/index.html>
2. World Health Organization. (2020, June 8). Child maltreatment. World Health Organization. <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/child-maltreatment>.

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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*

## ***Overview of the AST Safety System***

AST requires all faculty, staff, and volunteers who have contact with students to complete three SAFETY STEPS before employment or volunteer work begins.

### ***Step One: Sexual Abuse and Maltreatment Prevention Training***

All faculty, staff, and volunteers must complete the Sexual Abuse Awareness Training provided online through [Abuse Prevention Systems](#).

This training helps members of the AST community recognize behaviors that may be harmful to themselves or others. Upon completion, participants will understand:

- The definition of sexual abuse and maltreatment
- Characteristics of sexual abusers
- Grooming behaviors used to target children

This training must be renewed every two years.

AST policies require all faculty, staff and volunteers to refrain from abusive behavior of any kind. Any violations of this policy must be reported to a supervisor, the Head of School, or a divisional principal.

### ***Step Two: Screening Process***

All faculty, staff, and volunteers must complete the AST Screening Process, which includes:

- Completion of an employment application
- National police background checks from all prior countries of residence
- Local background checks
- A face-to-face or video interview
- Reference checks

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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*

\*Additional steps may be required based on the role's level of responsibility and access to children.

### **Step Three: Policies & Procedures**

Faculty, staff, and volunteers are required to review the policies in this manual, confirm they have read and understood them, and agree to comply with all requirements.

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#### **Child Safety Policy**

AST has a **zero-tolerance policy** for abuse. We are committed to reporting all inappropriate behavior, suspicions, or incidents of abuse.

It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer to act in the best interests of each child. Any report of inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse will be taken seriously and investigated in accordance with school policy and Taiwanese law. School administrators will determine whether to contact the Ministry of Education, and or Social Safety Net Care, or Police Department.

If a staff member or volunteer observes any inappropriate behavior (e.g., policy violations, neglectful supervision, grooming behaviors, poor role modeling) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual), they must immediately report the incident to the Head of School or a Divisional Principal, regardless of when or where the incident occurred.

#### ***Enforcement of Policies***

Faculty and staff members and volunteers who supervise others are responsible for the diligent enforcement of all AST policies.

Violations of these policies may result in:

- Immediate dismissal
  - Disciplinary action
  - Reassignment from current duties
- Final decisions regarding policy violations rest with the Head of School or the appropriate divisional principal.

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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*

## ***Safe Environment Policy***

The Safe Environment Policy is designed to reduce situations in which children are at increased risk for abuse due to the physical characteristics of the school building and grounds. This policy addresses visibility, supervision, and controlled access to ensure a safe environment for all students.

### **Visibility**

Increasing visibility means creating physical spaces that are open and observable by multiple people. Open and visible environments deter potential abusers, as such settings reduce opportunities for abuse.

- Door windows must remain uncovered. Any decorations or materials should not block visibility through door windows.
- Doors may remain closed only if visibility is maintained through the window.
- One-to-one meetings may occur only if the interaction is clearly visible from the window. This does not apply to meetings held by counselors or administrators when confidentiality is necessary.

### **Access**

To control access to students and staff:

- All visitors, volunteers, and contractors must sign in at the security guard station and wear a visible visitor badge at all times.
- Parent/guardian appointments should be scheduled in advance when possible. Notify the AST security guard of any scheduled visits.
- Student departures outside of regular hours require parent/guardian permission. Students must also check out with the registrar before leaving campus.

### **Supervision**

To ensure student safety, AST will provide appropriate supervision in all settings by implementing the following measures:

- Adequate adult supervision in non-classroom areas such as playgrounds, hallways, and stairwells

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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*

- Periodic walk-throughs of the building and campus to monitor for any unauthorized individuals
  - Use of monitoring devices, such as security cameras, installed in key locations throughout the school grounds
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## ***Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse***

### **Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse**

Any individual accused of committing a prohibited act—or any act considered harmful to a child—will be brought to the attention of school administrators, and an investigation will be initiated. During the investigation, the accused will be immediately suspended from all interactions with students and participation in AST activities.

If warranted, the investigation will follow protocols outlined in the Taiwanese child protection guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education (MOE).

Anyone found to have committed a prohibited act will be permanently disqualified from serving as a staff member or volunteer in any capacity involving students at AST. If the individual is an employee, such conduct may result in termination of employment.

Failure to report a prohibited act is considered a violation of this policy and may also result in termination of employment or volunteer responsibilities.

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### **Mandatory Reporting at AST**

Reporting is **mandatory** when any of the following concerns are **suspected**. Teachers and staff must report directly to their divisional principal or the Head of School in person.

All faculty and staff are required to immediately report knowledge or suspicion of the following:

- Sexual exploitation of children or youth
  - Sexual assault or harassment
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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*



- Bullying (including cyberbullying)
- Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse
- Neglect or abandonment
- Criminal activity involving or affecting students
- Possession or distribution of weapons or dangerous objects
- Kidnapping, abduction, or human trafficking
- Immediate threats to a student's life, body, or freedom
- Use or possession of illegal drugs or harmful substances
- Acts of violence or other deviant behavior

**Important:**

- Proof or confirmation is not required in order to report.
- Reasonable suspicion is enough.
- Lack of evidence must not prevent reporting.
- AST will not retaliate against any staff member who reports in good faith, even if the concern turns out to be unsubstantiated.

If the report involves another AST employee, the concern should be reported directly to the **Divisional Principal** or **Head of School**.

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### **Internal Reporting Process**

If any of the above concerns are suspected, the employee must report them to the Divisional Principal or Head of School. Reporters may be asked to submit a written statement documenting the concern.

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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*

If the Divisional Principal is suspected of misconduct, the report should be made directly to the Head of School. If the Head of School is suspected, reports could be directed to the Deputy Head of School or the AST Board Chair.

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## **Responding to Reports**

After a concern is reported, it is the Administrative Team's responsibility to determine if there is reasonable cause and to classify the nature of the incident. If reasonable cause is found, AST will notify the Ministry of Education (MOE).

If directed by the MOE, AST will convene an appropriate Response Team to evaluate the situation and determine the next steps to ensure the safety and well-being of all parties involved.

## **Possible AST Response Teams**

- Gender Equity Education Committee Response Team
- Bullying Response Team
- Child Protection Response Team (for all other cases)

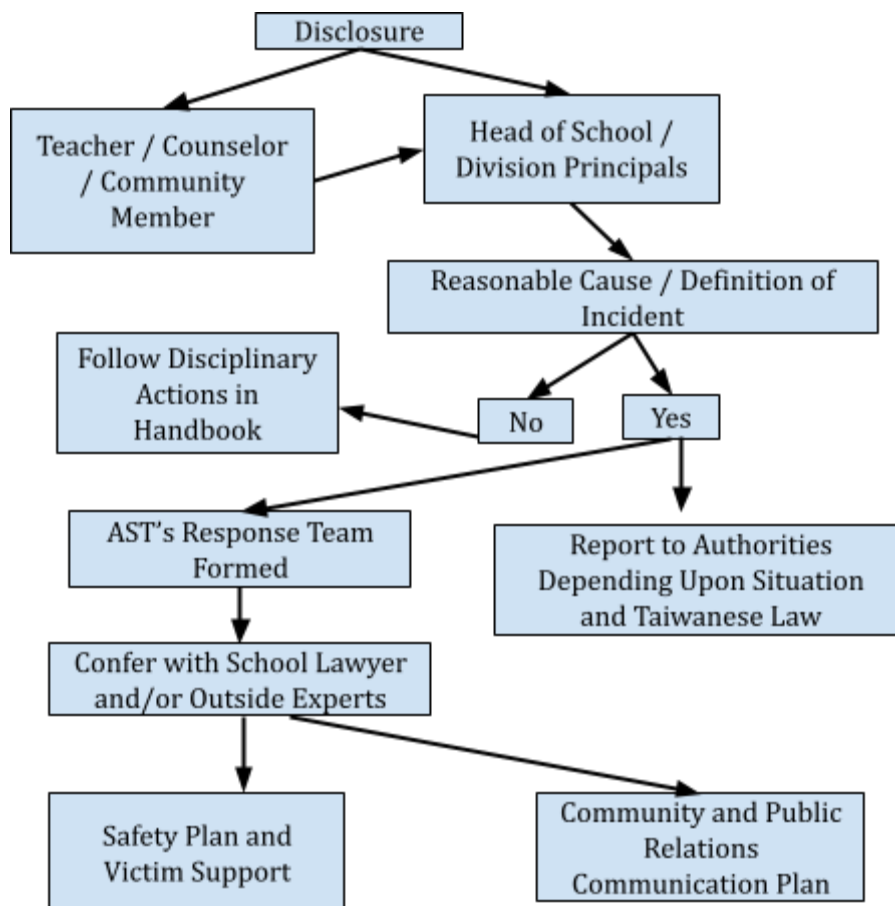
## **Response Team Members May Include:**

- Head of School
- Divisional Principals
- School Counselor
- Other relevant staff members (e.g., teacher representatives)
- External experts in related fields, as needed

## **Reporting Procedure**

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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*



## Respecting Privacy Laws

The AST Administration is responsible for reporting to local authorities and will comply fully with all applicable Taiwanese child protection and privacy laws. Any information related to a report—including progress or actions taken—may not be disclosed to the reporting staff member unless it is deemed necessary and does not violate privacy laws.

## When in Doubt, Report

If a faculty or staff member or volunteer knows or suspects that a child has been a victim of sexual abuse or other forms of maltreatment, the concern must be reported to the divisional principal and the Head of School. A decision will then be made regarding next steps, in alignment with this policy and legal requirements.

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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*

In addition to reporting to the appropriate authorities (when required), AST may also provide the student or the student's parent/caregiver/guardian with access to support services, including counseling and community resources to assist in recovery and protection.

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## **Faculty and Staff Code of Conduct**

The Faculty and Staff Code of Conduct establishes clear expectations for all interactions between adults and students at AST. This policy outlines appropriate, respectful, and professional behavior and reflects best practices for maintaining a safe and supportive school environment.

## **General Protection Policies On Campus**

### **Code of Conduct**

All adults at AST must engage in safe, supportive, and respectful interactions with students at all times. The following expectations apply to general conduct, physical behavior, and verbal or digital communication.

### **Bathroom Expectations**

- Adults must not use the bathroom at the same time as students.
- If an adult uses a bathroom with multiple stalls or urinals, the entry door must be locked to ensure privacy (exception: locker rooms).

### **Locker Room Expectations**

Locker rooms are private areas where students may be especially vulnerable. AST is committed to ensuring these spaces remain safe, respectful, and free from inappropriate behavior. The following expectations apply to all adults and students:

#### **For Adults (Faculty, Staff, Volunteers, Coaches):**

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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*

- Adults may use the bathrooms located in locker rooms only if the bathroom is in a private, enclosed, and locked single use stall.
- Supervision of students in locker rooms is permitted and should be done in a manner that respects student privacy and maintains professional boundaries.
- Adults need to use adult only bathrooms for changing clothes or showering in the student locker rooms.
- Adults must not take photos or videos in or near locker rooms at any time.
- If addressing behavior or safety concerns within the locker room, informing another adult whenever possible is recommended for transparency.

#### **Inclusive Practices:**

AST is committed to providing locker room spaces that are safe, inclusive, and respectful for all students, including those who are gender non-conforming or transitioning. Accommodations will be made as needed to ensure every student's comfort, dignity, and safety.

#### **Interactions with Students**

- Adults must interact with students in open and public spaces whenever possible.
- One-on-one meetings should only occur for educational or emergency purposes, and must:
  - Take place in a visible location, or
  - Be conducted in a room with the door left open, and
  - Include prior notification to another staff member.

This guideline does not apply to counselors and administrators when confidentiality is required.

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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*

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## **Transportation**

- Faculty and staff must not transport students in personal vehicles.
- In emergency or exceptional situations, administrative and parent/guardian notification and approval is required before transportation occurs.

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## **Release of Children**

At the end of the school day or during after-school programs and activities, AST staff and volunteers must release students only to:

- Parents or legal guardians, or
- Individuals designated in writing by the parent or guardian.

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## **Volunteer Parents**

A parent who desires to volunteer regularly will be considered a Volunteer Parent. All Volunteer Parents will be required to abide by AST Child Service Policies.

## **Physical Contact**

All physical contact must promote a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for students. Contact should always reflect professional boundaries and must align with AST's child protection standards.

- Appropriate physical contact may include handshakes, high fives, or pats on the back/shoulder.
- Inappropriate touching or public displays of affection are strictly prohibited.

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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*

- Adults must never force physical contact on a student. A child's preference not to be touched must always be respected.
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## **Verbal Interactions**

Verbal interactions between staff, volunteers, and students must honor and respect the dignity of every child. Language should be encouraging, constructive, and aligned with AST's mission to provide a nurturing learning environment.

- Staff and volunteers must refrain from using profanity, or vulgar language in the presence of students.
- Confidential matters—including academic performance, behavioral issues, or mental health concerns—must not be discussed in public spaces, such as the faculty lounge or hallways.

## **Use of Internet and Electronic Media**

- AST staff, volunteers, and students must not use school-related devices to access chat rooms or view pornographic or sexually inappropriate content.
  - Any concerns about the appropriateness of media (e.g., websites, films, or online content) must be referred to a divisional principal or the Head of School for guidance.
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## **Sexually-Oriented Conversations**

Adults are strictly prohibited from engaging in any sexually-oriented conversations with students. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Sharing personal information about relationships, dating, or sexual activity
- Discussing explicit topics in any context

## **Possession of Sexually-Oriented Materials**

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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*

AST staff and volunteers are prohibited from possessing any sexually-oriented materials on school property or in the presence of students. This includes books, magazines, digital content, and visual media.

## **Online Communication with Students**

All communication with current and former (non graduate) students must occur through school-approved platforms, such as:

- School email
- Alma
- Google Classroom

Use of personal social media accounts, messaging apps (e.g., LINE, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook), or private phone numbers is not permitted unless explicitly authorized and monitored.

To maintain transparency:

- Avoid one-on-one private chats without documentation.
- Group communication is strongly preferred.

## **Definitions**

**Child Abuse** - According to the World Health Organization, child abuse constitutes, “all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.”

**Physical Abuse** - Physical abuse may involve hitting, punching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, biting, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing intentional physical harm to a child. (These symptoms could also indicate harm to self, such as, cutting and suicide ideation).

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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*



**Possible signs of physical abuse:**

- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Injuries in places that are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained stomach pains
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather
- Fear of returning home or of parents being contacted
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Being aggressive towards others
- Being very passive and compliant
- Chronic running away

**Emotional Abuse-** Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child so as to cause severe and adverse effects on a child's emotional development. It may involve: conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved; that they are inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person; age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children; causing children frequently to feel frightened; or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may also occur alone.

**Possible signs of emotional abuse:**

- Physical, mental and emotional development is delayed
- Highly anxious
- Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder
- Fear of new situations
- Low self-esteem
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Chronic running away
- Compulsive stealing

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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*

- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Lying

**Sexual Abuse-** Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (i.e. rape) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production or viewing of pornographic material or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Children involved in commercial sex work are victims of sexual abuse, whether they perceive themselves as victims or not.

**Possible signs of sexual abuse:**

- Pain or irritation to the genital area
- Vaginal or penile discharge
- Difficulty with urination
- Infection, bleeding
- STDs
- Fear of people or places
- Aggression
- Regressive behaviours, bed wetting or stranger anxiety
- Excessive masturbation/Sexually provocative
- Stomach pains or discomfort walking or sitting
- Being unusually quiet and withdrawn or unusually aggressive
- Suffering from what seem physical ailments that can't be explained medically
- Showing fear or distrust of a particular adult
- Mentioning receiving special attention from an adult or a new “secret” friendship with an adult or young person
- Refusal to continue with school or usual social activities
- Age-inappropriate sexualized behaviour or language

**Neglect-** Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or physiological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development.

**Possible indicators of neglect:**

- Medical needs unattended
- Lack of supervision
- Consistent hunger
- Inappropriate dress
- Poor hygiene
- Inadequate nutrition
- Fatigue or listlessness
- Self-destructive
- Extreme loneliness
- Extreme need for affection
- Failure to grow
- Poor personal hygiene
- Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school
- Low self-esteem
- Poor social relationships
- Compulsive stealing
- Drug or alcohol abuse

**Long Term Impact of Unmitigated Child Abuse-**

The impact of child abuse can persist for a lifetime after the abuse has been committed. Some victims of abuse are resilient and thus manage to function and survive. Much research has established the relationship between long-term child abuse and life-time health and well-being, especially if the children do not get appropriate support to help them cope with the trauma.

The most important point to consider is that children often are exposed to multiple forms of abuse and suffer a myriad of symptoms. Furthermore, all forms of abuse have the potential for long-term impact on the victims, and can affect the victim's ability to function as a human being. Abuse challenges the self-value, self-esteem, and sense of worth of its victims, rendering them hopeless, helpless and unable to live a complete life.

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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*

**Possible long term impact of child abuse:**

- Poor educational achievement
- Inability to complete responsibilities
- Inability to live according to plan/ability
- Inability to care for self
- Inability to coexist, cooperate or work with others
- Lack of self-confidence, prone to addiction
- Inability to express love / or accept love
- Inability to lead family, constant health problem
- Prone to mental health problems
- Low self-esteem, depression and anxiety
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Attachment difficulties
- Eating disorders
- Poor peer relations, self-injurious behaviour (e.g., suicide attempts)

In addition to knowing the signs of victimization, below are some early warning signs to look out for in potential offenders:

**Possible signs of offenders (students):**

- Unusual interest in sex, sexualizing inanimate objects and activities
- Does not stop sexual misbehaviour when told to stop
- Uses force and coercion in social situations
- Unusual intensity when discussing sex and sexuality
- Socializes with children much younger
- Gives gifts, requires secrecy in relationships

**Possible signs of offenders (adults):**

- Has “favorite” student or child
- Attempts to find ways to be alone with children
- Inappropriate language, jokes and discussions about students/children
- Sexualized talk in the presence of students/children
- Gives private gifts or has private chats on facebook/internet

*(Resources taken from AISA Child Protection Handbook)*

**Bullying:** Bullying is repeated, aggressive behavior that involves unwanted, negative actions. Such actions can be physical, verbal or psychological in nature.

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*Last updated: August 1, 2025*

Bullying involves a pattern of behavior repeated over time; an isolated incident of teasing or harassment, while inappropriate and subject to discipline, is not considered bullying. Finally, bullying typically involves an imbalance of power or strength.

**Child:** Any person less than 12 years of age.

**Cyberbullying:** is a unique form of bullying which occurs digitally through the use of chat, texting, social networking sites, or other forms of electronic communication. As with all forms of bullying, cyberbullying involves unwanted, negative actions, repeated over time, with an imbalance of power. Such behavior will be treated just as seriously as any other type of bullying.

**Domestic Violence:** An act of harassment, control, threat or other illegal actions conducted against any family member that is physical, psychological, or economic in nature.

**Gender Equity Education:** Refers to using education to nurture respect for gender diversity, eliminate gender discrimination, and advance genuine gender equality.<sup>1</sup>

**Gender Identity:** Refers to an individual's awareness and acceptance of their particular gender category.<sup>2</sup>

**Gender Nonconforming Students:** A term for people whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations, such as "feminine" boys, "masculine" girls, and those who are perceived as androgynous. This includes people who identify outside traditional categories or identify as multiple genders. Other terms that have similar meanings include gender diverse or gender expansive.

**Self Harm:** Behavior that is self directed and deliberately results in injury or potential for injury to oneself. Can be categorized as either non-suicidal or suicidal.

**Sexual Assault:** The following acts constitute sexual assault

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<sup>1</sup> [\*Gender Equity Education Act\*](#)

<sup>2</sup> [\*Gender Equity Education Act\*](#)

- Rape
- Obscene acts without consent
- Sexual intercourse between an offender aged over 18 and a minor under 16 years old (with or without consent)
- Sexual intercourse or obscene acts between an offender, who takes advantage of his/her position of authority or trust, and someone under his/her care, e.g. a teacher to a student (with or without consent)

***Sexual Bullying:*** Any verbal, physical or other forms of violent attacks on other people's gender characteristics, sexuality or gender identities, that are not sexual harassment.

***Sexual Exploitations of Children and Youths:*** Is an act that engages children and/or youths in sexual activities for consideration (monetary or otherwise), for others to watch, for filming or other recording activities, and/or escort services.

- Sexual activities include intercourse, sexual penetrations and obscene acts capable of causing excitement or satisfaction of sexual desires.

***Sexual Harassment:*** Any non-consensual sexual or gender related activities and/or favorable or unfavorable treatment as the result of sexual or gender related activities that undermine dignity, adversely affect work, are threatening, hostile or offensive in nature. This may include:

- Insults
- Inappropriate or condescending remarks
- Insinuations or comments (verbally, in writing, drawing, images, films, audio, etc.)

***Suicide Threat or Ideation:*** Verbal or non verbal or written communication that the students intends to harm him/herself with the intention to day.

***Transgender:*** People whose sense of their own gender differs from what would be expected based on the sex characteristics with which they are born.

***Youth:*** Any person between 12-17 years of age.

**Resources:****Optional Community Counseling Outreach Support:**

- [Child Protection non-profit Organization](#)
- [Ru Yin](#) Mental Health Services Center
- [Garden of Hope](#) Foundation (Domestic Violence)
- [Taichung City Government Social Affairs Bureau](#) **Services**
- [List of Contact Numbers](#) Society Taichung Government Services  
Contact
- [Garden of Hope](#) Foundation (Domestic Violence)

**Links to Taiwan Laws and Guidelines:**

- [The Protection of Children and Youth Welfare and Rights Act](#)
- [Regulations for Reporting, Differential Processing and Investigation Cases of Children and Youth Protection](#)
- [Enforcement Rules of the Protection of Children and Youth Welfare and Rights Act](#)

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