



AST Child Protection Handbook

Last updated: May 30, 2024



Dear Faculty, Staff and or Volunteer,

Welcome to AST!

At AST, we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for AST faculty, staff and volunteers. 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 strictly enforced.

Sincerely,

AST Child Protection Committee

Last updated: May 30, 2024



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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 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.

Expectations of Staff Conduct:

At AST, we do not:

- Touch or speak to a student in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use corporal punishment or inflict any physical or emotional abuse such as striking, spanking, shaking, slapping, humiliating, ridiculing, threatening, or degrading a student.
- Accept gifts from or give gifts to students without the knowledge of their parents or guardians.

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>.

Overview of the AST Safety System

AST requires all faculty, staff and volunteers that will have contact with students to complete **3 SAFETY STEPS** *before employment or volunteer work begins.*

Step One: Sexual Abuse and Maltreatment Prevention Training

AST requires all faculty, staff and volunteers who work with students to complete the Sexual Abuse Awareness Training provided online through Abuse Prevention Systems (www.AbusePreventionSystems.com). The purpose of this training is to help all members of the AST community be on the lookout for any behavior that may be harmful to themselves or others. Upon completing the training, staff will have a basic understanding of the definition of sexual abuse and maltreatment, the characteristics of sexual abusers, and their behaviors in ‘grooming’ a child for sexual abuse. This training must be renewed every two years.

AST policies and procedures require that volunteers and staff members refrain from abusive behavior of any kind. Volunteers and staff members are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or the head of school or the divisional principals.

Step Two: Screening Process

Faculty, staff and volunteers are required to complete the AST Screening Process*, which requires members to:

- complete an Employment Application
- national police background checks from all prior resident countries
- local background checks organized by AST
- complete a face-to-face or a video interview
- provide references to be checked

* Additional steps may be required, based on level of responsibility and access to children.

Step Three: Policies & Procedures

Faculty, staff, and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and verify they have read and understood the material, and agree to comply with policy requirements.

Child Safety Policy

AST has a **zero tolerance policy for abuse** and we are committed to reporting any inappropriate behaviors, suspicions, or abuse. It is the responsibility of every volunteer and staff member at AST to act in the best interest of each child in every program. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be investigated, in accordance with this policy and the Taiwanese law. The administrators will make the decision to contact the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency. In the event that volunteers or staff members observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, grooming behaviors, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their responsibility to immediately report the observations to the Head of School, divisional principal regardless of where and when the incident took place.

Enforcement of Policies

AST staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all AST policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the AST Head of School or divisional principals.

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Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered to be harmful to a child will be brought to the administrators' attention and an investigation will ensue. During the period of investigation, immediate suspension from all interactions with children and AST activities will occur. If warranted, this investigation will follow the protocol determined by the Taiwanese child protection guidelines set by the Ministry of Education (MOE).

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act will be prevented from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programs that involve students at AST. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may result in termination of employment from AST. Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of employment of a staff member, employee, or volunteer.

Reporting

Mandatory AST Reporting

Reporting is mandatory if any of the following is suspected. Teachers and staff are required to report to the divisional principal, or head of school in person. All teachers and staff should immediately report knowledge of suspected:

- Sexual exploitation of children and youth
- Sexual assault/ harassment
- Bullying (including cyberbullying)
- Abuse
- Neglect/Abandonment
- Criminal Activities
- Possess or given weapons or other dangerous objects
- Kidnapped, abducted or subject to human trafficking
- In immediate danger to their lives, bodies or freedom
- Illegal drugs use, illegal use of regulated drugs and other harmful substances
- Incidents of violence and deviant behavior

Proof of accusation and/or reasonable cause is not needed to report and lack thereof should not prevent reporting. AST will not retaliate against anyone who

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mistakenly reports suspected infractions against child protection and/or community well being. If another employee is involved, the concern should be brought directly to the divisional principal or Head of School.

Internal Reporting Process

If any of the mandatory topics listed above are suspected by any employee of AST they must be reported to the divisional principal or Head of School. If another employee is involved the concern should be brought directly to the divisional principal or Head of School. If the principal is suspected of being the perpetrator of the abuse the Head of School will be notified instead. The Head of School will record the report and ask for a written statement. In instances where the Head of School is suspected of being the perpetrator of the abuse, reports can be made to the AST Board Chair.

Responding to Reports

After a concern is reported to the Head of School it is her/his responsibility to determine if there is reasonable cause and to define the nature of the incident. If it is deemed there is reasonable cause, AST will report the incident directly to the MOE. When necessary, a Response Team will be formed to determine next steps for the safety and protection of all involved parties.

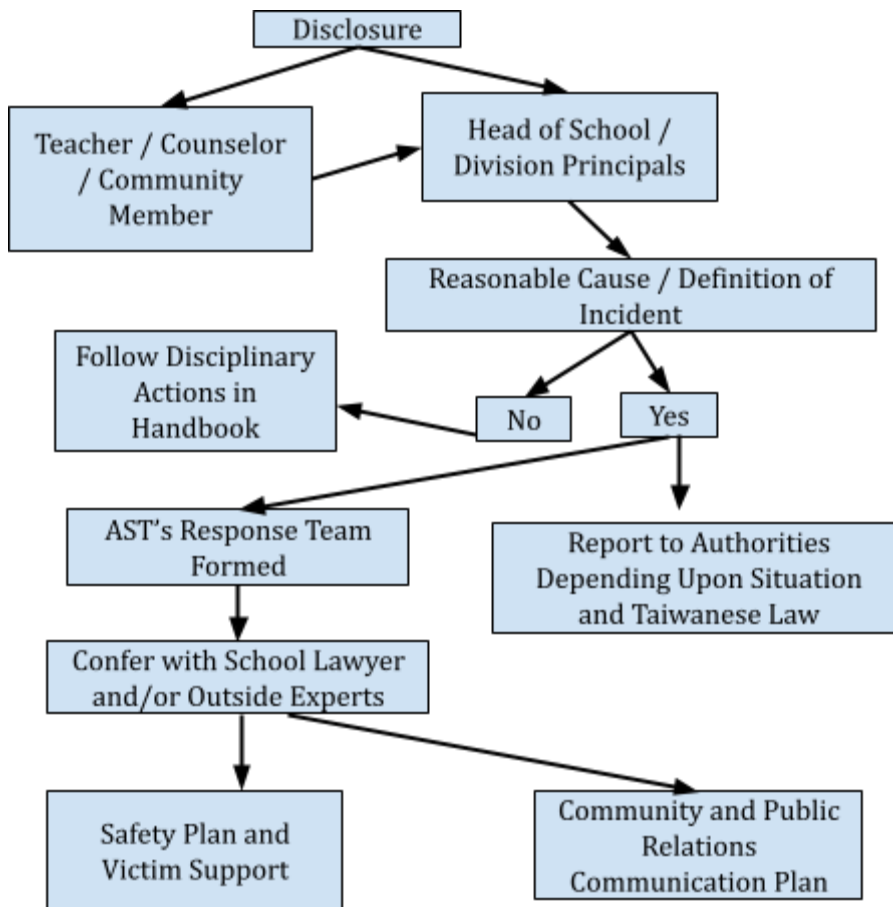
Possible AST Response Teams:

- Gender Equity Education Committee Response Team
- Bullying Response Team
- Child Protection Team (All other)

Members of each team may include:

- Divisional Principal of Victim
- Head of School
- School Counselor
- Other Principals
- Other Team Members as needed (teacher representative, etc.)
- Outside Expert (in relevant field) as needed

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Respect Privacy Laws

AST Administration will be responsible for reporting to the local authorities and will fully comply with their guidelines. All Taiwanese child protection and privacy laws are applicable for any report made. Information, or progress related to actions taken, may not be disclosed to the staff member reporting unless deemed necessary and not in violation of privacy laws.

WHEN IN DOUBT, REPORT!

When a Child Has Been Victimized

If a faculty member, staff member or volunteer has knowledge or a suspicion that a child is a victim of sexual abuse or other maltreatment, the information will be reported to division principals and Head of School and a decision will be determined.

In addition to notifying the appropriate authorities (if required), AST may provide the child or the child's parent/caregiver/guardian with information to allow the child (or parent, on the child's behalf) to obtain assistance and intervention, as well as available counseling and community social service options.

General Protection Policies On Campus

Bathroom Expectations

Adults are not allowed to be in the bathroom with students at the same time. If an adult is using a bathroom with more than one stall or urinal, the entry door must be locked.

Locker Room Expectations

Locker rooms are only to be used by students during school hours. Adults are expected to use the single bathroom in the Cafeteria. Adults must lock the bathroom door when using it.

Nudity

Adults should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. If students are required to change clothing, this should occur in designated areas.

One-To-One Interactions With Children

AST recognizes that meeting program objectives may occasionally require that staff members and volunteers interact with children on an individual basis.

There will be no one-to-one meetings between a staff member or a volunteer and a child behind closed doors. One-to-one meetings can occur when the door is open and the interaction is visible from the doorway.

This does not apply to counselors and administrators where confidentiality is a factor.

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Transportation

Staff and faculty should not transport students in personal vehicles. If there is an emergency or extenuating circumstance, administrative approval and parent notification is needed.

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 contact is expected to promote a safe, positive, and nurturing environment for the students. Physical contact in any form must maintain a level of professional expectations. The personal behavior of AST staff members or volunteers must foster trust at all times – personal conduct must be above reproach. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in AST:

1. Physical affection should be limited to handshakes, high fives, and pats on the back/shoulder. Any inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden and should be immediately reported to the Divisional Principal or the Head of School.
2. Do not force any physical contact, touch, or affection upon a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.

Release of Children

At the end of the program day or activity, AST volunteers and/or staff members are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated in writing by parents or legal guardians.

Secondary students can be released on their own, if parents are aware.

Sexually-oriented Conversations

Adults are prohibited from engaging in any sexually-oriented conversations with children. Adults are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit

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information about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities with any child in the program.

This provision includes the use of cellular phones, text messages, e-mail, instant messaging, and online chat rooms for such conversations.

Possession of Sexually-oriented Materials

AST staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing any sexually-oriented materials on AST property or in the presence of children.

Internet/Electronic Media

No computer at, or related to AST is to be used by adults or students to engage in computer chat room discussions or visit pornographic or sexually inappropriate websites. Any questions about the appropriateness of any kind of media (websites, movies, etc.) should be discussed with a divisional principal or Head of School.

Verbal Interactions

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. AST staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission to provide nurturing care to children. Staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing, profanity, and vulgar language in the presence of children. Violation of this policy will lead to discipline from their divisional principal or the Head of School.

Definitions

Abuse: Any act or failure to act which results in death, physical or emotional harm, or exploitation of a person.

Anti-social behaviors: A juvenile or an adolescent is considered highly likely to commit crimes.

- associates with criminals;
- frequents places that are detrimental to health or are age inappropriate
- skips from school or runs away from home;
- carries weapons, chemical substances or other dangerous objects without a valid reason;
- loiters on streets at night;
- abusive to parents, elders, and teachers;
- gambles in a professional gamble venue that is not open to the public;
- carries out obscene activities;
- is in possession of obscene materials;
- carries out violent activities or involves in fights without causing injuries to others
- stalks others without good reasons
- harasses others;
- smokes, chews beetles nuts, consumes alcohol or causes nuisance in public
- drives or rides a scooter without license; or
- engages in other antisocial behaviors.

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

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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.¹

Gender Identity: Refers to an individual's awareness and acceptance of their particular gender category.²

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

- 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)

¹ [Gender Equity Education Act](#)

² [Gender Equity Education Act](#)

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: 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.

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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