

# NTFT News

Niles Township Federation of Teachers

Local 1274 IFT, AFT, AFL-CIO

October 4, 2007

*"The NTFT: putting quality in the classroom first"*

## Reporting child abuse necessary for both child and teacher's well-being

With the year now well underway, we have all begun forming relationships with our students. Obviously, we all want the best for them and hope difficult situations never arise, but if they do, it is important to know how to protect both the child and ourselves.

For some, there may still be confusion over how to handle it if we suspect one of our students is getting abused or neglected. While the district's administration may provide important support and guidance, ultimately, Board policy and Illinois law state, "The employee shall immediately report such a case to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services." It then goes on to say, "The employee shall also promptly notify the Superintendent or Building Principal that a report *has been made*."

Of note in both of these statements is that the onus of responsibility falls upon us, the employees. A call to administrators is not officially called for until after the report is made.

Understanding this is essential because, in addition to prolonging the child's potential risk, failing to do so can have serious consequences for the teacher.

### When calling DCFS, have the following information

1. Name, address, and home telephone number of the student
2. Name, address, home and work telephone numbers of the parent(s)/guardian(s)
3. Age of the student
4. Names and ages of siblings living in the student's home
5. Details of the suspected abuse, including the student's present condition
6. Previous reports from District 219 school personnel made to DCFS about suspected abuse
7. Other information to help establish suspected cause of abuse

According to the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, any educator who does not report an incidence of suspected child abuse or may lose his or her certificate. They may also be guilty of a Class A misdemeanor that can result in up to one year in prison and/or a fine of up to \$1,000.

On the other hand, anyone who makes a report in good faith will be free from liability. The law was created this way to encourage us to take action in a situation where it is clearly better to be safe than sorry.

If you are not sure if you have a student in this situation, consider the following definitions.

Abuse applies to children under 18 and includes physical and emotional injury or even the risk of such injury. It also includes excessive punishment and, in extreme cases, sexual offenses and child torture.

*Please see "Reporting Abuse" on page 2*

## Reporting Abuse (cont'd)

Neglect also applies to children under 18 and includes the lack of necessary support for the well-being of the child. This could involve medical care or the absence of adequate clothing, food, or shelter.

Leaving a child with a family member is not considered neglect.

If you have a reasonable cause to suspect that a student may be abused or neglected by a parent, a family member, someone who lives in their home, a boyfriend or girlfriend of the parent, or even a babysitter or daycare provider, get help. Contact your department director, an assistant principal, the principal, or a counselor for support, but remember: the ultimate responsibility for action falls upon you.

To take action, call the DCFS Child Abuse Hotline number (1-800-25A-BUSE; 1-800-252-2873). Within 48 hours of the call, you will need to complete a DCFS form available on the DCFS web-site [http://www.state.il.us/dcfs/library/com\\_communications\\_forms.shtml](http://www.state.il.us/dcfs/library/com_communications_forms.shtml). Keep the original. Also be sure to send copies to the Assistant Principal for Pupil Personnel Services and DCFS. The address of the nearest DCFS office is 8140 McCormick Blvd., Skokie, IL. 60076.

Any report you make will be strictly confidential.

While it is unpleasant to consider these types of scenarios, knowing your responsibilities is essential. Not knowing what to do could seriously endanger your career and, more importantly, a child.

## Switching pension systems would cost taxpayers more

Despite recent attacks on public pensions, the unspoken truth is that Illinois' \$40.7 billion pension debt would not be erased by switching from a defined benefit system to a defined contribution system.

A study released during the spring legislative session showed that such a switch would likely result in much lower retirement benefits for teachers while creating higher costs for taxpayers.

The study was conducted by the Illinois Retirement Security Initiative (RSI), a project of the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability that is supported by the IFT.

Jourlande Gabriel, a co-author of the report and director of the RSI, said that if the pension plan were changed, "The state should expect to impose higher annual costs on tax payers while putting less retirement money in the pockets of its public employees."

Because of Illinois' constitutional restraints, switching to a defined contribution system does not and cannot reduce the state's current \$40.7 billion unfunded liability. The sole way to cover this liability is to design a rational payment program that does not backload costs like the current law.

*Courtesy of Insight*

*For the full report, visit [www.ift-aft.org](http://www.ift-aft.org)*

## AFT expresses concern over 'Jena 6' situation

The AFT has expressed concern over the plight of six students in Jena, La., who are believed to be victims of judicial inequality and an overzealous prosecutor.

Known as the Jena 6, the six black high schoolers are facing lengthy prison terms for their alleged role in a Dec. 4, 2006, schoolyard fight at Jena High School. The case has attracted national attention and criticism that the charges were too severe and racially motivated.

The racial tensions at Jena High School started on Sept. 1, 2006, when three nooses were hung from a tree outside the school. An apparent gathering place for the school's white students, the tree is commonly referred to as the "white tree." The nooses appeared after a black student sat under the tree.

While the school's principal recommended expulsion for the three students responsible for hanging the nooses, the superintendent of schools overruled the expulsion and gave the students a three-day suspension for what he called "an adolescent prank."

"The contrast between the treatment of these white students and the black students is particularly troublesome," said AFT secretary-treasurer Nat LaCour. "This was unequal and unfair treatment of these kids by the adults in the Jena school system."

*Courtesy of Inside AFT*