



Recognizing and Responding to Child Maltreatment

TIPS FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Facts About Reporting

- All citizens are required by law to report suspected child maltreatment.
- You do not need proof that maltreatment has occurred; you only need reasonable cause to suspect maltreatment.
- You do not need anyone's permission to make a report.
- You can file a report anonymously. Even if you provide your name, it will not be revealed.

What is Child Maltreatment?

Physical Abuse - Serious physical injury inflicted by or allowed by a parent/caregiver or substantial risk of serious injury by non-accidental means.

Sexual Abuse - Any behavior of a sexual nature imposed on a child including fondling, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration (by a finger, penis or object), exhibitionism, child pornography, and suggestive behavior/comments.

Emotional Abuse - Expression of attitudes or behaviors toward a child that may create serious emotional or psychological damage.

Neglect - Any serious disregard for a child's supervision, care or discipline.

Possible Signs of Child Maltreatment

Teachers spend a great deal of time with children and are in a good position to observe changes in a child's appearance or development. As a trained observer of children, watch for the signs listed here and be alert to extreme behavior or sudden changes in a child's behavior. Remember that children with disabilities or developmental delays are at a statistically greater risk of maltreatment.

Signs of Possible Physical Maltreatment

- Unexplained bruises in various states of healing.
- Self-destructive behaviors such as hitting or biting oneself.
- Welts, bite marks, bald spots.
- Unexplained burns, especially burns that resemble cigarette burns or glove-like burns on hands.
- Unexplained fractures, abrasions, or wounds.
- Expression of unusual fear of parent/caregiver.

Signs of Possible Sexual Maltreatment

- Engagement in sexual behaviors not developmentally appropriate.
- A detailed and sophisticated understanding of sexual behaviors.
- Regression to behaviors such as thumb-sucking or limited speech.

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- Pain, itching, bruising or bleeding in the genital area.
- Delinquent or aggressive behavior, depression, or suicide attempts.
- Substance abuse, self-mutilation, promiscuity, running away.

Signs of Possible Emotional Maltreatment

- Speech disorders, developmental delays.
- Ulcers, asthma, severe allergies.
- Habit disorders including thumb sucking or rocking.
- Extreme passive or aggressive behavior.
- Very low self-esteem, antisocial or destructive actions.

Signs of Possible Neglect

- Reported abandonment by parent/care-giver.
- Unattended medical needs, lack of supervision.
- Consistent hunger, inappropriate dress, poor hygiene.
- Lice, distended stomach, poor social skills, begging or stealing food.
- Frequent absences or tardiness from school.
- Extreme fatigue or falling asleep in class.

Making a Report

Early reporting is vital - you may change a child's life. Call your local county Department of Social Services (DSS) to make a report and share the information below with the social worker.

- Name, address and age of child and parent or caregiver.
- The child's condition, including physical, emotional, behavioral or other symptoms.
- Any information you have about the presence of drugs or weapons in the home.
- Any positive information you might have about the child's family. Ex. Child reports his grandmother visits frequently.

When a Child Discloses Maltreatment

Listen carefully to the child. Remember, your job is not to determine if maltreatment has occurred. You only need to suspect possible maltreatment in order to make a report. Let them talk and limit asking questions. Tell them you believe them and that the maltreatment is not their fault. Explain that you will need to talk to other adults who can help. Do not promise to keep the maltreatment a secret but do not share the information with people not directly involved in the situation.

After Your Report is Made

If your report is accepted for assessment, DSS should initiate that assessment within 24 hours for abuse and 72 hours for neglect. The assessment will include a visit to the home and the school, and interviews with the child, their family, and school personnel.

The job of DSS is to protect the child while assisting the family to address the issues that are contributing to the abusive or neglectful behavior. Families most frequently work with DSS to receive services in the form of counseling, emergency foster care services, help with basic needs, parenting classes, and intensive in-home services. If you disagree with DSS' decision, you can request a review of the case by the District Attorney.

After Your Report is Made

If you report an incident of suspected child maltreatment, some action will occur. Sometimes you may not agree with the action taken, but you will have accomplished the following: your legal obligation to report, a record of the report will be on file about the family in case of future incident, and the information that you provided is evaluated along with the family's strengths and weaknesses.

If you do not report, nothing will be done. Children cannot be protected and families cannot be strengthened unless they are identified, and the key to identification is reporting.