

## Child Abuse Reference Guide

### State Law on Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect (*The law reads in part*)

"Any person who reasonably believes that a minor is or has been the victim of physical injury, abuse, child abuse, a reportable offense or neglect that appears to have been inflicted on the minor by other than accidental means or that is not explained by the available medical history as being accidental in nature. . . shall immediately report or cause reports to be made of this information to a peace officer or to child protective services in the department of economic security..."

Child Protective Services Intake number is **1-888-SOS-CHILD** or **1-888-767-2445**.

## Types of Child Abuse

### NEGLECT

Of all cases of child maltreatment, school personnel most frequently encounter instances of neglect. It is an act of omission – the chronic failure of a parent or caretaker to provide a child with adequate food, clothing, medical care, protection and supervision.

#### Physical Indicators

- Height and weight significantly below age level.
- Inappropriate clothes for weather.
- Untreated illness or injury.
- Lack of safe, sanitary shelter.
- Lack of necessary medical and dental care.
- Assumes adult responsibilities.

#### Behavioral Indicators

- Begging or stealing food.
- Falling asleep in school, lethargic.
- Poor school attendance, frequent tardiness.
- Chronic hunger.
- Reports no caretaker in the home.

**REMEMBER:** Neglect must be evaluated within the context of cultural standards, which may differ from those prevailing in the community.

### PHYSICAL ABUSE

Any non-accidental injury to a child. Rarely a single physical attack, but rather a pattern that repeats over time.

#### Physical Indicators

- Unexplained bruises and welts are the most frequent evidence and may be found in various stages of healing.
- Unexplained fractures/dislocations,
- Unexplained burns on the child's body.
- Other unexplained injuries may include: lacerations, abrasions, human bite or pinch marks, retinal hemorrhage, abdominal injuries.

#### Behavioral Indicators

- Requests or feels deserving of punishment.
- Afraid to go home.
- Overly shy, tends to avoid physical contact.
- Displays behavioral extremes.
- Cries excessively and/or sits and stares.
- Gives unbelievable explanations for injuries.

### SEXUAL ABUSE

The exploitation of a child for the sexual gratification of another person.

#### Physical Indicators

- Somatic complaints, including pain and irritation of the genitals.
- Sexually transmitted disease.
- Frequent unexplained sore throats, yeast, or urinary infections.

#### Behavioral Indicators

- Sexual knowledge beyond that expected for the child's developmental level.
- Depression, suicidal gestures.
- Chronic running away.
- Decline in school performance.
- Avoidance in undressing or wearing extra layers of clothes.

**REMEMBER:** the most reliable indicator of child sexual abuse is the child's verbal disclosure.

### Identifying child abuse & responding to abused students

To fulfill their functions, teachers should:

- Be fully aware of your school's policy for reporting child abuse and the mandate for school personnel to report suspected abuse or neglect.
- Be a resource to parents experiencing child-rearing stress, or provide referral to appropriate school personnel.

**REMEMBER: A report of suspected child abuse, neglect or abandonment is a responsible attempt to protect a child.**

#### Some don'ts for school personnel

- DON'T promise to keep a secret.
  - DON'T fail to keep written records of behavioral patterns and any reports which you make.
  - DON'T make disparaging remarks about parents – even if it seems they have committed an atrocious act.
  - DON'T contact the parents on your own initiative.
- ABOVE ALL, DON'T fail to report suspected child maltreatment immediately. Remember that persons who report in good faith are protected from legal prosecution should the report prove to be mistaken.**