

A Manual for School Personnel



The School's
Role In The
Intervention of
Child Abuse and
Neglect

Agenda

📁 Understanding
Child Abuse and
Neglect

📁 Oklahoma Law

📁 Identifying Child
Abuse and Neglect

📁 Responding to a
Child Disclosure of
Abuse

📁 Reporting
Procedures

📁 After a Report is
made

📁 Assisting the Child
Victim and Family

📁 Protecting the
Educator

Understanding Child Abuse and Neglect



What is Child Abuse and Neglect?

- ❑ Nonaccidental physical or mental injury caused by the acts or omissions of the child's parents or caretakers.
- ❑ Physical abuse: any act which, regardless of intent, results in a nonaccidental physical injury.
- ❑ Neglect: failure to provide a child with basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, health care, educational opportunities, protection or supervision.

What Causes Child Abuse?

- ❑ Fine line between abuse and discipline
- ❑ Discipline is a learning process, abuse is not
- ❑ Abused children do not learn correct behavior
- ❑ There are multiple forces on the family, which reinforce each other and which cause child abuse and neglect.

Characteristics which may contribute to child abuse:

Adult Caretaker:

- ✓ Has unrealistic expectations that are inconsistent with the child's developmental age
- ✓ Has poor impulse control
- ✓ Reacts to stress with violence
- ✓ Has poor coping skills in stressful situations

Characteristics which may contribute to child abuse:

Environmental Conditions:

- ✓ Unemployment/change in financial situation
- ✓ Death in family
- ✓ Inadequate housing
- ✓ Another pregnancy or birth in the family
- ✓ Change in place of residence

Characteristics which may contribute to child abuse:

Societal Attitudes:

- ✓ Acceptance and even glorification of violence
- ✓ Lack of willingness to become involved
- ✓ Rigid gender role stereotypes
- ✓ School/agency discipline policies which include corporal punishment

Did you know?



1. The average age of fatalities from a child abuse is 21/2 years
2. Over 2,700,000 children are abused and neglected each year in the US
3. 10% of the victims of child sexual abuse are boys
4. There are more children under the age of 10 reporting sexual abuse than teenagers.

How Can We Prevent Child Abuse?

Primary Prevention:

Aimed at positively influencing parents/caretakers before abuse/neglect occurs. Key aspects of primary prevention:

- Offered to all members of a population
- Voluntary
- Promote positive family functioning rather than preventing abuse

Examples of primary prevention include:

- Abuse prevention education
- Social skill building, valuing diversity, impulse control, coping and stress reduction, communication skills
- Parenting education
- Media promotion
- Before school programs
- After school programs

Examples of primary prevention include...

- Parent/school/community partnerships
- Family life, child development and sexuality education
- New parent support/nurturing programs
- Referrals to community resources and support services
- Home visitation programs.

Secondary Prevention:

Refers to services offered to individuals considered to be “at risk” for abuse or neglect.

Key aspects for secondary prevention:

- Offered to a predefined group of vulnerable individuals
- Voluntary
- Focuses on particular stresses of identified individuals
- Identifies appropriate and inappropriate boundaries

Examples of secondary prevention include:

- Student assistance programs
- School based clinics
- Community mental health services
- Adolescent parenting/day care programs
- Parent support groups
- Agency/school partnerships
- Crisis and respite program
- Home visitation programs

Tertiary Prevention:

- Refers to services provided to children who have been identified as abused/neglected or to individuals who have been identified as abusive or neglectful to children. The intent of these services is to prevent reoccurrence of abuse and/or neglect.

Examples of tertiary prevention include:

- Emergency shelters for children taken into protective custody
- Foster care
- Court ordered counseling, therapy, parent education
- Hospitalization
- Juvenile justice system
- Crisis care
- Supervised visitation

OKLAHOMA LAW



Mandatory Reporting

- Found in TITLE 10, SECTION 7103 of the Oklahoma Statutes.
- Report to the DHS in the county where the suspected abuse occurred.
- Every teacher is required to report suspected abuse or neglect to the DHS in the county wherein the abuse or neglect is suspected.

Immunity of Reporters

- Title 10, Section 7105
 - Any person reporting in GOOD FAITH shall have immunity from any liability, civil or criminal.
- Title 10, Section 7103
 - There shall be no penalties or retaliation by an employer when an employee reports suspected abuse.

Questionable Situations

The DHS believes that some problems may be more effectively addressed by other community agencies:

- Parental substance abuse with no demonstrated adverse impact on the child is not reportable.
- The decision to immunize is a parental decision until the child attains school age when immunizations are required for admission in school.
- The seat belt statute is a civil law with designated fines and penalties. Law enforcement is responsible for enforcing this statute.

Questionable Situations...

- Failure to attend school is the primary concern of educational authorities
- Latchkey Children
 - Age alone is not a very good indicator of a child's maturity level.
 - The DHS will want to assess whether the child is physically capable of taking care of him/herself.
 - The DHS will want to assess the time of day and length of time the child is left alone.

Questionable Situations...

DHS will assess several areas when determining if a child is capable of being left alone:

- Child's level of maturity
- Accessibility of those responsible for the child
- The situation

Identifying Child Abuse and Neglect



General Indicators to Notice in the School Setting

- ✂ Frequent absences
- ✂ Learning disorders
- ✂ Behavior problems
- ✂ Poor social skills
- ✂ Psychosomatic illnesses
- ✂ Poor coordination
- ✂ Low self-esteem
- ✂ Clinging behavior
- ✂ Severe emotional disturbance
- ✂ Intentional cruelty to children/animals
- ✂ Frequent tardiness

Remember: Any person, whether professional or general citizen, must report the abuse. Your role is not to investigate suspected abuse or neglect.

Physical Abuse Indicators

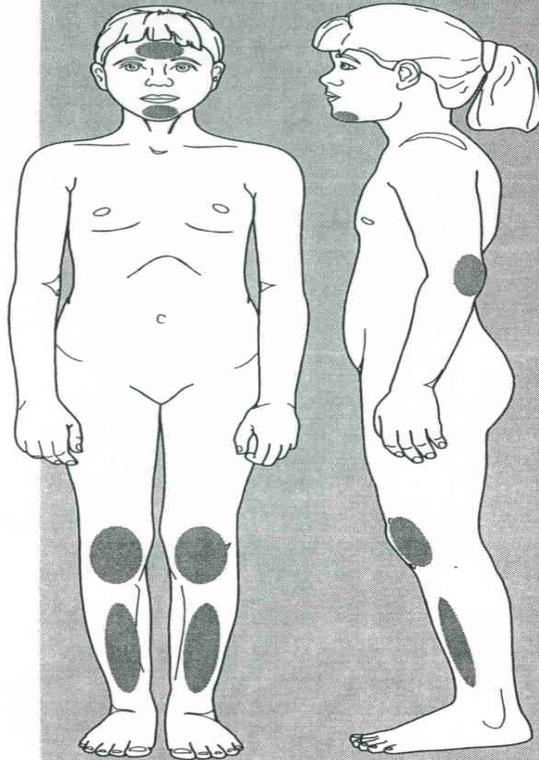
- Unexplained bruises and welts:
 - On face, lips, mouth, eyes, on torso, back, buttocks, thighs in various stages of healing, marks reflecting the shape of the article used to inflict the injury (I.e., electric cord, belt buckle)
- Unexplained burns:
 - Cigar, cigarette burns, especially on soles, palms, back or buttocks, immersion burns (sock-like, glove-like or doughnut-shaped), rope burns on arms, legs, neck, or torso..

Physical Abuse Indicators...

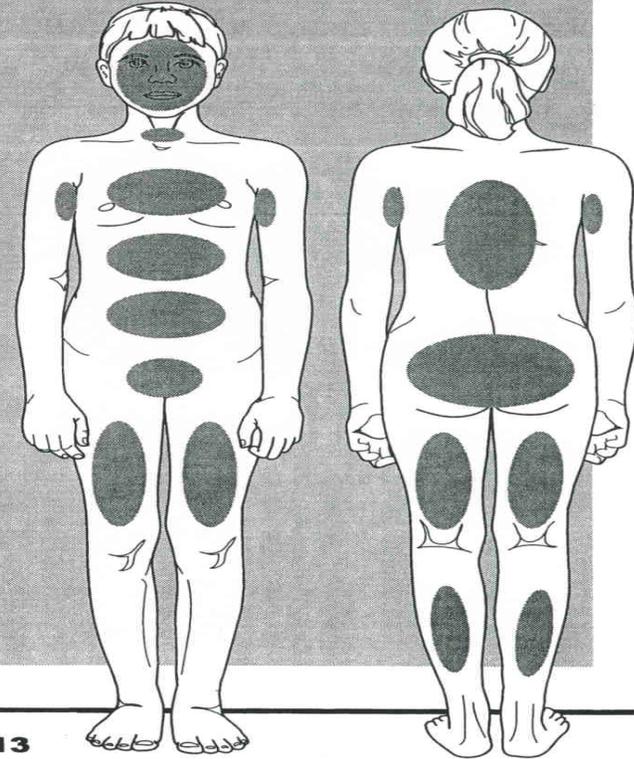
- Unexplained fractures:
 - To skull, nose, facial structure in various states of healing, multiple or spiral fractures.
- Unexplained lacerations or abrasions:
 - To face, mouth, lips, gums, eyes, torso, arms, back, buttocks, thighs, to external genitalia, human bite marks, bald spots.

Bruising Areas

Normal Bruising Areas



Suspicious Bruising Areas



Neglect Indicators

Physical Indicators:

- ✓ Consistent hunger
- ✓ Inappropriate dress, clothing dirty
- ✓ Poor hygiene
- ✓ Lack of age appropriate supervision
- ✓ Unattended physical problems
- ✓ Abandonment
- ✓ Distended stomach, emaciated

Neglect Indicators...

Behavioral Indicators of Child:

- ✓ Begging, stealing food
- ✓ Constant fatigue
- ✓ Frequent school absences or tardiness
- ✓ Destructive, aggressive
- ✓ School dropout (adolescents)
- ✓ Alcohol/drug misuse
- ✓ Sexual misconduct
- ✓ Delinquency or criminal involvement

Neglect Indicators...

Behavioral Indicators of Caretaker(s):

- ✓ Alcohol/drug misuse
- ✓ Disorganized, chaotic home life
- ✓ Isolated from friends, relatives, and neighbors
- ✓ Lack of social skills
- ✓ Long-term chronic illness
- ✓ History of neglect as a child
- ✓ Lethargic and apathetic
- ✓ Consistent failure to keep appointments
- ✓ Maintains home in unsanitary conditions
- ✓ Appear to be suffering from mental illness

Emotional Abuse Indicators

Physical Indicators:

- ✓ Speech disorders
- ✓ Lags in physical development
- ✓ Failure to thrive (especially in infants)
- ✓ Asthma, severe allergies, or ulcers
- ✓ Drug and/or alcohol abuse

Emotional Abuse Indicators...

Behavioral Indicators in Child:

- ✓ Habit disorders (sucking, biting, rocking, etc)
- ✓ Conduct disorders (oppositional, defiant, antisocial, destructive)
- ✓ Neurotic traits (sleep disorders, inhibition of play)
- ✓ Behavioral extremes:
 - Compliant and passive
 - Aggressive and demanding

Behavioral Indicators in Child...

- ✓ Overly adaptive behavior:
 - Inappropriately adult-like
 - Inappropriately infantile
- ✓ Developmental lags (mental, physical, emotional)
- ✓ Speech disorders
- ✓ Delinquent behavior (especially adolescents)
- ✓ Self-destructive (self-mutilations, suicide attempts)

Emotional Abuse Indicators...

Behavioral Indicators of Caretaker(s):

- ✓ Treat children in the family unequally
- ✓ Blames or belittles child
- ✓ Cold and rejecting
- ✓ Withholds love
- ✓ Lacks nurturing skills
- ✓ Ignores child's problems
- ✓ Unrealistic demands or impossible expectations without regard for the child's developmental capability.

Sexual Abuse Indicators

Physical Indicators:

- ✓ Difficulty in walking or sitting
- ✓ Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- ✓ Pain or itching in genital area
- ✓ Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal, or anal areas
- ✓ Venereal disease
- ✓ Frequent urinary or yeast infection
- ✓ Frequent unexplained sore throat
- ✓ Red or swollen genital area
- ✓ Odor in genital area
- ✓ Pregnancy

Sexual Abuse Indicators...

Behavioral Indicators of Child:

- ✓ Inability to concentrate
- ✓ Arriving at school early and/or leaving late
- ✓ Frequent absences from school
- ✓ Abrupt change in child's behavior/moodiness
- ✓ Depression-excessive crying
- ✓ Clinging behavior
- ✓ Low self-esteem
- ✓ Reluctance to undress for physical education

Behavioral Indicators of Child...

- ✓ Unwillingness to participate in physical/recreational activities
- ✓ Complaints (stomach aches, vaginal pain)
- ✓ Afraid to be alone with adults, especially males
- ✓ Severe drop in school performance
- ✓ Deductive, promiscuous behavior toward peers or adults
- ✓ Persistent and inappropriate sexual behavior

Behavioral Indicators of Child...

- ✓ Repeated attempts to run away from home
- ✓ Poor peer relationships
- ✓ Wary or threatened by physical contact, closeness
- ✓ Pseudo-maturity
- ✓ Overly concerned for siblings
- ✓ Self-destructive behaviors (suicidal threats or attempts)
- ✓ Detailed and age-inappropriate understanding of sexual behavior

Behavioral Indicators of Child...

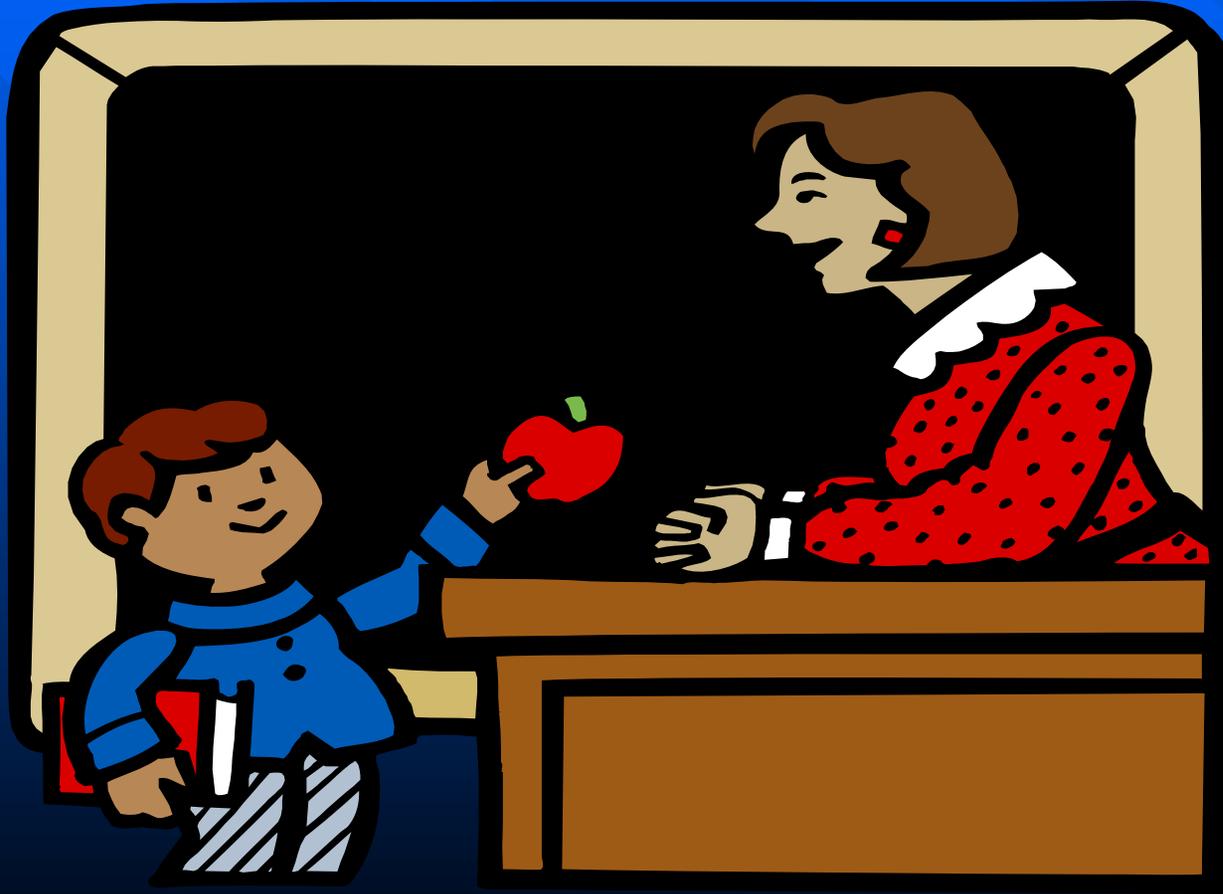
- ✓ Extreme weight loss/gain
- ✓ Unexplained money or gifts
- ✓ Excessive masturbation
- ✓ Frequent psychosomatic complaints
- ✓ Regression in toilet training
- ✓ Wearing layered or baggy clothing

Sexual Abuse Indicators...

Behavioral Indicators of Caretaker(s):

- ✓ Jealous or overly protective
- ✓ Isolation/alienation of child and family members within the community
- ✓ Frequent absences from home by one of the caretakers/parents of child
- ✓ Blurring of generational boundaries
- ✓ Rigid, restrictive home environment
- ✓ Alcohol/drug misuse
- ✓ Parental/child role reversal

Responding To A Child's Disclosure of Abuse



Disclosure of Abuse

- ✔ Children may or may not disclose through direct and specific communication
- ✔ “My neighbor wears funny clothes” or “My brother bothers me at night”
- ✔ Be sure to listen, encourage and assure the child
- ✔ If disclosure occurs during a class session, acknowledge the disclosure but not discuss it in front of the other students

Suggestions for responding to disclosure:

DO:

- ✔ Find a quiet, private place to talk to the child
- ✔ Listen to what is being told to you
- ✔ Ask only for information to assess the child's safety
- ✔ Reassure the child that he/she has done the right thing by telling you
- ✔ Keep your own feelings under control
- ✔ Use the child's own vocabulary
- ✔ Tell the child you cannot promise not to tell

DO:

- ✔ Tell the truth
- ✔ Be specific about what will happen next
- ✔ Be supportive
- ✔ Try to help the child regain control
- ✔ Reassure the child that you will do your best to support him/her
- ✔ Report the incident to the Department of Human Services.
- ✔ Seek out your own support person(s) to help you

Suggestions for responding to disclosure:

DO NOT:

- ✔ Do not express shock or disbelief while the child is talking
- ✔ Do not ever try to talk a child out of what he/she is saying
- ✔ Do not correct or criticize the child's choice of words or language
- ✔ Do not ask a lot of questions
- ✔ Do not conduct an investigation
- ✔ Do not call the child's parents

DO NOT

- ✔ Do not promise confidentiality to the child
- ✔ Do not convey anger or impatience if the child is not ready to discuss the abuse
- ✔ Do not make negative comments about the perpetrator or launch into a moral lecture about the incident
- ✔ Do not disclose the information indiscriminately
- ✔ Do not stand over a child while he/she is disclosing abuse
- ✔ Do not suggest to a child that you think he/she may have been abuse

Suggestions for responding to disclosure:

REMEMBER:

- ✔ The report should be made as soon as there is reason to suspect abuse
- ✔ An immediate oral report and prompt written follow-up are legally required
- ✔ Failure to report a suspicion of child abuse or neglect is a misdemeanor, and the child is left potentially at risk for future abuse, even death
- ✔ The person who reports in “Good Faith” is “immune from liability, both civil and criminal.” pg. 7
- ✔ You as the person who “knows or suspects” abuse, is responsible for reporting to the Department of Human Services.

REPORTING PROCEDURES



School District Reporting

- ◆ Each district needs to have a written district policy for reporting child abuse and neglect
- ◆ The policy should be based on Oklahoma law with input from the Department of Human Services and local law enforcement agencies
- ◆ All school district employees should be aware of the existence and content of such policy
- ◆ The policy should be reviewed and updated annually by a panel familiar with child abuse statutes and detection/reporting procedures

Model School Reporting Policy

Elements that should be cited in a school districts reporting policy:

- ⇒ A brief rationale for involving school personnel in reporting.
- ⇒ The name and appropriate section numbers of the state reporting statute.
- ⇒ Who specifically is mandated to report.
- ⇒ Reportable conditions as defined by state law.
- ⇒ The person or agency to receive reports.

Elements that should be cited in a school districts reporting policy:

- ⇒ The information required of the reporter (include a sample of the district reporting form).
- ⇒ Expected professional conduct by school employees.
- ⇒ The exact language of the law to define “abuse” and “neglect”.
- ⇒ The method by which school personnel are to report and the time within which to report. A telephone number of the local social services agency should be listed.

Elements that should be cited in a school districts reporting policy:

- ⇒ The law cites that there shall be no penalty or retaliation by an employer when an employee reports suspected abuse.
- ⇒ The penalty for failure to report, established by state law.
- ⇒ Any action which will be taken by the school board for failure to report.
- ⇒ Any provisions of the law regarding the confidentiality of records pertaining to reports of suspected abuse or neglect.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Procedures



- A list of OKDHS county offices is available online at <http://www.okdhs.org>
- The statewide hotline number is 1-800-522-3511.
- Fax number at the statewide hotline is 405-767-2697
- Faxing a report does not substitute for calling in a report.

Following information will be requested by OKDHS when you make your call:

- ☎ Name, age, and gender of child
- ☎ Parent's name
- ☎ Address, phone number and directions to the child's home
- ☎ Parent's place of employment
- ☎ Description of the suspected abuse
- ☎ Current condition of the child

After making the report to OKDHS, your school protocol may also require you to be responsible for informing your immediate supervisor

CHILD OBSERVATION DOCUMENTATION

Child's Name: _____

Describe your observations of a physical injury. Document a child's disclosure or your suspicions concerning a child abuse incident:

Incident 1:

Date: _____

Incident 2:

Date: _____

Incident 3:

Date: _____

Incident 4:

Date: _____

Incident 5:

Date: _____

Incident 6:

Date: _____

SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT REPORT

Child's Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Gender: _____

Address: _____ School: _____ Grade: _____

Parent(s)/ Legal Guardian: _____

Address: _____

Home phone: () _____ Work phone: () _____

A copy of this suspected child abuse or neglect report is to be filed with the county office of the Department of Human Services, the supervising administrator and the Superintendent of Schools.

Describe the nature and extent of the suspected child abuse or neglect:

Describe any evidence of previous suspected child abuse or neglect (including dates, time frame, objective observations, child and/or parent statements):

Names of persons present during the interview with the child:

Provide name(s), address(es), and relationship to child of person(s) responsible for suspected abuse or neglect (if known):

Call to Department of Human Services: _____
Date Time Person taking Report

Name of Person reporting to DHS Position School

Signature: _____

Recommendation: Send this form with your original signature to your local county Department of Human Services and retain a copy for school district files.

After A Report Is Made



Responsibilities of the Department of Human Services

- Notify a parent that a child has been initially interviewed
- Investigate cases of alleged child abuse or neglect
- Monitor services and treatment for the child and family where child abuse and neglect has been confirmed
- Offer voluntary services for families when there is a risk for abuse or neglect.

Responsibilities of Law Enforcement

- Investigate cases of alleged child abuse (law enforcement has primary responsibility for investigating child abuse as a crime)
- Gather and maintain all evidence
- Immediately report incidents to the local Department of Human Services
- Take the child into protective custody, if determined necessary

Responsibilities of the Multidisciplinary Team

- Review investigations, assess service delivery, and facilitate efficient and appropriate disposition of cases through the criminal justice system
- Develop a written protocol for investigating child sexual and serious physical abuse cases and for interviewing child abuse victims
- Increase communication and collaboration among the professionals responsible for the reporting, investigation, prosecution and treatment of child abuse and neglect cases
- Eliminate duplicative efforts in the investigation and the prosecution of child abuse cases

Responsibilities of the Multidisciplinary Team...

- Identify gaps in service or all untapped resources within the community to improve the delivery of services to the victim and family
- Encourage the development of expertise with discipline-specific and cross-discipline training
- Formalize a case review and case tracking process for all or problematic cases of child abuse and neglect
- Standardize investigative procedures for the handling of child abuse and neglect cases

Court Action and Testimony by School Employees

- Most cases of child abuse or neglect do not require court involvement
- Most families do not neglect or injure a child with willful intent and will accept help
- Ultimately, the court will decide what is in the best interest of the child
- On rare occasions, a school employee may be requested to provide a written report

Assisting the Child Victim and Family



Working with the Abused Child in the Classroom

- Create a supportive and safe environment for the child
- Give the child security, the child needs to know you can be trusted
- Give the child specific, positive information about him/herself
- The child needs to be able to predict your behavior, and for you to be clear about your expectations
- Be sure the child's work is displayed and that he/she has a place to store them.

Working with the Abused Child in the Classroom...

- Talk to the child, one on one, and share something about yourself/avoid touching
- Be sure to acknowledge the child
- The child needs to know that he/she is valued, accepted and capable
- Respect and support the child's family
- Make sure the abused child has been introduced to the school counselor

Working with the Abused Child in the Classroom...

- Give the child responsibilities/chores for the classroom to boost their self-esteem
- Help the children identify ways they can make choices
- Think ahead of what you would do as a teacher if your student began to undress, touch themselves or touch other students in their private parts.
- Identify ways the child can earn tokens, stars, etc., with good behavior, chores, or extra homework.

Protecting the Educator



Pro-Active Strategies for Avoiding False Allegations

- ✦ Clarify procedures used, role of the program, and the insurance coverage available if a staff person is accused of abuse.
- ✦ Consider obtaining your own personal insurance policy
- ✦ Inform parents verbally and in writing about your policies and procedures
- ✦ Inform parents about the facts: A child is less likely to be abused in school than by someone in his/her family
- ✦ Inform parents concerning your professional background

Pro-Active Strategies for Avoiding False Allegations...

- ↖ Teach children to protect themselves from being abused
- ↖ Post the phone number of Child Abuse Hotline in a prominent place
- ↖ Make sure that all parents know that they are welcome to visit or participate in your classroom at any time
- ↖ Educate yourself about the signs and symptoms of abuse.
- ↖ Make an official accident report of any injury a child has to the genital or anal area.

Pro-Active Strategies for Avoiding False Allegations...

- ✦ Insist on having another person working with you at all times
- ✦ Make sure the toileting area is open and visible
- ✦ Do not take children away from the school or after school program setting unless for a prearranged, approved field trip with permission from each parent
- ✦ Work hard toward having positive, open, clear, and trusting communication with all parents
- ✦ If you are accused of child abuse, your actions will be greatly limited by what you are told to do by state authorities and your supervisor.

Cultivating School and Interagency Partnerships

Suggestions for strengthening the working relationships:

- ✎ Request materials and information on reporting child abuse/neglect
- ✎ Get to know DHS child welfare workers and law enforcement officers
- ✎ Invite a DHS and law enforcement representative to present at a school staff in-service training
- ✎ Share school personnel frustrations related to child abuse and neglect with DHS and law enforcement personnel.

Suggestions for strengthening the working relationships...

- ✎ Listen to frustrations from DHS and law enforcement concerning schools and determine how to address these frustrations
- ✎ If a school employee has a complaint regarding the handling of a case, identify the proper DHS or law enforcement supervisory chain of command
- ✎ When developing or revising school policies and procedures on suspected child abuse/neglect cases, request input from DHS and/or law enforcement officers

Suggestions for strengthening the working relationships...

- ✎ Utilize documentation forms and reporting forms to assist DHS and law enforcement in concise information gathering about the child and/or the child's family or home environment
- ✎ Do not delay reporting a case of suspected child abuse/neglect
- ✎ If, to your knowledge, DHS has not followed up with an investigation after a report has been made, contact the intake worker and request follow-up information
- ✎ Remember that clear communication is the key to success.

ANY QUESTIONS?

