



Breaking the Silence Child Abuse Awareness Training

A Best Friend's Quandary



The Scenario

A volunteer who helps students with homework comes to you about a dilemma. A student confided that her friend, Marvin, was having problems at home. Marvin said that his mother takes drugs and is hardly ever home. Reportedly, Marvin, the oldest child, always takes care of his younger siblings. The children do not have money and they often go without food. The student doesn't want to get anyone in trouble, but wants to help her friend. The volunteer wants to know what to tell the student. What do you do?

Discussion Begins

What do you do?

Do you report? If so, to whom? If so, when? If you don't, what might happen to Marvin and his siblings? To the concerned friend? To the volunteer? To you? To your school? To LAUSD?

If you report and the Department of Children and Family Services or Local Law Enforcement Agency tells you...

...to **handle it administratively**, what do you do next?

...**they will investigate**, what do you do next?

Filing a Report

If an employee does not have reasonable suspicion of child abuse, s/he may ask clarifying questions; however, if an employee has reasonable suspicion, s/he must file a Suspected Child Abuse Report (SCAR) without further questioning.

In order to comply with the mandated reporting requirements, an employee must always file a SCAR if s/he has reasonable suspicion of child abuse, even if the Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) or the Local Law Enforcement Agency indicates to "handle it administratively."

Required steps for filing a SCAR:

1. Phone call immediately or ASAP to a Child Protective Agency (CPA)
2. Written report mailed to the CPA within 36 hours of receiving the information

SCARs must be filed with a CPA – either DCFS or a Local Law Enforcement Agency. Generally, reports are filed with the DCFS if they involve allegations of abuse or neglect by an in-home perpetrator. Generally, reports are filed with a Local Law Enforcement Agency if they involve allegations of abuse by a District employee or an out-of-home perpetrator or allegations of moderate to severe abuse by an in-home perpetrator.

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Legal Response

Neglect includes any act or lack of action by a person responsible for the child that results in the child being harmed or being put at risk for harm. The negligent treatment of a child by a person responsible for the welfare of the child constitutes child abuse.

If based upon the initial student's statements, you do not have reasonable suspicion of child abuse, you may ask Marvin clarifying questions such as, "I wanted to talk to you about what might be going on at home. Who do you live with? Who helps take care of you and your siblings at home? Who is at home after school?" If there is reasonable suspicion that child abuse occurred, a SCAR must be filed with a CPA.

Other Considerations

Volunteers are not mandated reporters and are not required to file a SCAR. In this situation, the volunteer has correctly reported the information to a mandated reporter.

Emotional Support

Listen

The information reported to you may elicit a strong emotional reaction. It is important to listen to the volunteer and ask clarifying questions. Taking notes might be helpful with remembering the details to be included in the SCAR.

Protect

The situation must be addressed by following the mandated child abuse reporting procedures. Doing so is the best way to protect students and promote a safe learning environment. Encourage the volunteer to continue to be a supportive presence in the student's life.

Connect

Convey concern for the student's well-being to certificated staff. Every school site has protocols, systems, and resources to support and address student safety and well-being. This is an opportunity to become familiar with and use the procedures, policies, and resources at your work site.

Model

Maintain a professional and calm level of emotions and reactions to help them achieve balance and restore a calm environment. Do not express shock, anger or disbelief at the possible perpetrator or event.

Teach

Inform the volunteer that by reporting her/his concern, she/he acted in the best interest of the student. Furthermore, the student who shared the information about her friend may be commended for being helpful and for taking care of her friend. Teaching students to seek help and identify who they can go to for support at home and school is important.

