



Breaking the Silence Child Abuse Awareness Training

Home Alone



The Scenario

A reliable source tells you that a 4th grade student is home alone while his mother works the evening (3:00 pm to midnight) shift. He reportedly hangs out with the neighborhood teenagers until late. The child often comes to school late, unkempt, hungry, and tired. 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 the student? To you? To your school? To LAUSD?

If you report and the Local Law Enforcement Agency or the Department of Children and Family Services 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, he/she may ask clarifying questions; however, if an employee has reasonable suspicion, he/she 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 he/she 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

General neglect is the negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by a parent or caretaker that could or does result in harm or threatened harm to the child's health or welfare. Furthermore, severe neglect is the intentional failure to provide food, clothing, shelter; medical care or supervision; severe malnutrition; nonorganic failure to thrive; or actions that willfully cause or permit the health or safety of the child to be endangered.

The initial report is sufficient for you to form a reasonable suspicion that child abuse has occurred. Accordingly, a SCAR must be filed with a CPA.

If based upon the initial reports, you do not have reasonable suspicion of child abuse, you may ask clarifying questions such as, "You seem tired, what time did you go to bed last night? Who takes care of you while your mom is at work? What did you have for dinner/breakfast? What is happening?" If there is reasonable suspicion that child abuse occurred, a SCAR must be filed with a CPA.

Emotional Support

Listen

Hearing that a student is being left unsupervised may elicit a strong emotional reaction. However, listen carefully to the details and ask clarifying questions, as needed. 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.

Connect

Convey concern for the student's well-being. 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. Additionally, the mother may benefit from assistance on securing supervision for her child while she is working.

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. Instead, demonstrate a caring and inquisitive tone.

Teach

Inform your source that, by reporting her/his concern, he/she acted in the best interests of the child. Teaching students to seek help and identify who they can go to for support at home and school is important.



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