



# Breaking the Silence

## Child Abuse Awareness Training

# John & His Uncle



### The Scenario

John has demonstrated a change in behavior. He is usually peaceful, happy-go-lucky, eager to participate in class, and very friendly with peers, but recently he has been challenging authority and not following classroom rules. He has become combative with his peers and displaying mood swings. He is not completing classwork and has stopped turning in homework. What do you do?

### Discussion Begins

When you speak with John, he tells you that his 30 year- old uncle recently moved in and they share a bedroom. Late at night, the uncle watches pornography in the bedroom. He says that he can't tell his dad because his uncle supports the family and his dad might hurt the uncle. What do you do?

### Discussion Continues

### What do you do?

**Do you report?** If so, to whom? If so, when? If you don't, what might happen to John? 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

Some indicators of sexual abuse include:

- Child discloses sexual activity
- Sexualized behavior
- Knowledge of sexual matters that are unusual for their age
- Describing scenes of adults engaging in sex
- Describing pornographic magazines and/or videos

If based upon the initial student's statements, you do not have reasonable suspicion of child abuse, you may ask John clarifying questions such as, "What are you doing while your uncle is watching pornography? What is your uncle doing while he is watching pornography?" If there is reasonable suspicion that child abuse occurred, a SCAR must be filed with a CPA.

## Emotional Support

### Listen

It may be difficult to hear this disclosure and it may elicit a strong emotional reaction. Listen carefully, pay attention, and convey your concern and interest for his well-being. Taking notes might be helpful with remembering the details to be included in the SCAR.

### Protect

Act immediately by following the mandated child abuse reporting procedures. This is the best way to protect students and promote a safe learning environment. Let the student know that you take his disclosure seriously.

### Connect

Convey your concern for the student's well-being by fulfilling your mandated reporting obligations. 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

Help John to understand that it is normal to have a confusing range of feelings as a result of what's happening. Teach him that he did the right thing by telling someone and getting help. Teaching students to seek help and identify who they can go to for support at home and school is important.

