



Breaking the Silence

Child Abuse Awareness Training

Unwanted Attention



The Scenario

A female student tells you that Ms. Harold, track coach, keeps staring at her breasts while she changes in the locker room and she wants to know how to deal with it. What do you do?

Discussion Begins

Does it matter what title Ms. Harold holds? What if she is the Principal? AP? Teacher? TA? Volunteer?

Discussion Continues

What do you do?

Do you report? If so, to whom? If so, when? If you don't, what might happen to the girl? To other students? 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, 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 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 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

If based upon the student's initial statement, you do not have reasonable suspicion of child abuse, you may ask her clarifying questions such as, "When did you notice this was occurring? How often does this happen? Have you talked to her or others about this?" If there is reasonable suspicion that child abuse occurred, a SCAR must be filed with a CPA.

Other Considerations

Whether you have reasonable suspicion that child abuse occurred, there is sufficient information to determine that improper conduct may have occurred (e.g., LAUSD Code of Conduct). What the student is describing appears to be possible sexual harassment (BUL-3349.1). You should notify an administrator of the possible inappropriate conduct.

You should notify an administrator of the possible inappropriate conduct. The administrator should then notify the Local District (LD) Operations Coordinator. At this time, the LD Administrator of Operations must exercise discretion as to whether the employee should be removed from the school site or work assignment (BUL-6532.1, Protocols and Procedures to Report, Reassign and Investigate Allegations of Employee Misconduct).

The site administrator/division supervisor will inform the Local District/Division of law enforcement's determination as to whether the District may proceed with or should refrain from conducting an administrative investigation. Once clearance has been obtained from the Local Law Enforcement Agency, the administrative investigation shall proceed. Upon conclusion of the investigation, appropriate administrative action will be taken, if warranted.

If the alleged suspect is the principal, notification should be made to the LD Administrator of Operations.

Emotional Support

Listen

The information reported to you may elicit a strong emotional reaction. It is important to listen carefully, pay attention, and convey your concern and interest in her well-being. Taking notes might be helpful with remembering the details to be included in the SCAR.

Protect

The situation must be addressed by following 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.

Model

Maintain a professional and calm level of emotions and reactions. Do not express shock or anger at the possible perpetrator or event.

Teach

Help the student to understand that it is normal to have a confusing range of feelings because of experiences like this. Remind her that she did the right thing by reporting her concerns. Teaching students to seek help and identify who they can go to for support at home and school is important.

